

# Fasting Guide



O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

Psalm 63:1-8

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## KNOWING GOD

To know God is the highest good. In fact, we were created for that very purpose – to know and enjoy Him. “Knowing God” is the driving force behind what we do as a church. God’s presence is what we long for when we worship. We gather with the Lord’s people as a church to experience His presence. We are driven to fulfill the mission Jesus gave us to make disciples so that people from all over the world may know God.

We’re fasting together as a church to cultivate a deeper hunger for God. We want to know Him more fully; to be reminded of His goodness in our lives.

On the following pages, we’ve provided you a guide to help you fast. Note, this fast is not intended to be a miserable experience. In fact, it’s quite the opposite. It’s to be a joyful experience for you where you spend good time in the Word of God and praying.

If this seems overwhelming, it’s okay. You’re encouraged to engage in whatever way seems good to you. Read the next section as you consider how to best do so.

# FASTING 101

## Why Fast?

Fasting is the renunciation of something good or essential that displays our need for God. Fasting is meant to intensify our prayer life and time in the Word. We go without food for a time to experience our need for God. Instead of eating, we spend time in prayer and the Word. Our physical hunger helps us fight to experience a deeper hunger for God's presence in our life. We want to grow in the reality that we really do need God more than food. We seek to prove to ourselves the truth that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4).

## How Do I Fast?

Develop your own plan for a fast. If you have never fasted or are hesitant about fasting a 24 hour fast may be daunting. Choose a plan for which you will be successful and enjoy. Your strategy for fasting can be flexible depending on your schedule and your health. You can choose to simply forgo a meal, fast for a 12 hour period, or fast for a full 24 hours. Some people engage in fasts that last for days and weeks. Whatever your strategy, make it meaningful by sacrificing something like food that is good or essential for a given period of time. The goal is to intensify your need for God in order to fill yourself with prayer and the Word.

## What About Kids?

We encourage parents to teach kids about fasting throughout the day. We do not suggest a full fast from food for small children. For older children who want to participate, you could make their meals smaller or eliminate certain items to teach them about sacrifice. This would also be a good time to teach them about kids around the world who go with little to no food throughout their day.

## What About My Health?

While we are choosing to fast from food, this doesn't mean you should risk basic nutrition for the time you choose to fast. Above all, you should make sure you stay hydrated. If needed, drinking juice, eating a few crackers, or rice is appropriate. If there are other health considerations or a history of eating disorders that would be exacerbated by fasting, please refrain. Choose to fast from something other than food in order to pray and engage in the Scriptures.

## **GOD-CENTERED FASTING AND THE GOSPEL**

Before you fast, remember the gospel! Christian fasting is unique because of the gospel. The greatest needs you have are met in the gospel. Therefore, the sorrow over sin and repentance in which you engage in fasting is to be met with joy and celebration of the gospel.

### **Christ-Centered Fasting**

The emptiness in your stomach is to call you to mourn over the sin that has left you empty. Reflect on how sin has left you empty. As you mourn your sin, intentionally look to Christ who has met your greatest needs. He has defeated sin and death for you! Remember, Jesus will not leave you empty. You are not fasting as in the days of old in sackcloth and ashes, waiting for the judgment of God. You are standing covered in the righteousness of Christ.

### **Spirit-Filled Fasting**

Jesus said we would fast as we await his return. The emptiness of a world without Jesus causes you to long for His coming more and more. Fasting reminds you that not even food can fill your deepest needs. Only the return of Jesus will satisfy your deepest longings.

The longing for this future Kingdom, however, has to an extent been met by the Holy Spirit who indwells every Christian. The Spirit is the literal presence of Christ and His Kingdom with you in the world. The Spirit as the presence of the Kingdom creates a clash in our lives between this sin-cursed world in which we live and the presence of the Kingdom coming. By the power of the Spirit, you taste a world coming where there will be no sin and death. This creates a deep longing in your life for Jesus to return. The Spirit invokes an unsatisfied satisfaction within you and you groan for the Kingdom.

Spirit-filled fasting must be Word-filled fasting. It is in the Word of a God that the Spirit fills your life with deeper longings for the Kingdom. The Spirit Himself wrote the Bible to show you that through faith in Jesus His story becomes your story. His Kingdom has become my Kingdom. In the Word, I learn who I am and cultivate a deeper longing for what has been given to me in Jesus.

### **Before the Good Father**

Jesus promises us that in Him His Father is our Father. He is a good Father. You know He is good because He not only meets your basic needs as long as you need them, He has given you something even better, the Kingdom of Christ. In love, He

sent the Son to die for your sins. The apostle Paul confirms the Father's goodness by saying, "freely give us all things." As you desperately seek the Father, you do so in light of His goodness.

### Seek to Memorize This Verse Today

*"<sup>18</sup> I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live."*

John 14:18-19

### Notes

# A PLAN FOR SCRIPTURE READING AND PRAYER WHILE FASTING

Throughout the day your hunger should prompt you to reflect upon Scripture and pray. However, we encourage you to pray throughout your day in the following categories: Personal Holiness, Family and Friends, Church, and the World. Your strategy for the day should fit your schedule. Again, we want you to be successful in pursuing the Lord and spending time in prayer and the Word. It will probably look different for each one of us but here is a suggested plan.

- Pray for PERSONAL HOLINESS at BREAKFAST TIME
- Pray for your FAMILY AND FRIENDS at LUNCH TIME
- Pray for our CHURCH at DINNER TIME
- Pray for the WORLD at BED TIME

## For Your Personal Prayer Time

Your hunger should remind you of the desperation you have for God to answer certain prayers in your life. What things in your life do you long for more than food? Is there something you want God to give you more than the next meal? Take some time and express these things to the Father. Be honest about your heart's desires.

Thank the Father for giving you the Kingdom in the Son by sending His son to die for your sins. In light of His goodness, ask God for the power and courage to trust Him and His will no matter what it means for your life.

The grumbling in your stomach should remind you to hunger for His Kingdom in the same way. Ask God for a desire to long for the Kingdom by the power of the Spirit more than anything this world has to offer. Pray for God to create this desire within you with a deep desire for His Word. Pray that the Spirit would free you from being too satisfied with the things of this world. Pray specifically that Jesus would return soon and make all things new!



## Breakfast Time

Read and reflect upon this Scripture before you pray for the requests that follow:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the Word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

*Ephesians 1:3-14*

## Personal Holiness

*"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied".*

Matthew 5:6

- Take some time to confess and repent of sin in your life.
- Ask for deliverance from and victory over indwelling sin.
- Ask God for the power to turn from sin in your life as you turn to follow Jesus more faithfully.
- Ask God for a better, more consistent prayer life.
- Ask God for a deeper longing to be in the Word.

- Ask God for more discipline to be in the Word on a regular basis.
- Ask for more boldness in evangelism.
- Take some time to thank God for the forgiveness He grants you in Christ through the cross.
- Thank God for the holy life Jesus lived that is credited to you by faith in Him.
- Praise Him that the righteousness you hunger for and need has been given in Jesus.

## Notes

## Lunch Time

Read and reflect upon this passage before you pray:

*"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."*

Matthew 6:25-34

## For Your Family and Friends

### Family

- Pray for your husband's purity and leadership in your home.
- Pray for your wife's contentment and security in the Lord.
- Pray for specific struggles and burdens that are weighing on your spouse at this time.
- Pray your spouse would love Jesus more than they love you.
- Pray that your kids would believe in Jesus and follow Him all the days of their lives.
- Pray for boldness and wisdom to teach your kids to love and trust Jesus more than anything in this life.
- Pray for wisdom for your parents during whatever season in life they find themselves. Pray for a heart to honor them in the Lord.

### Friends

- Pray that your friendships would be centered on the gospel and your fellowship would be genuine in the Lord.
- Pray for your friends by name to love the Lord and pursue holiness by God's grace.
- Pray for a specific friend who you know who is enduring great difficulty.
- Thank God for specific friends who have encouraged you in the Lord.

### Notes

## Dinner Time

Read and reflect upon this passage before you pray:

*So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs-heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

Romans 8:12-17

### For Our Church

- Pray God protects our church from sinful divisions.
- Pray our church continues to grow in holiness and sacrificial love for others.
- Pray we continue to see people in Richmond believe the gospel.
- Pray God continues to raise up people and provide the resources to plant churches around the world.
- Pray that our pastor(s) and staff would remain faithful to the Lord as they continue to lead us by the Spirit according to God's Word to love and enjoy the gospel of the Kingdom.
- Pray that our pastor(s) would continue to shepherd us with joy for the sake of our souls.
- Pray for each person in your BFG by name.
- Pray for the specific ministry team on which you serve.
- Pray that God would continue to raise up equipped servants to fulfill roles of service throughout our church body.
- Pray that the needs of the saints would be made known and met with grace and mercy.

## Notes

## Bed Time

Read and reflect upon this passage before you pray:

*Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.*

Isaiah 55:1-2

## For Our World

- Pray, by name, for friends you know who need to follow Christ.
- Ask God for opportunities to share the gospel with your friends, neighbors, classmates, and coworkers.
- Pray for opportunities and resources to take a mission trip in the next year.
- Pray that God would raise up many college students who will reach their campus for Christ in Madison County.
- Pray for our mission efforts in New Orleans, Peru, and East Asia.
- Pray God would raise up missionaries and church planting teams from our church who we can send around the world.
- Pray about giving a sacrificial offering to our Ends of the Earth Fund.

## Notes

## BREAKING YOUR FAST

At the end of your fast, we recommend briefly praying for the four areas of personal holiness, family and friends, our church, and the world, and reflecting upon Scripture over a light meal. It is important to start with a light meal at the end of a full fast to allow your stomach to readjust to food.

Read and reflect upon this passage as you end your fast:

*"The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*  
*The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.*

Revelation 22:17-21

## Notes