



# *Personal Planning for Fasting*

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## **HOW AND WHY WE FAST**

To fast effectively, we must determine and fulfill the parameters of our fast. We need to organize ourselves to “make the most of the opportunity”; by that we mean that we must determine how much or how little we will eat and when. We must also purpose and plan to spend time with God and our brothers in Christ through study, meditation on His word, and intensified prayer. We will need to consider the opportunities that are available to us and schedule accordingly. We often think we don’t have any extra time; we do, and if we plan, we will find it.

We cannot candy coat the reality; fasting is a sacrifice of food and our normal routine, but the benefits that we gain are well worth the effort. To borrow a phrase from pop-culture: “no pain, no gain”. If we want to receive from God through fasting, we will have to embrace the sacrifice.

This guide is written with the intention of helping us to understand fasting and its benefits, and to apply the principles learned to our congregational fast. We pray that you are instructed and helped. If you should need any additional help to better understand fasting in general or our congregational fast in particular or how to work out the details of your fast, please contact the pastoral staff. We would be pleased to serve you.

## **DETERMINING HOW TO FAST**

- Since you are embarking upon a long period of fasting, we would suggest that you make a general commitment first. Then, as you have opportunities, intensify your fast by foregoing meals to dedicate yourself to prayer. For example, you may decide to eat only one meal a day for twenty-one days, but on the weekend you may choose to fast an entire Saturday or Sunday. Whatever you decide, it is important that you commit yourself to the fast and do your best to fulfill it.

It may be necessary to vary your fast from day to day or week-to-week according to your commitments and obligations. The idea here is not to diminish the general commitment you have established, but to take advantage of open spaces in your schedule. There may be periods where you have more time to dedicate to intensive prayer and study. You might reduce your food intake to the lowest levels at those times. Yet, it may be necessary, especially if you have a physically demanding job, to eat more food at times due to the demands of your day and your experience with fasting. Don’t feel guilty about brief, legitimate adjustments, but return to your general commitment promptly.

- If you are taking medications or have a physical condition that limits fasting, **please inform and consult your medical doctor** for instructions. Fasting, if done correctly, can aide you physically as well: “...and your health shall spring forth speedily...” (Isaiah 58:8).
- Also, if you are responsible for purchasing and preparing food for your spouse and children, you will need to fulfill that duty and explain why you are changing your diet and why you are not eating with the family as usual.

## **INCREASED SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY**

The real benefit of fasting does not come from decreased physical food without increased spiritual food. Spiritual growth comes from a shift of concentration from the physical aspects of life to the spiritual. Jesus, in Matthew 6:33, said, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (spiritual aspects) and all these things (physical aspects) will be added unto you.” Jesus is talking about priorities. Fasting helps us establish our priorities, which ensures fulfillment in all areas of life.

Begin to consider what you are going to read and when. Make plans for intensified private prayer as well as corporate prayer at the times offered. Plan to attend all of the services available to you during the fast. You might consider spending personal time with other brothers or sisters for prayer and fellowship in the word of God.

## **THE SPIRIT OF THE FAST**

Jesus, in Matthew 6:16-18, instructs us about the attitude that must govern our fasting, if we desire to get God’s attention. Pleasing God, not showing off to men, is what Jesus requires. The idea of secrecy during a congregational fast is not of utmost importance, since we know that we are all engaged in the fast. The attitude is most important.

Please read Isaiah 58 to obtain further instruction concerning the attitudes and actions that govern fasting. You will find that fasting is to be a day of joyful sacrifice and celebration in the presence of God, not of long-faced mourning.

## **A SUGGESTED FAST**

There are several types of fast found in the word of God which you may employ. They include a partial fast (Daniel), a water only fast, and liquids including clear natural liquids including water, broth, and pure fruit juices.

We would like to suggest, as a minimum fast, in particular for those that do not have a great deal of experience with fasting, the following criteria.

Your fast diet may consist of fruits, vegetables, grains for protein, and liquids (water and juices are the best). Clear or vegetable soup is also a good choice. You may eat the foods at the appropriate times and in combination, but keep the portions, especially the grains, small. For example, you might eat one fruit for breakfast, one for lunch, and vegetables and a little rice for dinner. You should drink liberally, especially water. Be careful not to become dehydrated.

It is also recommended that you unplug yourself from your normal media sources (TV, Games, Internet [other than essentials], etc.)

## **PRAYER MEETING SCHEDULE**

- Sunday Mornings: 9:00-9:30am (NL Young Adults room)
- Tuesday and Thursday Mornings: 6:00-7:00am (NL Youth room)
- Wednesday Nights: 7:00-8:30pm (Sanctuary)
- Friday Nights: 7:00pm (NL Youth room)

# PERSONAL PLANNING WORKSHEET

1. List the foods that you are limiting yourself to: (Example: fruits, vegetables, water, and juice)

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2. Determine what you will or will not eat daily:

- Breakfast \_\_\_\_\_
- Lunch \_\_\_\_\_
- Dinner \_\_\_\_\_

3. Prayer times: (determine when you will give yourself to prayer).

- Private prayer times: \_\_\_\_\_
- Corporate prayer times: \_\_\_\_\_
- With other individuals: \_\_\_\_\_
- I will unplug or reduce: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Spiritual foods:

- Particular Biblical passages: \_\_\_\_\_
- Biblical theme: (Ex. Faith) \_\_\_\_\_
- Book you may want to read: \_\_\_\_\_
- Preaching/teaching series: \_\_\_\_\_
- Fasting Prayer Guide (available in hard copy and online)
- We encourage you to check out New Life's website where you can hear recent messages.

5. I am fasting for: (what do you want to see God do through this fast?)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

