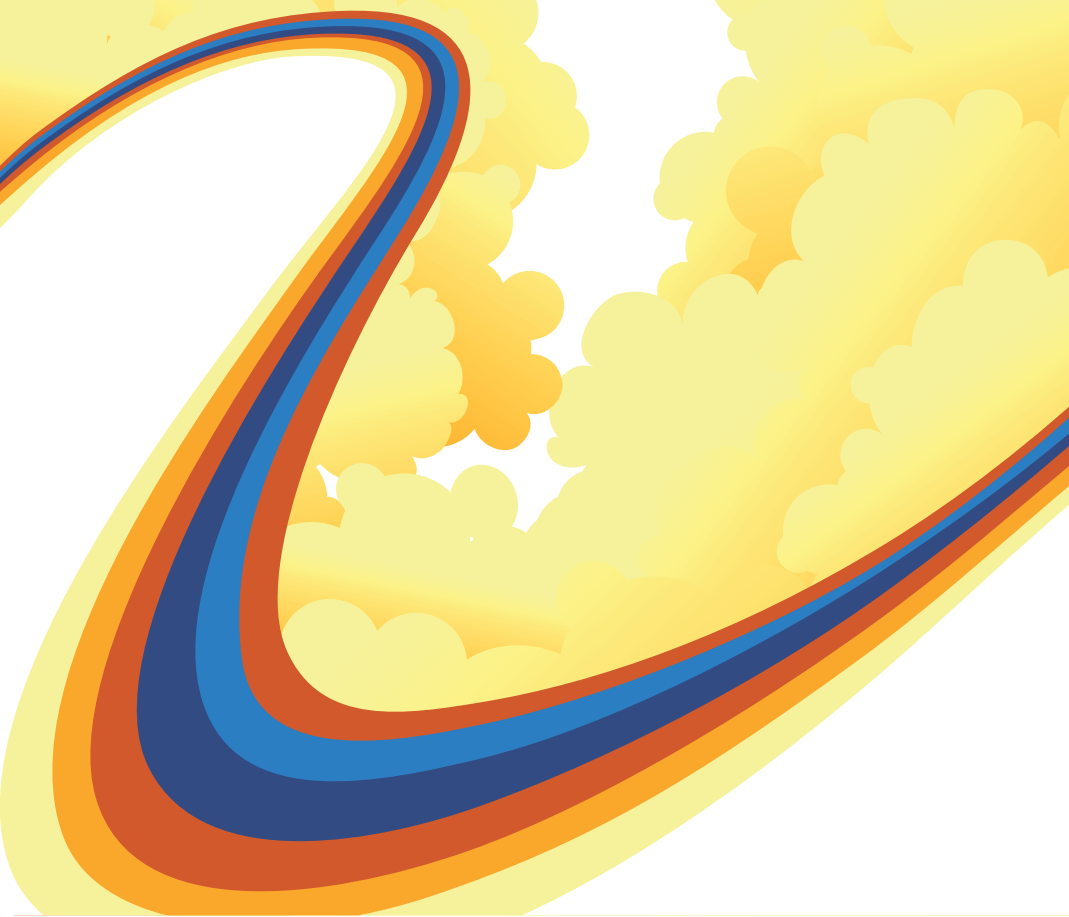


the  
**power**  
of  
**fasting**



# Introduction

When God has placed a dream inside you that only He can bring to pass, prayer and fasting are keys to see that happen.

When circumstances are such that the power of God to bring breakthrough is needed, prayer and fasting are keys to that power being released.

If your relationship with the Lord has become routine or bland, prayer and fasting are keys to rekindle your first love.

Prayer and fasting release the anointing, power and favour of God in the life of a Christian.

Fasting is a part of a normal relationship with God, yet many Christians never discover its power.

Jesus fasted and prayed. If He, the Son of God fasted and prayed because there were supernatural things that could only be released that way, how much more should fasting be a part of our lives. (Read Matt. 17:14-21)

In Matthew 6:1-18 Jesus instructs His disciples on giving, praying and fasting. Jesus speaks about when you do these things, not if. Fasting is elevated, along with prayer and giving, as a normal, powerful, and foundational aspect of the Christian life.

This small booklet is designed to help you discover (or perhaps rediscover) the joy- yes, JOY!!! and power of fasting.

There are some basic practical guidelines included. If you have any questions please speak to one of our pastors.

Whatever you do, don't assume that fasting is not for you. Read on and you will find that there are different types of fasts. You are able to decide the type of fast that is practical for you.

Don't miss the opportunity to set the year up for the blessing of God. Fasting early in the year helps us establish the right priorities and perspectives for the following months. It also puts into practice the principle found in Matthew 6:33

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

# What is Biblical Fasting ?

Fasting is refraining from food and/or liquids for a spiritual purpose.

There are many different types, lengths, circumstances and purposes of fasts recorded in the Bible.

On a full food fast you go without food of any kind for a certain period of time, not just between lunch and dinner! You drink water and some people also choose to drink juices and clear broth.

A partial fast involves giving up particular food and drinks for a period of time. The most commonly used example of a partial fast is found in the book of Daniel. Daniel and his companions refused to eat meat and sweets and asked only for vegetables and water. During another partial fast, Daniel took no sweets, no meat and no wine.

A liquid fast is drinking fruit or vegetable juices.

## What Biblical Fasting is not

Fasting is not a means of manipulating God to do our will. Through fasting and prayer we position ourselves to come into line with God's will and His plans.

Fasting also is not a way to earn brownie points with God. The only thing that gives us merit before God is the sacrifice of Jesus.

Fasting is not a diet. Our motivation is not one of losing weight, even though this may be a side effect.

Fasting becomes a diet if we stop eating physically but don't nourish our spirit on the Word of God and through prayer.

# Why do we fast?

## **2 Chronicles 7:14**

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land.

Fasting is a scriptural way of humbling ourselves before God. As we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us.

## **Matthew 5:6**

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Fasting indicates our hunger and desperation for God. We are declaring that our spiritual hunger is greater than our desire for natural food. God promises that He will fill us.

## **Isaiah 58:6-9**

Is this not the fast that I have chosen:

To loose the bonds of wickedness,

To undo the heavy burdens,

To let the oppressed go free,

And that you break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,

And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out;

When you see the naked that you cover him,

And not hide yourself from your own flesh?

Then your light shall break forth like the morning,

Your healing shall spring forth speedily,

And your righteousness shall go before you;

The glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;

You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am'.

## **Fasting empowers us to overcome sin and the struggles we face in our lives.**

It allows the Holy Spirit to do a deeper work in us as we discipline ourselves to deny our natural desires. As food is taken out of our lives our spirit becomes uncluttered by the things of this world and we become very sensitive to the things of God. As we yield ourselves to God, oppressions such as depression, sickness, and poverty can be addressed and restoration comes.

## **Prayer and fasting brings clarity of direction from the Holy Spirit.**

### **Romans 12:1-2**

Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

Fasting is a means of presenting ourselves to God, a living sacrifice yielded to Him. As we do this we open ourselves up to hear from God. Fasting makes the way for us to receive fresh vision, revelation and direction for our lives. We all have assignments from and a purpose in God. As fasting enables us to be more sensitive to what God is saying to us, we are able to take a hold of His will for our lives more fully.

## **Fasting is a means of renewing ourselves spiritually.**

Fasting takes us out of our normal routine. Just as our lives generally can fall into patterns and ruts, our relationship with God can also go this way.

The busyness of life can cause us to lose our freshness and enthusiasm for God, even though we still love Him.

Fasting is a step of faith that takes us out of the ordinary. It is a form of worship which reminds us of our dependence on God. As such, it also magnifies God and in doing so, puts our problems and circumstances into a God perspective.

As we put God first and worship Him through fasting, our relationship with the Lord goes deeper and we are able to come back to the point of our first love for Him.

## **Answered prayer is a characteristic of fasting.**

### **Matthew 6:17-18:**

But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

As stated earlier, fasting is not a means of manipulating God. However, when done corporately or individually, fasting is a private discipline that God will reward. God rewards those who diligently seek Him.

In the Scriptures prayer and fasting are linked with financial blessing, healing and health, overcoming demonic powers and the protection of the Lord.

As we pray and fast we can petition God for all of these things as well as restoration of relationships, salvation and those things that the Holy Spirit impresses on us.

## **Fasting Together**

As a body, when we all fast and pray together God is honoured. He rewards the sacrifices we make on an individual and a corporate level.

Where possible pray together and attend the prayer times organised. Pray together in Connect groups and with friends and family participating in the fast.

Jesus knew that some spiritual power could only be released through fasting. Satan knows this as well and so tempted Jesus as He was fasting in the wilderness.

As we fast together this is a time to encourage one another and to pray fervently for one another. (1Thess. 5:11; Eph 6:18).

# Fasting Guidelines

## Decide how you will fast

There are no formulas for deciding the right fast for you. If you have never fasted before, don't be over ambitious.

Ask the Lord what type of fasting you will do:

- > Full fast
- > Partial fast
- > Drinking fruit juices (go for drinks that don't have added sugar)

## Prepare

Ask the Lord if there are areas in your own life He would want you to address at this time.

Plan extra times to spend with God.

Buy a good supply of juices, fruit, vegetables (whatever your fast allows). Shop again BEFORE you run out.

Start reducing your intake of heavy foods, e.g. red meats some days before you start fasting. Eat lots of fruit and vegetables and start getting into a routine of drinking more water.

Start reducing your intake of sugar and caffeine (tea, coffee, coke) over the 4-5 days leading up to the fast.

## **Further Guidelines**

Always drink plenty of water when fasting - at least 2-3 litres throughout the day. Keep a bottle of water with you.

Monitor and restrict your activity. Rigorous exercise is not recommended when you are fasting. For the fit and healthy a good walk at a moderate pace is OK. However, if you are on water only we recommend you delete exercise for the time being.

DO NOT FAST if you have medical or dietary conditions which would make fasting unwise. If in doubt consult your doctor.

## **Possible Physical changes**

Many people testify to the physical as well as the spiritual advantages of fasting. As toxins are flushed out of the system it can be like a spring cleaning for the body.

However, the process is not always pleasant. In the first few days you may experience headaches, feel sluggish or weak and have challenges sleeping. This is usually caused by the withdrawal of caffeine and/or sugar, or dehydration. Remember to drink plenty of water or juices.

You will also most likely feel hungry but this also tends to subside after the first couple of days.

Gradually come off fasting with soups, fruit etc. Build up to your normal diet over 2-3 days.

## **Recommended Reading**

'God's Chosen Fast' by Arthur Wallis

'Fasting' by Jentezen Franklin.



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