

Fasting

WHAT WE BELIEVE

ONELIFE CHURCH

“...I am convinced that when God’s people fast with a proper Biblical motive — seeking God’s face not His hand — with a broken, repentant, and contrite spirit, God will hear from heaven and heal our lives, our churches, our communities, our nation and world.”

— Dr. Bill Bright

WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is abstaining from food, for a set amount of time, with the purpose of focusing our hearts and minds on God. It is a powerful Christian discipline that should be a normal part of our lives as believers.

The reason why we typically abstain from food during a fast is that food very easily becomes our god. It is often one of our primary focuses in our lives. As we fast, we are saying that our stomach is not our god. When we experience physical hunger while fasting, it prompts us to hunger spiritually for fellowship and intimacy with Christ. Practically, fasting from eating also gives us more time to spend in prayer and worship.

The Bible mentions three types of fasts as it relates to the people involved: private, congregational, and national fasts. A private fast is when one person feels led to devote time to prayer and fasting (Matthew 6:16-18). When an entire congregation comes together to fast, it is called a congregational fast (Joel 2:15-16; Acts 13:2). Lastly, national fasts occur when a nation of people is called to fast (2 Chronicles 20:3, Esther 4:16).

WHY DO WE FAST?

Our purpose in fasting is a “God-centered” one. It is not to prove that we are spiritual or to manipulate God into acting in our favor. Instead, fasting prompts our minds to thoughts of God. It leads us to prayer and worship, and it helps us reconsider our purpose as believers. Fasting is not, “God, see what I am doing!” Instead, it is, “God, do a work in me.”

Prayer is something that is discussed throughout the Bible, and we hear

of many people who fasted. These include Moses, David, Elijah, Esther, and Jesus Himself. There are several reasons why we believe that fasting is still a Christian discipline for today.

1 WE FAST BECAUSE JESUS COMMANDED US TO DO IT

In Matthew 6:16, Jesus says, “When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others.” In this passage, Jesus doesn’t say, “If you fast...” Instead, he says, “When you fast...” There is an expectation that fasting is a normal part of the thriving believer’s life.

2 WE FAST BECAUSE IT HELPS US TO RE-ALIGN OUR HEARTS AND MINDS WITH CHRIST AND DRAW CLOSE TO HIM

Fasting takes our minds off of our physical needs and desires and leads us to trust God to sustain and satisfy us. It can help remind us that our first love is Jesus, not anything in this world. (Matthew 4:4)

3 WE FAST BECAUSE IT CAN TRANSFORM OUR PRAYER LIVES FROM BORING AND ROUTINE TO DYNAMIC AND POWERFUL

As we pray and worship during our fast, we ask God to take our eyes off of ourselves and to place them on Him. We pray that He remove any selfish motives we may have or highlight to us ways in which we are pursuing our best interests in life instead of His.

Fasting doesn't make our prayers be heard or ensure that God answers them the way we want. Instead, it helps make our hearts receptive to God's will.

4 WE FAST BECAUSE IT IS A SOURCE OF VICTORY IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

To resist the devil's temptations, Jesus fasted. Later, when Jesus' disciples struggled to deliver a boy of demons, he said, "This kind only comes out by prayer and fasting." (Matthew 17:21) We live in a broken world, and we are surrounded by people in our communities who live in bondage. Fasting is a powerful way to pray for those in desperate situations and to pray for revival for our city.

HOW DO WE FAST?

There are many types of fasts; however, the most typical fasts are a complete fast or a partial fast. During a complete fast, the person abstains from eating or drinking anything. In a partial fast, people restrict their diets to certain foods or drinks. We will be completing a partial fast in which we restrict ourselves to liquids. Specifically, we will drink water, juice, and broth. It is not blending your supper into a drinkable form!

During our fast, we can use times in which we would normally be eating to pray, worship, and read Scripture. As we feel hungry, we turn our minds to Jesus. Fasting, by itself, is weak. It must be paired with a full-on pursuit of Jesus.

As we fast, we want to be careful of pride that can seep into our hearts. We must continually examine our motives and remind ourselves to seek

Jesus, not the fasting experience. Fasting does not make us more spiritual nor does it make God take more notice of us. We already have been given God's approval; He can't love us any more than He already does.

PRACTICALS OF FASTING:

- The first day of a fast can be hard. Most of us don't typically go more than a few hours without eating. Expect that you will feel hunger pains and may feel caffeine withdrawal.
- Don't go into fasting with the view that it is going to be a negative and hard experience. Expect that it will be an incredible time of God revealing Himself to you. Go into fasting with excitement and joy.
- Fast in community. Don't do this alone. We are purposely fasting as a church community so that we are in this together. Encourage one another in your community groups, and come to the nights of prayer during the fast.
- Some people, due to health reasons, may be unable to participate in the fast to the full extent. If you are unable to do a liquid fast, fast in ways that you can. This could be eliminating certain foods from your diet for the duration of the fast or eating a very limited diet.