

We will begin the new year with a Church-wide 21-day period of fasting and prayer. Our fast days will be January 2-22, 2019 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day.

Please consider carefully your participation in this fast. Be mindful of your specific dietary and medical needs. Also, keep in mind that it is better not to vow at all than to break your vow. (See Deuteronomy 23:21-23) So, if you cannot fast the entire time, be honest with God about what you can and will sacrifice. Be prayerful. Be open. Be obedient. Expect God to move!

Guidelines and Biblical Instructions for Fasting

What is Fasting? Fasting is simply denying some earthly desire in order to focus more on God. It is the expression of our hungry hearts for God. Fasting is done to:

- (1) Better focus our mind on God – replacing eating with meeting with God, and using hunger as a reminder to come to God throughout the day.
- (2) Learn satisfaction in God by denying certain material or emotional desires and breaking the hold those desires may have on our heart.
- (3) Intensify our prayers around a particular concern.
- (4) To share in God's grief over sin.

Suggested Fasting Schedule: **Jan 2-22:** Fast from all alcohol, nicotine, and desserts. Fast from some or all foods during the designated hours of fast. **Jan 2-8:** Fast from caffeine. **January 9-15:** Fast from negative talk and complaining **January 16-22:** Fast from or minimize use of social media and watching television. Please be sure to INCREASE your water intake while fasting!!

Scriptures that Speak of Fasting:

Matthew 4: 1-2; 6:16-18; 9:14-17	Acts 9:9; 14:23; 13:1-3	Psalm 35:13; 109:24	
Joel 2:12-13	Esther 4:16	Ezra 8:21	Daniel 1:12 and 9
Ezra 9:3	Isaiah 58	Zechariah 7:4-10	

How and Why to Fast: Replace the time you would spend eating, or doing other activities, with prayer, Bible reading, silence, and meditation. Do this so that your heart and mind can be drawn to God who is far more satisfying than these other activities. Incorporate times of confession of your faults and repentance of sins into your prayers. Ask God for forgiveness. Ask God to show you changes that you need to make in your life spiritually, socially, financially, and physically. Keep record of how you are feeling during the fast and what you are hearing from God. What practices from your time of fasting will you continue after the corporate fast has ended?

What to Do When Fasting: (1) Pray for yourself and others (especially during hours of fast). Use a journal; listen silently to God; fellowship with God; meditate on biblical truth. (2) Sing and Worship - listen to Christian music. (3) Read the Bible and/or devotional literature. Find biblical promises and use them as the foundation for affirmations which you can recite regularly (4) Serve someone (5) Walk (6) Reconnect with family and friends (7) Set goals for the week, month, and year.