

21-Days of Fasting & Prayer Guide

We will again begin the New Year with a Church-wide 21-day period of fasting and prayer. Our fast days will be January 4-24, 2021 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. This year, we will also have a church-wide prayer call from 7-7:15a.m. every Monday-Friday during the fast. Dial: 605.313.4162 Access Code: 701912#

Please consider carefully your participation in this fast. Be mindful of your specific dietary and medical needs. Remember that it is better not to vow than to break your vow. (See Deuteronomy 23:21-23) So, if you cannot fast in the suggested ways or times, be honest with God about what you can and will do. Pray. Be open. Be obedient. Be ready to experience God.

Suggested Fasting Schedule: Jan 4-24: Fast from all alcohol, smoking, and sugar (sweets). Fast from some or all meals during the designated hours (8am-4pm) of fasting. **Jan 4-10:** Fast from all caffeine products. **January 11-17:** Fast from or minimize use of social media and television. **January 18-24:** Fast from negative talking, thinking, and complaining. **INCREASE water intake while fasting!!**

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) Share in God's grief over sin.

Scriptures that Speak of Fasting: Isaiah 58; Matthew 4:1-2; 6:16-18; 9:14-17; Acts 9:9; 13:1-3; 14:23; Joel 2:12-17; Esther 4:15-17; Ezra 8:21-23; Zechariah 7:4-10

How and Why to Fast: Replace the time you would spend eating, or doing other activities, with prayer, Bible reading, worship, silence, and meditation. Do this so that your heart and mind can be drawn to God who is far more satisfying than food or 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, physically, relationally, and financially. 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. Use a journal; listen silently to God, write down what you hear; fellowship with God; meditate on biblical truth. Find biblical promises and use them as the foundation of affirmations that you recite regularly (2) Worship God (3) Read the Bible and a devotional. (4) Serve someone (5) Exercise (6) Reconnect with family and friends (7) Set goals for the week, month, and year. (8) Do something creative.