

Crossroads Church-Wide Fast

The New Testament church sometimes fasted when it sought God's will and needed the grace and strength to remain faithful to God's work.

Fasting is not a magical way to manipulate God into doing our will; it is not a way to get God to be an accomplice to our plans. Neither is fasting a spiritual way to lose weight or control others. Fasting clears us out and opens us up to intensely seeking God's will and grace in a way that goes beyond normal habits of worship and prayer. While fasting, we are one on one with God, offering him the time and attentiveness we might otherwise be giving to eating, shopping or watching television.

Fasting is an opportunity to lay down an appetite-an appetite for food, the media, or for shopping. This act of self-denial may not seem huge-it's just a meal or a trip to the mall-but it brings us face-to-face with the hunger at the core of our being. Fasting exposes how we try to keep empty hunger at bay and gain a sense of well-being by devouring creature comforts. Through self-denial we begin to recognize what controls us. Our small denials of the self show us just how little taste we actually have for sacrifice or time with God.

Fasting reminds us that we care about soul things. We care about the church, we care about the world, and we care about doing God's will. Thus we willingly set aside a little comfort so we can listen and attend to the voice and nourishment of God alone. For God can give us grace and comfort and nurture we cannot get on our own.

Guidelines

- Don't attempt a long fast without guidance; check with your doctor before fasting.
- Don't fast when you're sick, traveling, pregnant or nursing. People with diabetes, liver disease, kidney disease, ulcers, hypoglycemia, cancer and blood diseases should not fast.
- Begin fasting for one meal. Spend the time with God that you would normally be eating.
- Begin a fast after supper. Fast until supper the next day. This way you miss two, rather than three, meals.
- Don't break your fast with a huge meal. Eat small portions of food. The longer the fast, the more you need to break the fast gently.

What to do in the time set apart for fasting

Relax and breathe deeply. Place yourself in the presence of God. Offer yourself and your time to God by repeating Samuels's words "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." Or simply say, "Here I am."

Bring your desires to God. Ask him if this desire is in line with his will and his word for you and the church. Be still and listen. Offer your desires and prayers to God.

What to pray for

- Pray for the unity of the church.
- Pray for restoration of relationships.
- Pray for God to get the glory.
- Pray for Pastor Bill and his family.
- Pray for wisdom for the elder team.
- Pray for the spiritual growth of individual church members.
- Pray that God continues to make our church healthier and that He keeps using us to bless our community.

Spiritual Exercises

Fast one meal a day. Spend your meal time in prayer when you feel hungry, sit with Jesus in the wilderness and feed on the bread of heaven. Talk to Jesus about what his self-denial means to you.

Fast from media, sports, shopping, reading or use of the computer. Dedicate the time you now have to God. What feelings arise in you? What thoughts interrupt your prayer?

Make two lists: one of needs, the other wants. Ask God to show you where to fast from some of your wants. Offer to God the time you spend hankering after your wants.

Material taken from Adele Calhoun's Spiritual Disciplines Handbook.

For more information on fasting, see <http://www.cru.org/training-and-growth/devotional-life/personal-guide-to-fasting/>