

## **Prayer and Fasting**

**Fasting, combined with prayerfulness, is an intentional practice of self-denial in order to communicate with God. We refrain from food (or any other sort of activity, if chosen) in order to seek God on matters of deep concern.**

Both the Old and New Testaments refer to the practice (Jer 36:6, Acts 14:23, Acts 27:9, Ex 34:28, 2 Chron 20:3, Dan 6:18, Matt 6:16-18, Luke 2:37, etc.). Both the nation of Israel and the early church practiced prayer and fasting for significant events, in times of distress, mourning, or during times of decision. Although fasting can be an individual choice, a corporate fast signals a community's united concern and substantial desire for God's intervention, strength, direction, or mercy.

Having a dedicated time of prayer and fasting is not a way of manipulating God into doing our will. Rather, it is a way to focus on God, offering Him an attentiveness and humility beyond normal habits of worship and prayer. Fasting itself is a physical reminder to keep us mindful of our commitment to prayer. The denial of food and its accompanying discomfort is a small act of coming face-to-face with our humanness, our need for God to be God, or realization of what things satisfy our appetites. Fasting and prayer remind us that we are dependent on God.

### **Guidelines for fasting**

Do not abstain from food if you have a medical condition that makes fasting unwise.

Stay hydrated.

Plan your day so as to “not advertise” that you are fasting. This may mean changing activities that include groups or mealtimes.

You can tailor your fast, choosing to abstain from all food for an entire day, from just one meal, from one particular food group (such as protein), or for a shorter period of time.

If you have older children, think of how they might join the experience or learn about prayer and fasting.

### **Guidelines for prayer when fasting**

Make time to pray in quietness. Be still. Be alone, if you can, for a portion of your fast.

Ask God to make you aware of His presence through your fast, and listen for His reminders.

Worship Him. Read your Bible. Journal.

When you feel hunger, bring your thoughts back to Him.

Ask for your requests, and be attentive to His responses through what you notice, or what you believe He is speaking to you.