

A GUIDE TO FASTING FROM FOOD – Pastor Jacob George

What is fasting?

Christian fasting is more than denying ourselves food or something else of the flesh - it's a sacrificial lifestyle before God. In [Isaiah 58](#); we learn what a "true fast" is. It's not just a one-time act of humility and denial before God, it's a lifestyle of servant ministry to others. As Isaiah tells us, fasting encourages humility, loosens the chains of injustice, unties the chords of the yoke, frees the oppressed, feeds the hungry, provides for the poor, and clothes the naked. This concept of fasting isn't a one day thing - it's a lifestyle of servant living for God and others.

"Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am' ([Isaiah 58:8-9](#)).

According to Scripture, personal experience and observation, fasting and prayer can also effect change on a much grander scale. 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. He will heal our lives, our churches, our communities, our nation and world. Fasting and prayer can bring about a change in the direction of our nation, the nations of earth and the fulfillment of the Great Commission - this is powerful motivation in today's unsettled world.

For those who desire both inward and outward impact, humbling yourself before God through fasting is a good place to start. His power can be released in and through you by the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

In the book of Esther, the Jews were on the verge of destruction because of the evil conspiracy of Haman, one of the king's advisors. Haman was "filled" with wrath against a Jew named Mordecai because he did not "*bow or pay him homage*" (*Esther 3:5*). "*Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai*" (*Esther 3:6*).

Mordecai sought help from Queen Esther, who was his niece. Mordecai's request meant Esther would have to literally risk her life for it was very dangerous for her to approach the king without being summoned first. So, Esther called a fast.

"Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law, and if I perish, I perish!" (Esther 4:16).

Those 72 hours of fasting changed the history of the world. When Esther approached the king on behalf of her people, they became a nation not of defeat, annihilation, suffering and shame, but a nation of favor. They received honor and promotion . . . all because of three days of fasting and prayer.

You and I can help change the history of our own nation through prayer and fasting. Yes, we have become a world void of morality and truth. But we don't have to accept it! I want to challenge you to make a habit of regular prayer and fasting for our nation. Fast and pray for our church, for the Senior leadership, Pastors and staff. Fast and pray for our leaders. Fast and pray for our religious freedoms. Fast and pray for the multitudes who have been deceived by the enemy.

When the economy is in trouble . . . when we are worried about wars and hostile nations . . . when natural disasters take homes and lives, we are to call a solemn assembly and fast. We are the ambassadors of Christ and we can affect change.

In the book of Joel, God promises a latter day outpouring of His Spirit. *"And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28-29).*

But this great end time outpouring can only come through prayer and fasting. Joel 1:14 says, *"Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; Gather the elders And all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, And cry out to the LORD."* Will you join God's people in crying out for His Spirit? Your fasting and prayers can change history!

- **How to Begin – WHY FAST**

Start with a clear goal. Be specific. Why are you fasting? Do you need direction, healing, restoration of marriage or family issues? Are you facing financial difficulties? Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Pray daily and read the Bible. The primary Biblical reason to fast is to develop a closer walk with God. By taking our eyes off the things of this world, we can focus better on Christ. Fasting and prayer can restore the loss of your "first love" for the Lord and result in a more intimate relationship with Christ. Fasting is a biblical way to truly humble yourself in the sight of God (Psalm 35:13; Ezra 8:21). King David said, "I humble myself through fasting."

- **How to Prepare Spiritually**

Confess your sins to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of weakness. Forgive all who have offended you and ask forgiveness from those you may have offended (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3-4). Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ and reject the worldly desires that try to hinder you (Romans 12:1-2). Spend much time meditating on the Word and praying without ceasing.

- **Deciding how to Fast Safely**

You may have a physical problem that would make fasting unwise or dangerous. Also, if you are taking any type of medication, make sure to talk to your doctor before changing your regimen. Prudence and caution are in order. In spite of the safety and benefits of fasting, there are certain persons who should NEVER fast without professional supervision. For example:

- Persons who are physically underweight or emaciated.
- Persons who are prone to anorexia, bulimia or other behavioral disorders.
- Those who suffer weakness or anemia.
- Persons who have tumors, bleeding ulcers, cancer, blood diseases or who have heart disease.
- Those who suffer chronic problems with kidneys, liver, lungs, heart or other vital organs.
- Individuals who take insulin for diabetes or suffer any other blood sugar problem such as hyperglycemia.

- Women who are pregnant or nursing.

When you are assured that you are in good health, you are ready to begin your fast.

- **Deciding How Long**

You may fast for as long as you like. Use wisdom and pray for guidance. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you. **Beginners are advised to start slow.** Don't go from no fasting to attempting a weeklong. Start with one meal; see how it goes for a few days. Then try two meals, and work your way up to a daylong fast.

Keep yourself hydrated at all times. Drink plenty of water and juices. Juice provides nutrients and sugar for the body to keep you operating, while also still feeling the effects from going without solid food. It is *not* recommended that you abstain from water during a fast of any length.

Remember to replace that time with Prayer and Meditating on the Word.

- **What to Expect**

When you fast your body detoxifies, eliminating toxins from your system. This can cause mild discomfort such as headaches and irritability during withdrawal from caffeine and sugars. And naturally, you will have hunger pains. Limit your activity and exercise moderately. Take time to rest. Fasting brings about miraculous results. You are following Jesus' example when you fast. Spend time listening to praise and worship. Pray as often as you can throughout the day. Get away from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mind set on seeking God's face. As you enter this time of heightened spiritual devotion, be aware that Satan will do everything he can to pull you away from your prayer and Bible reading time. When you feel the enemy trying to discourage you, immediately go to God in prayer and ask Him to strengthen your resolve in the face of difficulties and temptations.

- **How to end the fast.**

Don't overeat when the time comes to end your fast. Because your digestive system has most likely reduced enzyme production and affected the mucus lining in your stomach, overeating or ingesting certain foods too quickly may cause you to experience health problems such as nausea, stomach aches or diarrhea. Introducing regular foods slowly and strategically will help you break a fast safely, without disrupting your digestive system.

Break your fast with these foods which are gentle on your stomach: Melons (especially watermelon), apples, pears, yogurt, dates, juice or soup.

Wait for some time before eating solid foods.

Begin eating solid food gradually; eat small portions or snacks.

Credit for some of the above points: Bill Bright and Jentezen Franklin