

GoDeeper



CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION WITH YOUR SMALL GROUP, FAMILY, OR IN YOUR PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY TIME.

21 Days of Prayer and Fasting | Pastor Steve Wells | 01.10.2020
Replay message at: <http://www.northpointeFL.org/messages>

This week Pastor Steve has invited us to join in a Church-wide fast. Spend 21 Days in Prayer and Fasting. Cru has great information on Prayer and Fasting. Check out some information from the article below, be sure to visit the link for the complete article. <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/prayer-and-fasting.html>

God considers fasting important. The Bible contains 92 passages referring to it. Many of our heroes of the faith, including Moses, Elijah, Esther, Nehemiah, Daniel and Paul, fasted at crucial points in their journeys with God. Fasting played an important role in the life and ministry of Jesus. After being anointed by the Holy Spirit, He was led into the wilderness to fast and pray for 40 days (**Matthew 4:2**). During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave specific instructions on how to fast (**Matthew 6:16-18**). Jesus knew the followers He addressed would fast.

But what is the purpose of fasting in the life of the believer today?

- **Showing Humility and Repentance**
 - Demonstrate humility before the Creator of the universe. God responds when we diligently and wholeheartedly seek Him--**2 Chronicles 7:14**
 - Sometimes this involves confessing and turning away from sin--**Jonah 3:5-10** , **Psalm 35:13**
- **Seeking God's Face More Fully**
 - A second reason we fast is to respond to God's love toward us. It is as if we are saying to God, "Because You are righteous and holy, and loved me enough to send Jesus to die for my sins, I want to get to know You more intimately." **Jeremiah 29:13** says we will find God when we seek Him with all our hearts. When we deliberately set aside time for fasting, we show God we want to seek Him.
- **Asking for Something You Desire**
 - Sometimes we fast to demonstrate our sincerity to God concerning something we truly desire. **Ezra 8:21-31** Although fasting may show our sincerity, it does not guarantee we will receive what we desire. Maybe our request is not within God's will. Sometimes we ask with the wrong motives. David fasted for seven days when God struck with illness the child Bathsheba conceived by David. David repented of his adultery with Bathsheba and of the murder of her husband. He humbled himself, fasted and prayed, but the child still died (**2 Samuel 12:15-18**). Through fasting, we can demonstrate the sincerity and earnestness of our requests.
- **Fasting to Know God's Will**
 - Seeking God's direction is different from asking Him for something we desire. When the Israelites were in conflict with the tribe of Benjamin, they sought God's will through fasting. The entire army fasted until evening, and they asked God, "Shall we go up again to fight against the Benjamites, our fellow Israelites, or not?" (**Judges 20:1-28**, New International Version).
 - **Acts 13:1-3** implies that church leaders were seeking God's direction for their ministry through prayer and fasting. The Holy Spirit responded by saying, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." In both instances, people fasted and prayed to determine God's will.
- **Developing Discipline**
 - An important benefit of fasting is that it promotes self-control through disciplining the body--**1 Corinthians 9:27** Other reasons people in the Bible fasted include a need to be set free from demonic oppression--**2 Chronicles 20:3**, mourning--**1 Samuel 31:13**, healing the sick--**Psalm 35:13**, spiritual strength--**Matthew 4:2** and the appointment of elders in the church--**Acts 14:23**.
 - Losing weight is not the emphasis when fasting for spiritual reasons.

Fasting — Not Just for Biblical Times

- Fasting is not limited to the believers in the Bible. Most of the church's Reformers, including Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Knox, fasted. Knox fasted and prayed so much that Queen Mary said she feared his prayers more than all the armies of Scotland.
- John Wesley, the renowned English preacher, missionary and founder of Methodism, fasted twice weekly from dawn until late afternoon. Charles Finney, a revivalist of the 1800s, fasted regularly and would often go three days without eating when he felt any decline of spiritual power at his meetings.
- Bill Bright, the co-founder and former president of Cru, made it his practice to fast and pray. He believed it played a vital role in what God did through him and the ministry of Cru. Bright encouraged believers to fast, but he also warned of two common pitfalls:
 - We can become legalistic about fasting. It is essential to remember God loves us and is not displeased with us when we do not fast.
 - We can take pride in our fasting. To avoid this problem we focus on God's character and all He has done for us.
- Fasting is a commitment to seeking the Lord. It is not reserved for the self-righteous, but it is a privilege from which each of us can benefit.

How to Fast

Most people go without food during a diet or when they're too busy to eat, but this isn't biblical fasting. So what is biblical fasting? Our sincerity and attitude play important roles in biblical fasting.

- Before beginning, ask yourself three questions:
 - a. Am I confident that my desire to fast is God-given?
 - b. What are my spiritual motivations or goals for this fast?
 - c. Am I harboring any desire to impress others?
- When you are satisfied you have Godly motives, you're ready to begin. But you still may not know how to begin the fast or how long it should last.

A Tried and Tested Fast

This involves abstaining from all forms of food but not from water, and it commonly lasts 24 hours, from sunrise to sunrise. According to The Foods and Nutrition Encyclopedia, "For healthy individuals, no harm results from short-term fasting." The average healthy person can go without food between 21 and 40 or more days before the body begins to eliminate vital tissue (starvation).

Consult your physician before your fast if any of the following apply to you:

- You are planning a fast lasting longer than three days.
- You are under the care of a physician for any kind of disease.
- You struggle with anorexia or bulimia.
- You are pregnant.

Beginning the Fast

If you are fasting for the first time, you might begin by missing a meal or two. Over time, you can build up to a full day or more. Begin by refraining from solid food, but drink liquids. Water is the best.

How to Spend Time You Would Have Spent Eating

Fasting is not just about what you give up, it is about what you do with the time you would have spent eating. So set aside specific and significant time during your fast to worship and seek God. Many people begin this time by repenting of any sins the Holy Spirit brings to mind and asking for God's forgiveness. This is essential to ensure that sin is not hindering your communication with God.

Then plan time to make your requests known to God and to seek His will. Take breaks to study Scripture passages you have chosen. Don't rush your fellowship with God. Take time to listen. Keep a notebook and pen nearby to record the ideas, insights, directions and instructions He impresses on your mind. When you turn down the noise of everyday life by fasting, you can more easily hear God.

Breaking the Fast

The longer you fast, the more time the digestive organs need to reactivate before functioning at full speed. If you plan to fast only a day or two at a time, it is best to end the fast with a small glass of fruit juice as your first meal. Gradually introduce small amounts of easily digestible foods such as yogurt, soup, fresh fruit and cooked vegetables.

Remember, it is your attitude toward God and your walk with Him that is important, not how long you fast. God desires for you to love, obey, follow and enjoy Him. Deliberately abstaining from food is one way to demonstrate your commitment and sincerity in seeking Him.