



FASTING

Fasting is the wrestling with the flesh, with our physical bodies and with our coping mechanisms. By taking up our cross daily, we are putting down the heavy things of this world that act as distractions, picking up what God has actually called us to bear, and following where He leads. The act of dying to ourselves and picking up our cross to follow Jesus is sometimes easier said than done.

It can be easy to fall into the trap of distraction as we go from day to day. Whether it's work, school, kids, stress, social media, finances, relational challenges, or unexpected dilemmas and delays that pop up throughout the day, it can all become so overwhelming and completely time- and thought-consuming. With every distraction, it can be easy to slip into “autopilot” in our relationship with God. However, we were never meant to have a passive, neutral relationship with God.

Every now and then in our walk with Christ, we can greatly benefit from hitting the pause button on our day-to-day routine and hitting the refresh button in our spiritual lives. The best way to reset and refresh our spiritual lives and relationship with God is to set aside a designated time to intentionally seek the Lord through fasting and prayer.

Fasting is not a “get-fit-for-the-New-Year-quick” crash diet; it is an integral spiritual discipline that is meant to help us, as believers, take our focus off something for a period of time—food, social media, TV, etc.—and focus our time, attention, and hearts fully on Jesus.

By fasting, we are setting aside distractions, even necessities such as food, to stir up a deeper hunger for the Lord. Some signs that it might be time to intentionally fast and pray are when you find yourself heavy with a burden, stuck in a particular pattern of sin, being oppressed by

the enemy, seeking an answer or direction from God, or even when you just need a spiritual refreshing.

Fasting should reveal the raw state of our hearts. The purpose of fasting is not to lose something, but to gain something: a deeper, more intimate relationship with God.

Modern fasting is taught in various ways. However, fasting, by its definition, is the abstinence from food. I would argue that adding the distractions of the digital world on top of this is a needed addition. They didn't exist for most of human history. The distractions and temptations were physical, and you had to go somewhere and do something to engage with them. Today, most things are so close to home and readily available that it's even more important that we take a step back and seek God.

We have a page on our website with all the information and an intro video for context on the theme, as well as a simple overview below of the two different styles of fasting. Please feel free to adjust or mix and match to suit your context.

It's important for those with dietary requirements, eating disorders, or who are breastfeeding or pregnant to take this into consideration when fasting. It might be that changing what you're eating instead of not eating is more suitable. This is where the Daniel diet of plain/raw fruit and vegetables can be a great option.

Ultimately, it is important to seek the Lord in this. We are not trying to do this simply in our own strength. It's not about success or failure, or who can do the most extreme fast for the longest. It's about getting closer to God and laying our daily necessities on the altar, saying how much more important God is than those things.

Sunday 20th

Focus point: Feeding on God

As we begin this six-day journey of setting aside the things of this world that can become daily distractions, it is important that we posture our hearts to receive what God has for us over the coming days. Our attitude can set the tone for what we are ready and willing to receive, whether we realise it or not. Today, we are focusing on asking God to check our hearts and reveal anything that does not reflect Him.

This is a great moment to reflect on ourselves and get ourselves in order, ensuring our hearts are in the right place to fast. We need to be willing to set the right boundaries and habits in place to sustain us for the next two weeks. Keeping the goal in mind: to hear from the Lord and clear out anything that stands in the way of that. Pray this verse over yourself today: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10)

Heavenly Father, today I ask that You search my heart. Forgive me and rid me of everything that does not reflect You. Help me to set aside every distraction that does not point me back to You. My heart and my hands are open and ready to receive what You will speak to me over the coming days. I pray that as I keep my heart and mind focused on You, my relationship with You will become more intimate and personal. Help me to feed on You and receive from You as my Provider and Sustainer. I put all that comes up at Your feet. I need Your help. Take a moment to confess any sin you know of, and then we close by saying:

“We confess that we have sinned in thought, word and deed. We have not loved You with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. In Your mercy, forgive what we have been, help us to amend what we are, and direct what we shall be; that we may do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with You, our God. Amen.”

Monday 21st

Focus point: Enjoying His presence

As we step out of our comfort zone, it can feel really daunting. The time we normally spend on other things, combined with the hunger in our bellies, can be confronting. If we aren't careful, we can simply find other ways to distract ourselves. The greatest challenge is choosing to go to God in these times, giving Him space to speak and creating room in our agenda for Him. It's not just about trying to be more spiritual, but actually giving Him the biggest portion of our time. Whether it's going for a prayer walk, spending time in your Bible, going to a monastery, or simply spending extended time in worship, these are all great ways to help guide ourselves into His presence and enjoy being there. God's presence should be sweet. It should be something that meets us in the discomfort and gives us a reason to push through.

“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” (James 4:8 ESV)

We see in James this confidence: if we seek God, He will draw near. But it will require us to choose Him, to put aside our doubts and distractions, and also to purify our hearts. In His presence, humility and purification are a natural posture. But so are love, grace, and His power. So it's a trade. As we bring these things to Him, He will clothe us with the things He has for us. Take time today to intentionally seek His presence and spend time with Him in a way that works for you, using one of the suggestions listed above. Dear God, we want to thank You for Your goodness and grace to us. Help us to experience Your presence today, to be able to enjoy it, and to give You the time to really encounter You today. I thank You for what You have for me, and I can come as I am into Your presence.
In Jesus' Name, Amen

Tuesday 22nd

Focus point: Death of the flesh

Today is the day when things might really feel like a fight. The struggles and desires are coming up, along with temptations to give in, eat, or do something we chose to set aside. Today, from a place of knowing His presence, we choose to fight the flesh. To let it die. It's acknowledging the weaknesses and things that are coming up. It's seeing what controls us, and then being willing to give it over to God and remove its authority over our lives.

It will change us, and there may well be things we can't go back to. But by doing so, we are aligning with the power of God for change in our lives, allowing Him to refine us and make us more like Jesus.

Which means we are able to be moulded into who He created us to be and to fulfil the promises He has for us. Ephesians 2:10 is a great reminder: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Ultimately, the core of each of our purposes is to do one thing: to glorify Jesus in all that we do and to build up the body of Jesus. Today, our prayer is that each of us would have greater clarity, vision, and Jesus-centred motives about our purpose and how we fit within the greater story of God's kingdom. Today we pray that God will guide us into the right posture. We set our purpose and giftings, our passions, struggles and coping mechanisms, and our selfish pursuits on the altar, asking You to reveal Your plans and ideas. Help me to look beyond myself, to serve and love others, and to root my identity not in what I do but in who I am in You. In Jesus Name Amen!

Wednesday 23rd

Focus point: Encountering God

As we come to the end of ourselves, this is the best place to meet God. It's a personal journey as well as something which happens in the gathering of believers. But it is also a choice. Are we willing to go up the proverbial mountain to seek God? And are we willing, during these moments and in our weakness, to allow God's power to break through?

Today's topic goes way deeper than simply giving space. John Mark Comer says that when it comes to fasting, there are three stages: encountering ourselves, encountering our enemy, and encountering God. So it's by going through the first two that we are able to experience the third. It's also in this place where God moves at His best because we are most open to allowing Him to move. So rather than getting frustrated by our bodies and the warfare around us, it's the moment to lean in. To invite God to speak. To move.

So today, as we are in a place of weakness, battle and distraction, this is the moment when we need to choose to encounter God. We put these things aside while also asking God for an encounter: a word, a picture, or an outpouring of the gifts. The best response to this is worship. Worship is the choice to give God glory, to face towards Him in a posture of surrender. As it says in Romans 12:1: "...In view of God's mercy... offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship." So today, in the midst of it all, we know, God, that You are here with us. Your promises are that You will not leave us. Help us today to choose to wade deeper, beyond the fights and battles and distractions, and meet You. Help us to keep our focus right. As we worship You, we surrender all of ourselves.

In Jesus' Name, Amen!

Thursday 24th

Focus point: Divine alignments

When we come to a place of surrender, these are the best places to allow God to speak and reveal things to us: His plans and the next steps we can take in obedience. We see in Acts 13 that it was through prayer and fasting that the Holy Spirit set apart Paul and Barnabas. I'm sure we all have promises and words over our lives, but it's in these places that we seek to understand how we align with Heaven's agenda. How does He see these things working out and coming to pass? It is through prayer and fasting that we see spiritual realities change in the New Testament. We see this in the account of Jesus' disciples failing to cast out a demon. For this spiritual reality to change, we need to pray and fast.

But for His reality to be made evident on earth, as it says in the Lord's Prayer: "Your kingdom come, Your will be done"... "on earth as it is in heaven."

God has plans and realities in store, but we need to align with them. We need to be willing to have our vision and direction changed. The reason we write this today is because if we have been denying ourselves and picking up our cross, we are able to realign. To have our hearts changed. To allow His Spirit to align our vision with His.

Secondly, it's so important that we also take the things we hear this week and seek confirmation with others. Words, pictures, and leading are great, but they must be aligned with Scripture and with those we walk with in life. But God, we come to You today, seeking that You would help align us with Your plans for our lives. That we would be people who let You shape us. Thank You for Your goodness.

In Jesus Name Amen

Friday 25th

Focus point: Unity and maturity

From the beginning, God's vision for humanity has centered on family. He desires to live in unity with us as His children and for our families to reflect that unity on earth. But also that these bonds would grow strong and mature. That as His body we would grow together. Yet, the enemy works tirelessly to divide and fracture relationships. Regardless of your current situation, today is an opportunity to place God at the center of your home. Whether reconciliation, forgiveness, or healing is needed, trust that God can restore and strengthen your family. Let's bring our families before Him, knowing there is nothing too broken for Him to heal.

Lord, I thank You for my family, even when we don't always agree. I ask that Your hand guide each of us, especially [list family members by name]. Bring peace, unity, and healing where it's needed. Help me to serve and love my family in ways that honor You.

I also lift up my loved ones who are far from You. As I've experienced salvation and a relationship with You, my heart longs for them to know You too. I thank You that Your love for them is greater than mine and that You desire a relationship with them even more than I do.

Jesus, I pray for [list loved ones by name] today. Stir their hearts and draw them to You. Surround them with believers who can be a light in their lives. Help me to reflect Your love and grace in my interactions with them. Protect them from the enemy's lies and distractions, and let Your presence be undeniable in their lives. I trust in Your timing and thank You for the work You're doing in their hearts.

In Jesus' name, Amen.