



Fasting & Prayer

INTRODUCTION

“You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”

Jeremiah 29:13

“Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!”

1 Chronicles 16:11

*“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

Hey Church!

Over the past seven years, God has done incredible things in the life of our church. Every time I pause to reflect on all He has done, I'm filled with both excitement for the future and deep gratitude for His goodness. One thing I've learned is that as long as we have breath, God is still writing our story. He's using every circumstance of our lives for our good and Himself glory. However, far too often, we structure our lives in ways that make it difficult to see His hand at work or hear His voice as He leads us.

Which leads me to a series of question for you:

What if God is trying to turn your life and your attention in His direction?

Would you hear or sense Him moving?

What if God is trying to take our Church on a journey that we never thought possible?

Here's what I know: as we begin these 21 days of fasting and prayer that we're about to embark on together, it's not just possible—it's highly probable—that God will speak into our lives and into the life of our Church, turning our hearts and minds toward His will. The only question is this: *Will we make ourselves available, listen for His voice, and respond obediently?*

We are excited to begin our 21-day fast on February 28, in conjunction with *Gather25*—a powerful event where the global church will unite in prayer and worship, all at once. For the first time in history, Christians from every continent will come together simultaneously to worship and to pray for the nations to know and worship God. During this historic gathering, we will hear from leaders of the persecuted church and many other bible teachers.

The purpose of these 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting is to seek God as He leads us into the future. One thing we always say at Connection is that we believe that the Local Church is God's plan A for reaching the world and our greatest desire is to be directly in the middle of His plans.

Our prayer is that God would move our hearts as a family to deepen our roots in this body, in this community and globally. That we would be led to invest in the mission and vision He is putting before us to see this generation reached with the hope of the Gospel! We believe that our mission of *making disciples and multiplying churches among all nations*, will happen most effectively when our body is invested in God's heart for the nations and sees themselves as integral parts of His plans; working together to accomplish the mission and vision He has given our church.



So, as we prepare for this years 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, let's come before the Lord with expectation and humility. Let's be completely available to what the Lord wants to do in our hearts individually and corporately. As we pray, let's decide first to be obedient to whatever He asks from us and then be adamant about following through as He speaks.

We want to be known as a Church that listens to God and does what He says!

This introduction document will help you as you prepare for these 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting! It will teach you what fasting is biblically and what it is not. I want to encourage you to approach this fast from a biblical perspective and to do it with your Connect Group, depending on your community for support and prayer!

We eagerly wait for what the Lord will do in us and through us during these 21 days that we are setting aside to seek His face and His plan for our body, our city and our world. See you on February 28, at 8pm!

Heart & Soul -

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'MP' in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Page

Lead Pastor

Connection Church Rincon

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people, and His incomparably great power for us who believe.

// Ephesians 1:17-19a //



Fasting Guide

What does the Bible teach about fasting?

Simply put, biblical fasting involves abstaining from eating (and/or drinking) for spiritual purposes.

In the Old Testament, Israel celebrated certain annual fasts, the most prominent being the Day of Atonement. There were also occasional fasts tied to specific historical events, sometimes individual and sometimes corporate. Here are a few of the occasions for fasting: at a time of grief (I Sam. 31:13; Nehemiah 1:4), at a time of repentance (I Sam 7:6; I Kings 21:27), as an expression of humility (Ezra 8:21; Psalm 69:10), and as an expression of a need for God's guidance and help. What all of these fasts share in common is that they were an expression of dependence on God and a turning back to Him.

Several New Testament passages give us insight about fasting.

Fasting teaches us that its God's Word that truly nourishes us:

Matthew 4:1-4 records the only example of Jesus fasting, just prior to His being tempted in the wilderness. He faced temptation with these words, *"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."* Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 8:3-5 which talks about the 40 years Israel spent in the wilderness, depending daily on manna to sustain them. He says that God humbled them and let them be hungry in order to teach them to depend on God's Word to sustain them. By His example of fasting, Jesus reminds us that food alone can't sustain us. We need to be nourished by God's Word.

Fasting teaches us that doing God's will sustains us:

John 4:31-35 records Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well. When the disciples return, they encourage Jesus to eat. He responds by saying, *"I have food to eat that you know nothing about."* Then He adds, *"My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."* Again, Jesus reminds us that food alone is not enough. We are sustained by doing God's will.

Fasting teaches us that Jesus Himself sustains us:

In John 6:48-50 Jesus says, *"I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die."* We see this pictured symbolically in the bread and the cup of the Lord's Supper. Jesus is the source of eternal life. Fasting is literally feasting on Jesus.

Jesus assumed that fasting would be a part of His disciple's spiritual life. In Matthew 6:16-18, He says, *"When you fast,"* not *"if you fast."* He warns us not to fast to impress people, but to be near to the heart of God.



What is the purpose of fasting?

Fasting is designed to intensify our dependence on God by weakening our dependence on food. How does it do that?

Fasting reveals and heals our dependence on food (and other things) to fill the discomfort caused by low self-esteem, unsatisfying work, unloving relationships, uncontrollable circumstances, etc. It removes the false peace that comes from the pleasure of eating or filling our schedules with busy work or useless entertainment.

Richard Foster says, “More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us. This is a wonderful benefit to the true disciple who longs to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We cover up what is inside us with food and other good things, but in fasting these things surface. If pride controls us, it will be revealed almost immediately. David writes, *“I humbled my soul with fasting”* (Psalm 69:10). Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, fear—if they are within us, they will surface during fasting.”

Fasting teaches us that we can go without getting what we want and still survive.

Fasting can free us from having to “get” what we want. Therefore, fasting can teach moderation or self-control, not only in relation to food, but in other areas as well. It teaches contentment. (1 Timothy 6:6)

Fasting expresses and deepens our hunger for God.

Fasting reminds us that we are sustained *“by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”* (Matt. 4:4). Food does not sustain us; God sustains us. In Christ, *“All things hold together”* (Colossians 1:17). Therefore, in our experiences of fasting, we are abstaining from food or other activities and feasting on God’s Word and God’s presence.

Fasting must always, first and foremost, center on God. It must be about Him.



Step 1: Clarify the purpose of your fast

As a church, we are fasting to gain perspective on where God is leading us and how we can better position ourselves to honor Him with everything we do. We are seeking God's heart for clear direction going into a new year and for Him to receive glory in everything we strive to accomplish. Our heart is that you would join us in endeavoring to seek God's heart for our body.

Why are you fasting? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for **your** prayer and fasting. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically. Fasting is God-led and God-initiated. That means that He fuels a desire to fast and pray. He loves it when we fast.

Step 2: Specify the kind of fast you will do

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus implied that all of His followers should fast. (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14,15) For Him it was a matter of when believers would fast, not if they would do it. Before you fast, decide the following up front:

- How long you will fast - one meal, one day, one week, several weeks, certain days (beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts)?
- The type of fast God wants you to undertake - discussed in the Types of Fasts section below.
- How much time each day you will devote to prayer and God's Word.

Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

Step 3: Prepare your heart, mind, and body for fasting

Fasting is not a spur-of-the-moment thing. It is planned. We must prepare. The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Un-confessed sin can hinder your prayers.

There are several things you can do to prepare your heart:

- Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision.



Step 3: Prepare your heart, mind, and body for fasting

(continued)

- Do not rush into your fast. Prepare your body. Eat smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high fat and sugary foods. Eating raw fruit and vegetables prior to your fast is helpful. Physical preparation makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so that you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer.
- Prepare your heart and mind: Remember that God is your Father and He loves you and is for you.
- Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3,4). Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you.
- Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1, 2). Meditate on the attributes of God, His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others. (Psalm 48:9,10; 103:1-8, 11-13)
- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart. (Hebrews 11:6)
- Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit. (Galatians 5:16,17)
- Finally, and of deep importance, Jesus instructs us in Matthew to not let others know about your fasting. The strict details of your fast should not be something you constantly talk about to others. It should remain between you and God.



Types of Fasts

Now that we have explored the Old and New Testament teaching and instruction on fasting, we can proceed to discuss specific kinds of fasts.

Lets begin with the helpful words of Richard Foster in, *Celebration of Discipline*:

“As with all the Disciplines, a progression should be observed; it is wise to learn to walk well before we try to run.”

Biblical fasting almost always concerns food. Since the purpose of fasting, as we saw above, is to focus on God, to humble ourselves and to remind ourselves that we are sustained by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, then the task in fasting is connecting our “going without” to “hungering for God.” This takes time, focus and prayer. Please do not expect to be an “expert” at fasting right away. Fasting is a discipline that can take a very long time to understand well. Also, do not let this fact deter you or intimidate you.

Fasting is not unlike the writings in scripture. It is simple enough for a child to understand and enjoy, and yet deep enough for the scholar to devote his/her entire life to.

Abstaining from certain types of foods (*meat, sweets, etc.*) - Daniel 10:3

This type is a good one for beginners to fasting or those with health needs and special or restrictive diets.

Choose to abstain from something like breads, sweets, sodas, coffee, or even red meat. Perhaps spend some time reading through Daniel’s fast in Daniel chapter 1 and chapter 10. Stick to only fruits and vegetables like he did or something similar.

Determine the timing and duration of your fast and begin. You may choose to go without this specific type of food on only certain days like Fridays, or you may go without during the weekdays only or perhaps every day. Finally, choose the duration of your fast. This fast is 21 days (February 28 - March 20) but that does not mean you must go without for all of the 21 days. Determine the timing and duration ahead of time and stick to it. Pray through this entire process.

Abstaining from all food - Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9

This kind of fast is more difficult but can be broken up by timing and duration. This seems to be the most prevalent of the fasts we see in the Bible. It is also the most intimidating, but refuse to let it scare you.



Fasting from all food is not scary if you determine beforehand when you will do so and for how long. Here are some ideas:

- Start slowly. Begin with fasting for only a part of a day (lunch, or lunch and dinner). Do this for one day a week, or perhaps three days a week. You determine the timing and duration. Take a step of faith. Fasting is risky and involves our faith.
- Next, try fasting from food but not beverages. This means that according to your timing and duration, you would not eat any solid foods but only water, juices, smoothies, or perhaps simple soup broths.
- Do this for the first one or two weeks. Devote the time that you normally would eat to Scripture reading and prayer. Focus on Jesus' statements about food.
- Next, try a 24-hour fast. This means that you get up and eat a good breakfast and drink only water or juice until the following breakfast the next day. Set aside specific time, during normal meal times if possible, to pray and seek God.
- Finally, you may progress to a two or three day fast. For some, progression may lead to a multi-day, even multi-week fast. But remember the purpose of your fast.

Choosing your fasting plan is a very personal decision. We are all at different places in our walk with God and our spirituality should never be a cause for comparison or competition. There is nothing more *"inherently spiritual"* about one type of fast as opposed to another. Your personal fast should present a level of challenge to it, but know your body, know your options, and most importantly, seek God in prayer about this and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do. It's also important to not let what you eat or do not eat become the focus of your fast. This is a time to disconnect enough with your regular patterns and habits in order to connect more closely to God.

If you do not choose to fast, or no matter what kind of fast you choose, seek God with us in prayer.

We will break our fast together on March 20 at our final prayer and worship gather!

See the next page for a schedule of events for the 2025 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting.



2025 _ 21 Days of Fasting & Prayer Schedule:

February 9 - Fasting instructions available on Church Center.

February 23 - Fasting Journals journals available.

February 28 - Gather 25 (Church gathering - Friday 8pm -12am). The church will be open and streaming Gather 25 until Saturday the 29th at 9pm. 21 Days of prayer and fasting will launch.

March 6 - First worship and prayer night.

March 13 - Second worship and prayer night.

March 20 - Last worship and prayer night/ break fast.