

# **Fasting Basics**

*“Fasting Forward towards Easter 2019”*

Fasting is an extremely powerful means of laying hold of the things of God “that are exceedingly abundantly beyond what we ask or think,” but is often misunderstood or misapplied by its practitioners. The most common misapplication is to use it as a way of somehow acting upon God with a view to getting what we want for ourselves or our loved ones. Many Christians see it as a more powerful method of making God do what they think He would not ordinarily do. Others see it as a means of manifesting greater piety, believing this show of sacrifice is the currency to be used to gain God’s favor. These misunderstandings lead to all kinds of problems in those who practice fasting, and at worst, can be harmful, especially when done in a legalistic way (e.g. “Will I lose favor if I break my fast an hour early? etc).

## **A way of approaching fasting**

One way of looking at fasting is to think in terms of the parts of us that we feed or starve. God desires to fill our minds, hearts and bodies with Himself-His grace. Unfortunately, instead of feeding our hunger (for friendship, stimulation, meaning, joy, confidence, peace, comfort, strength etc.) with the grace of God, we as humans, tend to satisfy our longings and lacks with things that are substitutes for God. These may take the form of running to human comfort and relationships to alleviate loneliness, turning to social media and entertainment to forget boredom, emptiness and pain, and indulging the flesh to just feel good.

Yet when Paul charged Timothy to “be strong in the grace” of God, he was actually pointing to a greater, more supernatural empowering that was meant to fill and energize these places of our humanity. Fasting makes room for this inflow of God’s power into our soul by our not turning to fleshly means of feeding and filling the soul, but opening our hearts to the inflow of the Spirit’s power and presence. It is in our weakness that we wait on God to fill us so that His strength is made perfect in weakness. In doing so, the Holy Spirit is able to cleanse our minds, bring focus to our hearts, and bring the shape of our listening faculty to be in tune with the softer and more powerful whispers of the Spirit.

## **Fasting what you tend to feed on in place of God.**

For many people, food is what comes naturally to mind. But for many, what may be more relevant and effective is to fast the thing that merely assuages soul-emptiness, and to invite God to be the One to fill those places. So you may choose to fast social media, entertainment, excessive talking, certain patterns of alleviating discomfort, loneliness or boredom, magazines, music, TV, the news.

Biblical fasting, simply stated, is the refraining from food or anything in substitution for God's grace that we may have hitherto fed our soul on as a means of seeking God with greater clarity and effectuality. Scripture speaks of this discipline as a means by which doors open, miracles come to pass, and the tender touch of God is felt upon the lives of His children. Fasting can help to release the anointing, the favor and the blessing of God in the life of a Christian. We would like to invite you to consider joining your fellow brothers and sisters at VCF in a church-wide fast during Lent in preparation for Easter, believing that God will use it mightily to lift you up individually and our church body as a whole!

### **Time-Line for VCF Fasting this year:**

- #1) Lent Season – Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup>
- #2) Prayer Gatherings – Sundays at 9am & 5pm, every other Friday (3/8, 3/22, 4/5, 4/19)
- #3) Immerse Night of Worship – Friday, March 29<sup>th</sup> at 7pm
- #4) Holy Week Prayer Meeting – Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm
- #5) Good Friday Foot Washing with L.A. Christian Health Centers – Friday, April 19<sup>th</sup>
- #6) Easter Celebration – Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup>

## **So Why Should We Fast? – Some Key Points!**

### **1). Fasting for breakthrough**

Psalm 42 – Fasting can bring one into a deeper, more intimate and powerful relationship with the Lord. When food is eliminated from a person's diet, his or her spirit becomes uncluttered by the things of this world and can grow keenly sensitive to the things of God. Deep calls unto deep.

### **2). Fasting from strongholds/ spirit of heaviness/ healing**

Matt 17:20-21 – Story of a father who had a demon-possessed son. Though Jesus had given the disciples power to cast out evil spirits and heal every disease, they couldn't cure the boy. Jesus later recalls that this kind of possession could only be conquered through prayer and fasting.

### **3). Fasting for Family & God's blessings/ protection**

God knows there is never a convenient time to fast. Here's why now is a great time to consider. You are able to set out the course for the rest of the year -- "Faith Catalyst." When you fast at the beginning of the year and pray, you release the principle found in Matt 6:33 – "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Blessings can happen for you and your family throughout the entire year! As a church, we've decided to coincide start of fast with lent season this year.

## **What Happens When We Enter a Fast**

- Fasting helps keep you sensitive to His Spirit, enabling you to live Holy.
- Fasting can often prepare you for a new anointing.
- Satan gets powerfully disturbed and defeated when you fast. The devil knows fasting releases God's power.
- When you hunger for God, He will fill you.
- Fasting stirs a hunger in your spirit that goes deeper than a temporary hunger you experience in your flesh.
- Fasting brings us to a desperate place with God again. We must desire Him more than food or drink.
- Victories of eternal worth are generally not won in public, but in private.
- Fasting can break a "spirit of poverty" from your life
- Health & healing can and often follows fasting.
- Fasting can also help overcome sexual addictions and demonic powers.
- The rewards of fasting often come after the fast, though from time to time, answers can come during the fast itself.
- Fasting parents can experience God's hand redeeming backslidden children.
- One person fasting is powerful, but when a group of people begin to fast, it is multiplied strength. It is multiplied power.
- When the Holy Spirit calls you to fast, He is preparing you for what is ahead.
- Fasting helps place you in the mainstream of God's priorities.
- Anytime you fast, it is a hunger strike against hell.
- You should enter a fast seriously, having repented of any known sins.

## **Types of Food Fasts (3 Basic Types)**

### **The Absolute Fast**

An absolute fast is extreme and should be done only for a very short period of time with no food, no water (no more than 1-3 days at most). Depending on your health, this fast should be attempted only with medical consultation and supervision.

### **The Normal Fast**

On a normal fast, you typically go without food of any kind for a certain number of days. You do drink water, clear broth and juices in order to maintain your strength.

### **The Partial Fast**

A partial fast usually involves giving up particular foods and drink for an extended period of time. The most commonly used example of a partial fast is found in the book of Daniel. Skipping breakfast and lunch and eating solid foods only after sun-down is another example. Many variations of partial fasts exist – follow your convictions as God leads you on how best to construct the right "fast" for you.

## **Fasting and Spiritual Warfare**

Many people do not realize that part of why fasting is potentially so powerful is that it opens up the spiritual realm and may bring us into direct conflict with spiritual forces. This may explain why for many people, in the first few days of fasting they may experience, discouragement, distraction, a greater surfacing of self-doubt and doubts about God, resistance in the circumstances surrounding them. There may even be more temptation to sinning, prompting them to feel *less* spiritual, rather than to feel more godly. This should not prevent us from fasting, for if we persevere, God will give power increasingly as we wait upon Him. (Isaiah 40:30, 31) and bring us to another level of faith and sensitivity. It is in connection with this point that we strongly encourage you to join the scheduled prayer gatherings and worship night.

## **Length of Fasts**

The duration of fasts can vary. There are significant numbers we find in the Bible, which include the following: (just to name a few examples)

- 3 days fast (Esther when Jewish annihilation threatened: Esther 4-7)
- 7 days fast (King Saul and his son's bones buried: 1 Samuel 31: 13;1)
- 21 days fast (Daniel while mourning, before vision came: Daniel 10:1-3)
- 40 days fast (Moses receives 10 Commandments: Exodus 34: 27)
- (Jesus being tempted by Satan: Mathew 4:2)
- Half / Full-day fasts (Hannah, King Darius, Paul, apostles, prophets, etc).

The type of fast and the length of time you choose to fast should depend on your circumstances. There are times when the Lord may impress you to go on a longer fast. A Daniel Fast, eliminating meat, bread and sweets for 21 days, is a fast just about anyone can handle. If eliminating certain foods or meals means something to you, it will mean something to God.

## **Tips for Fasting**

- 1) Remember if the fast doesn't mean anything to you, it won't mean anything to God. So please pray into how God would want you to construct your fast.
- 2) Fasting is a continual prayer before God. He sees your sacrifice.
- 3) Fasting is likened to "spring-cleaning" for your body. Fasting can be a royal road to healing for anyone who agrees to take it for recovery and regeneration of the body, mind and spirit. Medically speaking it is very healthy as well.
- 4) Talk to mature believers who've fasted before you consider starting your own!

### **Additional Book recommendation:**

Fasting, by Jentezen Franklin, 2008 (Opening the door to a deeper, more intimate, more powerful relationship with God).