

## A SEASON OF FASTING

America is at a point of great risk and has no real hope apart from the mercy of God. The amount of prayer reaching heaven today is higher than I have ever seen it because the future of our nation is bleaker than ever. Thus, recognition in the church has turned to 2 Chronicles 7:14 like never before.

This is understanding that it is God's people who must repent before God will move to heal the land. To assist in prayer, Scripture teaches us to fast in order to accelerate our drawing nearer to God and having Him draw near to us. That is why we are entering into a corporate fast at this season.

Fasting is simply a physical expression of our spiritual hunger and our longing for God. Before we can fast though, it is essential to get a vision for it. Why do we fast? What is our pursuit? What do we gain by fasting?

Without a vision, fasting will become something to be done only occasionally. Instead, we want to institute it as a normal part of our weekly routine. Fasting is more than a suggestion; it is a discipline to become intricately woven into our lifestyle of prayer.

In the Book of Joel – Chapters 1 and 2 – the Lord is directing a fast. “... **turn and keep on coming to Me with all your heart ...**” (vs. 12) – “**Rend your hearts and not your garments and return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness; and He revokes His sentence of evil ...**” (vs. 13) – “**Blow the trumpet in Zion; set apart a fast – a day of restraint and humility; call a solemn assembly. Gather the people, sanctify the congregation...**” (Vs.15-16).

Fasting is a time to set aside where we do without “something”, which is generally difficult for us. The “something” can be food or anything that comes between us and God like an idol or that takes up unnecessary time from our relationship with Him. It is a time for arresting the desires of the flesh and for taking on a spirit of humility.

Typically, fasting is about the giving up of food. If it is a food-fast – it might be to take liquids only; it can be to fast one or two meals per day with liquids in between or it might be that just specific foods are eliminated for the period of fasting.

In this day and age there are many things that can place a wedge between us and our God. If not food, fasting can be about putting down hobbies, games, TV, Internet, or any other thing that demands more attention of us than spending time with the Lord. Only the Holy Spirit knows what the best fast is for each of us. Ask Him, recognizing that whatever He might call you to fast, the grace to carry us through comes from Him.

Fasting is not only about putting down something; it is also about picking up. It is a time to replace the time that was usually filled by eating, surfing the net, etc. with reading of the Word, praying, quiet time with the Lord, or perhaps serving Him in a new capacity.

Joel 2 goes on to tell us that when the people fasted, repented, and prayed in sincerity of heart “**Then was the Lord jealous for His land and had pity on His people.**”(vs.18) The Lord speaks to the land and says, “**Fear not ...**” to the beasts of the field, “**Be not afraid ...**” to the people He says, “**Be glad ... I will restore or replace for you the years that the locust has eaten – And you shall know that I the Lord am your God and there is none else.**”(Vs. 18-27)

## The Three Most Common Food Fasts Are:

- **Water** – this fast is often supplemented with tea
- **Juice** – A juice fast is 100% juice of fruits and vegetables. V8 heated up, with a few spices is a good change of pace in this fast. Remember to not choose only acidic juices, such as orange and tomato. The lining of your stomach will appreciate the apple juice as well.
- **Daniel fast** – The Daniel fast is often done as ‘no meats, no sweets’. But, in reading Daniel 1, many people will choose to do this fast as only fruits and vegetables and water, i.e. no breads, pastas, milk, meats or sweets. For those with heavy workloads or those who can’t afford to lose any weight, a protein shake fast is recommended. Having a protein shake and occasional vegetables can create a good fast that is easy to sustain for a long period of time. Go ahead and be creative! It all counts in God’s economy.

## Practical Tips on Fasting

**Ease into and out of a fast.** Many people will try to fast by eating normally, taking one day to fast and then breaking it. It is fine to do this but if you want to establish a lifestyle of fasting, habits have to change in this area. Depending on the length of the fast you choose, ease into a fast by eating only fruits and vegetables for a meal or two before starting and ease out of a fast the same way.

Exercise. This may seem odd to emphasize, but to truly establish a lifestyle of fasting, a habit of aerobic exercise on the non-fasting days is needed. You will also appreciate exercise because long fasts and a lifestyle of fasting will cause your metabolism to drop. Therefore, exercise is great, because it boosts metabolism.

**Choose healthy foods.** If you are doing a water fast, add a bit of lemon or honey to the water for a little healthy boost of energy. Juice fasts: only drink 100% juice; V8 can also be warmed up and drunk like a tomato soup. A green tea is wonderful for your body as you fast, because it helps with the detoxification process. It is also helpful for those who are addicted to caffeine, as green tea is caffeinated. However, it is best to try and break caffeine addictions before fasting.

**Your body will detoxify.** Depending on the intensity and length of your fast, your body will switch into detoxification mode, eliminating many poisons and waste products. Because of bad breath, gum and extra teeth brushing sessions are a good idea for the sake of friends. Because of this process, it is essential to drink a lot of water and fluids. You want to flush out your system.

**Consult your body.** Remember to pay attention to what your body is telling you. Sustain your body with frequent small ‘meals’. That is, continually sip juice, eat several small meals of vegetables, and so on. Drink a lot of water! Set goals for yourself with how much water you want to drink in a day and carry around a water bottle with you. Getting dehydrated is not a goal with fasting.

**Set Goals.** Why are you fasting? What are you going to specifically pray for? Who are you going to pray for? Set Goals for bible reading and study. Maybe you want to read through the New Testament. Challenge yourself and give yourself something to pursue on this fast. Fill up your extra time by spending time with the Lord.

**Get some vision!** Search out the scripture, meditate on Matthew 9:14-17, listen to teaching on fasting. Don't let the lack of vision be an excuse for not fasting. Throw yourself into this lifestyle, create a habit, choose a day of the week and fast.