

DAY OF FASTING AND PRAYER

By Pastor Titus B. Stewart

WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that is taught in the Bible. Jesus expected His followers to fast, and He said that God rewards fasting. Fasting, according to the Bible, means to voluntarily reduce or eliminate your intake of food for a specific time and purpose.

"When you give up eating, don't put on a sad face like the hypocrites. They make their faces look sad to show people they are giving up eating. I tell you the truth, those hypocrites already have their full reward. So, when you give up eating, comb your hair and wash your face. Then people will not know that you are giving up eating, but your Father, whom you cannot see, will see you. Your Father sees what is done in secret, and he will reward you." Matthew 6:16-18 (NCV).

WHY FAST?

There are many good reasons, and even health benefits, for fasting. However, our "Me Being Revived, Restored and Refreshed" Fasting Schedule on 01/09/2023 – 01/29/2023 for the 21 Days of Transformation.

Fasting is for three primary reasons:

1. Fasting gives you more time for prayer. You can use the time you'd normally spend eating as time in prayer for what God wants to do among us during this transformational period.

In the Bible, fasting is always connected with prayer.

"While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So, after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off." Acts 13:2-3 (NIV)

Fasting demonstrates the depth of your desire when praying for something. It shows you that you are serious enough about your prayer request to pay a personal price. God honors deep desire and praying in faith.

"Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord." Joel 1:14 (NIV) - "Even now," declares the Lord, "return to Me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Joel 2:12 (NASB)

2. Fasting releases God's supernatural power. It is a tool we can use when there is opposition to God's will. Satan would like nothing better than to cause division, discouragement, defeat, depression, and doubt among us. United prayer and fasting has always been used by God to deal a decisive blow to the enemy!" So we fasted and prayed about these concerns. And he listened." Ezra 8:23 (Msg) "God says, "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?" Isaiah 58:6 (NIV)

TWO CAUTIONS

1. Remember that fasting is not "earning" an answer to prayer. God cannot be blackmailed by human effort. God wants to answer our prayers and He answers out of grace. Fasting simply prepares us for God's answer.
2. Fast only if your health allows it at this time. If you are able to do only a partial fast - do it in faith and God will honor your intentions.

MAINTAINING NUTRITIONAL BALANCE:

There are many types of fasts, and the option you choose depends upon your health, the desired length of your fast, and your preference:

- A Water Fast - means to abstain from all food and juices
- A Partial Fast - means to eliminate certain foods or specific meals
- A "Juice" Fast - means to drink only fruit or vegetable juices during mealtimes I know the prospect of going without food for an extended period of time may be of concern to some. But there are ways to ensure that your body is getting the nutrients it needs, so you can remain safe and healthy during your fast. If you are beginning a juice fast, there are certain juices you may wish to avoid and certain ones that are especially beneficial. You may find the following daily schedule helpful during your fast.

- 5:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.

Fruit juices, preferably freshly squeezed or blended, diluted in 50 percent distilled water if the fruit is acid. Orange, apple, pear, grapefruit, papaya, grape, peach or other fruits are good.

- 10:30 a.m. – noon

Vegetable juice made from lettuce, celery, and carrots in three equal parts.

- 2:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Herb tea with a drop of honey. Make sure that it is not black tea or tea with a stimulant.

- 6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Broth from boiled potatoes, celery, and carrots (no salt).

I suggest that you do not drink milk because it is a pure food and therefore a violation of the fast. Any product containing protein or fat, such as milk or soy-based drinks, should be avoided. These products will restart the digestion cycle and you will again feel hunger pangs. Also, for health reasons, stay away from caffeinated beverages such as coffee, tea, or cola. Because caffeine is a stimulant, it has a more powerful effect on your nervous system when you abstain from food. This works both against the physical and spiritual aspects of the fast.

Another key factor in maintaining optimum health during a fast is to limit your physical activity.

Exercise only moderately, and rest as much as your schedule will permit (this especially applies to extended fasts). Short naps are helpful as well.

Walking a mile or two each day at a moderate pace is acceptable for a person in good health, and on a juice fast. However, no one on a water fast should exercise without the supervision of a fasting specialist.

HOW TO FINISH YOUR FAST IN A HEALTHY WAY:

Most experts agree that breaking a fast with vegetables, either steamed or raw, is best. Your stomach is smaller at this point, so eat lightly. Stop before you feel full. Stay away from starches like pastas,

potatoes, rice, or bread (except for "Melbatoast"). Also avoid meats, dairy products, and any fats or oils. Introduce them slowly and in small amounts.

Extended fasts are not the only fasts which need to be ended with caution. Even a 3- day fast requires reasonable precautions. It is wise to start with a little soup - something thin and nourishing such as vegetable broth made from onion, celery, potatoes, and carrots - and fresh fruits such as watermelon and cantaloupe. In terms of resuming any sort of exercise routine, the advice is the same. Start out slowly, allowing time for your body to re-adjust to its usual regime.

AN ASSUMED PRACTICE!

But, then we read a passage like Matthew 6:16-18 (NIV): "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

This passage comes right in the middle of Jesus' teaching on prayer and giving. In this sermon, Jesus uses phrases like: "When you give" (v. 2), "When you pray" (v. 5), and "When you fast" (v. 16). Jesus assumes that his audience will give, will pray, and will fast. Fasting is not an option. It is not an oddity. Fasting, according to Jesus, is a given. In fact, fasting is mentioned more times in the Bible than baptism!

In the Bible, we observe the people of God fasting for a variety of reasons:

- They were facing a crisis
- They were seeking God's protection and deliverance
- They had been called to repentance and renewal
- They were asking God for guidance
- They were humbling themselves in worship

Intimacy with God through prayer!

During these 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, you are encouraged to prayer daily as a family.

Pray for the Leadership of Greater Emmanuel Family Worship Center and its Kingdom journey in the earth realm. We pray for the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. We declare spiritual, emotional, numerical and financial growth to manifest within this house. So shall it be said the Lord.

You got this!

Pastor Titus B. Stewart