

“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 2:15

Purpose:

To understand the biblical foundation, purpose, practice, and heart posture of fasting – and to invite our church family to fast together for six weeks.

1) Opening & Invitation

A Call to Seek the Lord

Jesus said, *“Apart from Me you can do nothing.”* (John 15:5)

Fasting is one way we abide in Christ.

We affirm:

- Fasting is not a means of salvation.
- It is not a way to manipulate God.
- It is not penance to earn forgiveness.
- It is a Spirit-led expression of surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

2) What Is Fasting?

Definition: Fasting is voluntarily abstaining from food (or something significant) for spiritual purposes. Fasting is nearly always linked to a time of seeking God in prayer.

3) Why Fasting? (Biblical Foundation)

a) Fasting Is Biblical

- *“Fast”* appears 78 times in Scripture.
- Jesus said, **“When** you fast...” – not *if*. (Matthew 6:16–17)
- Jesus taught there would be a time His followers would fast – that time is now (Matthew 9:14–15).

b) Fasting Was Practiced by God’s People

- Moses (Deuteronomy 9:9)
- Elijah after his victory over Jezebel (I Kings 19)
- David (Psalms 69:10)
- Esther (Esther 4:16)
- Daniel (Daniel 9:3)
- Nehemiah when preparing to return to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:4ff)
- Jesus (Matthew 4:2)
- The early church (Acts 13:3; 14:23)

Jesus viewed giving, praying, and fasting as a trio of spiritual disciplines (Matthew 6).

Yet fasting is largely forgotten in modern Christianity – in a culture built on indulgence, consumption, and comfort.

4) Types of Fasts

- a) Normal Fast – Abstaining from food.
- b) Partial Fast – Limiting certain foods (Daniel 1:12; 10:3).
- c) Whole Fast – No food or water (Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9).
- d) Supernatural Fast – Moses' (Deuteronomy 9:9) and Jesus' (Matthew 4:2) 40 days.
- e) Private or Corporate Fast – Individual or church-wide (Joel 2:15).

Fasting may extend beyond food (media, comforts, habits) if done with spiritual purpose.

5) The Purposes of Fasting

There are five primary reasons why people fasted in the Bible, each of which represents a different life-context and situation for the child of God:

- a) To seek God intensely when there is a **great or urgent need**. An example of this can be found in Ezra 8:22-23.
- b) To develop a **deeper intimacy** with God. Examples of this are found in Isaiah 58:1-12 and Zechariah 8:18-23. The purpose of fasting is the development of a Deeper Life of knowing and following the Lord Jesus. This category includes fasting as an act of repentance for sin.
- c) To seek God for **revival and the special anointing** of the Holy Spirit. A wonderful Biblical example can be found in the passages of Joel 1:13-14; 2:12-15, and 2:28-32.
- d) To bring **deliverance to those in bondage**, whether spiritual, emotional, sexual, chemical, or any other kind of bondage or spiritual oppression. A biblical example of this is found in Mark 9:14-29. That God responds to fasting to bring deliverance to those in bondage is vividly seen in Isaiah 58:6.
- e) To **seek God's wisdom and guidance**. This is illustrated by the Church in Antioch as they were deliberating whom to send on the first missionary journey. As Acts 13:1-3 records, out of such prayer and fasting they selected Paul and Barnabas.

Fasting declares:

“God, You are more necessary than food.”

6) The length of a fast

- a) One night (Daniel 6:18)
- b) One day
 - I Samuel 7:6
 - II Samuel 1:12; 3:35
 - Judges 20:26
- c) Three days and three nights
 - Esther 4:16
 - Acts 9:9, 17-19
- d) Seven days
 - I Samuel 31:13
 - II Samuel 12:16-23
- e) Fourteen days
 - Acts 27:33-34
- f) Twenty-one days
 - Daniel 10:3-13
- g) Forty days
 - Moses (at two different times). Exodus 24:18; 34:28
 - Deuteronomy 9:9, 18, 25-29; 10:10
 - Elijah. I Kings 19:8
 - Jesus. Matthew 4:2 (Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2)

7) Guidelines for Fasting

- a) Begin with a Focus on God
- b) Come in Humility

In the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount the key to fasting is readily apparent. In Matthew 6:16-18 Jesus calls us to fast with a spirit of humility, rejecting the spiritual arrogance and hypocrisy so characteristic of the Pharisees.
- c) Examine Your Motives

The Pharisee fasted with pride (Luke 18:12).
God rejects prideful fasting.
- d) Expect God to Work (Matthew 6:17-18) – God sees in secret.
- e) Let the Spirit Lead – This is not legalism.
- f) Break the Fast Gradually – Light, simple foods.

*****Seek Medical Advice if Needed*****
If pregnant, nursing, diabetic, or under medical care – consult your doctor.

Cautions while fasting

- Do not expect emotional highs.
- Do not attempt to manipulate God.
- Guard against spiritual superiority (1 Corinthians 1:31).
- Ensure fasting is accompanied by repentance and obedience (Isaiah 58).

God desires transformed hearts, not empty stomachs alone.

How to Spend Your Time While Fasting

Instead of eating, use the time to:

1. Praise God for who He is.
2. Confess sin.
3. Read Scripture.
4. Worship (music or meditation).
5. Give thanks.
6. Intercede for our church family.
7. Pray for wisdom and future direction.
8. Pray for loved ones.
9. Bring personal requests.
10. Wait and listen.
11. Close in praise.

**Use the weekly Prayer
and Fasting guide to help
you focus your time,
prayers, and thoughts.**

Fbcsalem.org/prepare

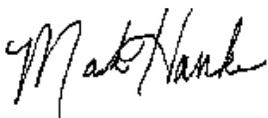
John Wesley declared that fasting was not merely reasoned out by believers — it was taught by God Himself and remains relevant for us today.

Church family, you are invited.

As we say “no” to physical hunger, may God create in us a deeper spiritual hunger.

May Christ be exalted in all we do.

Seeking the heart of our King,



Pastor Mark