



## WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that provides the opportunity for a concentrated focus and intentional partnership with God.

Fasting is mentioned throughout the Bible. Moses fasted to seek God's direction (Exodus 34:28). Joel 2:12 records God's request for humility and repentance that was accompanied by fasting: "Turn to Me now, while there is time. Give Me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning." Psalm 35:13 acknowledges that fasting is a way of humbling our soul before the Lord.

During the time of Jesus' life and ministry, fasting was a routine that was an expected part of a person's faith journey with God. Jesus Himself went on a radical fast at the beginning of His ministry (Matthew 4:2). But as Jesus spent time training His disciples, He broke from fasting traditions. They did not follow the prescribed fasting routines outlined by religious leaders, which provoked a question: "Why don't your disciples fast like John's disciples and the Pharisees do?" (Mark 2:18). His response was intended to point out the purpose of the fast – to encounter concentrated, focus moments with the Lord. Since Jesus was with them in person, why would they need to fast in an effort to clarify God's presence and purpose for their life...He was standing right there! Jesus said, "Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. They can't fast while the groom is with them. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast." (Mark 2:19-20). Notice these words: "then they will fast." Jesus' expectation was once He was no longer present on the earth (in a bodily means), His followers would need opportunities to focus on His presence in their life.

One advocate for Christians incorporating fasting into their pursuit of God makes this observation: "Biblical fasting takes a lot of discipline and strength – strength which you can only receive from God." (Jentezen Franklin). Our weakness and need is amplified in actions of fasting – identify your need, call on God, lean into Him, and trust the Lord to meet with you in your holy pursuit!

## WHO SHOULD FAST?

The Church of The Living God should fast!

- Are you in need of a miracle?
- Do you need a touch from God in your life?
- Is there a dream inside you that only He can make possible?
- Are you in need of a fresh encounter with Almighty God?
- Do you long for a deeper, more connected relationship with Him?
- Do you want to increase your sensitivity to His presence?
- Do you need a stronghold broken?
- Are you in need of direction?
- Do you need to be standing before the Lord on behalf of another?

If you answered 'Yes!' to any of these questions, consider beginning a regular practice of fasting.

## HOW?

- **Be clear on your “Why.”** Be specific and unapologetic about getting direct and serious before the Lord.
- **Prepare.** Decide when, where, how, and what you are going to use as your fast. The concept of fasting was built around a denial of food. The routine to eat is replaced by spiritual nourishment instead. A person converts the space and resources needed to eat, into a sacred pursuit of God. The key is to think ahead and prepare. Look at your calendar, consult with medical advice, and make the right decisions to make the fast a healthy and productive exercise.
- **Plan how to use the fasting space.** Don’t just skip a meal or turn off the TV. Have a plan. Design a simple way to map out that you will use the time and energy for a more inspirational connection with God.
- **Consider how your fast may impact others.** Jesus warned about exaggerating the pains of a fast to draw attention to yourself (Matthew 6:16-18). Your fast is about drawing attention to the Lord, not you. Be thoughtful about how your fast and spiritual denial might impact others. Guard against making it unnecessarily inconvenient or uncomfortable for someone else.

## SUGGESTIONS...

- Fasting sounds much easier than it is. You might be surprised by how difficult it can be. If you are too idealistic, you might find a fast ends up discouraging you instead of building you up. Here are some suggestions to help make this a meaningful and spiritually strengthening encounter:
- Choose a fast that is routine enough that your mind and body signals a need to fulfill that natural desire. For example, when you feel the craving for food – let that be a signal to remind you to substitute that natural hunger for a supernatural appetite. If you pick something to fast and it doesn’t signal you, it might not be as beneficial.
  - One whole day each week
  - One meal or one hour a day for fasting and prayer
  - Utilize the one-hour prayer guide provided. This guide will give you a map for navigating one hour spent with the Lord.
  - Enlist a Fast Partner. Find someone who will fast with you and encourage you. If they don’t want to fast with you, they can commit to supporting you to go the distance.