

Grace FAMILY, we are asking our church to participate in a fast from Sunday evening, February 15th until Sunday evening, February 22nd.

Fasting is an important spiritual discipline that is talked about more than 50 times in the Old and New Testaments, and it seemed to be an expected practice for Jesus and His disciples. However, please know that **FASTING WILL NOT MAKE GOD LOVE YOUR MORE!** Rather it is creating space for us to know and experience His love and Presence more fully.

In our day and time, fasting is a particularly important spiritual practice, because we are constantly bombarded with the call to consume, to fill every craving and impulse. We are discipled by our culture to believe that if we feel it or want it, we should go for it and have it. This makes choosing to fast particularly difficult, and that is why fasting together in community can be helpful so that we can encourage and help one another to seek God with greater intentionality. **We will be opening the church for prayer each day of the fast from 6:00 AM – 7:00 AM and from 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM for anyone to come and pray and seek the Lord together, beginning Sunday evening, Feb 15th through Saturday evening Feb 21st.**

 During this Fasting Week, we would ask all of us to be intentionally praying:

- For God to make us **WHOLEHEARTED** in understanding His great love for us
- For **GLOBAL AWAKENING** and revival as we look towards our Faith Promise Missions month in March
- For our church to experience an **OUTPOURING** of God's Presence and leadership, that we might become the church He is creating us to be.

IMPORTANT: We know that for some people, the thought of participating in a Food Fast can trigger issues with eating disorders or body image. Food is not the only thing that you can fast. We have four different types of fasts for you to consider (Food, Media, Consuming, Caffeine/Alcohol), and within those categories, we also offer different levels of intensity. Please use the attached fasting guide to decide on which fast to choose. It will help with practical tips as well as Biblical guidance for how to pray as you fast. (Parents, the guide also has ways that you children could participate and for you to consider fasting with your kids.)

I know that fasting is not comfortable, but there can be great joy in pressing through discomfort into the greater good of enjoying God's Presence in a new way. Thank you in advance for participating with us by faith.

As I have spent time looking at resources for how to fast, [this article](#) has been the most helpful as a simple guide, and much of the following is distilled from that article. Also, this video by our good friends Alex and Hannah Absalom (Naturally Supernatural) is [a great guide to fasting you can watch in less than 15 minutes](#).

Firstly, fasting is not done to get the attention of others or to try and force God into doing our agenda. It is a humbling of ourselves in secret before God, acknowledging our deep need for Him. When we fast, we empty ourselves of things that fill us (whether that is food, alcohol, caffeine, media, shopping) in order to give the Spirit more room to pour into our lives and lead us. We fast in order to focus our attention and affections on God. Jesus said:

Matthew 6:1, 16-18 Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others 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.

We notice that Jesus says WHEN you fast, not IF you fast, and that we are to fast in such a way as to not draw attention to ourselves. The goal is not our own glory or praise from others, but rather to seek our good Father in secret.

Secondly, fasting leads us to be more yielded to God. We can bring concerns and requests to the Lord in fasting, humbly asking Him to move where we are desperate, and it also opens us to have our prayers shaped by Him as well. We may come into a fast desiring answers or wanting God to do something, but as we take time to listen, He can reshape and redirect our prayers.

Romans 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.

FASTING WILL NOT MAKE GOD LOVE YOUR MORE! When we fast, we take intentional time to be with God and pray and listen, tuning our hearts to the ever-flowing presence of His rest and love (think back to eternal rest of God that we are invited into, Hebrews 4:11). We want to use this time to seek God, so, [for example](#), if you are fasting from meals, use that meal time to pray rather than simply get more work done since you're not taking a lunch hour. When you stomach inevitably growls, use that as a prayer prompt, asking God to increase your hunger for Him and to fill You with His righteousness. You could pray this verse:

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Or if you are fasting from media, use that time to read the Scriptures and pray, occupying that brain space with God and His Word.

**Psalm 1:2 [Blessed are those who] delight in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.**

**3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.**

No matter which fast you choose, it would be helpful to have [a regular schedule/rhythm](#) of seeking God and worshipping Him that week. You could use the [Grace worship team playlists](#) to help set your heart on the Lord through worship music.

Fasting is intentionally setting aside things that give us comfort, ways that we check out from life, and ask God to fill us and lead us instead. We have a guide for four different types of fasting: Food, Media, Consuming, and Caffeine/Alcohol, as well as a Parent Guide. We are suggesting you prayerfully choose one of the fasting areas that will be uncomfortable for you yet will not compromise your health. Also, you will note that for the Food and Media categories, there are different levels of intensity. You may want to build up over the course of the week and try different intensity levels on different days. The point of this is not legalism, it is creating space or us to worship God and hear from Him, to grow in our delight in Him and dependence upon Him.

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Here are several options to prayerfully consider:

Food Fasts: IMPORTANT: Fasting from food is not a dieting plan. Sometimes people conflate spiritual fasting with food fasts that are popular today. This is not about dieting or weight management. If you have struggled with an eating disorder or are working through that, we would encourage you to consult with your care team and consider choosing a different fast.

Daniel Fast - this fast is taken from Daniel 1:11-13 and Daniel 10:3, where he ate only vegetables and water and did not drink alcohol. Daniel Fasts typically excludes meat and meat products, dairy products, processed foods, deep-fried foods, solid fats, refined sugars, and alcohol and beverages other than herbal teas and water. You will also want to supplement protein via legumes, nuts, and seeds.

Fast from food, drinking only juice and water, from sunup to sundown. This does not mean that you gorge yourself before sunrise and after sunset. When I fast in this way, I do not eat breakfast or lunch, and then a moderate dinner. Staying hydrated with water and juices is key.

Fast from food, drinking only juice and water for the whole week. If you do this fast, you should consult your doctor to make sure that it is safe for your body. You would also need to adjust your regular exercise routine, especially later in the fast, and cut back on caffeine, alcohol, and sugary drinks. It is critical to set reminders to hydrate throughout the day.

If you do a food fast, it might be good to meditate on these verses throughout the day:

Isaiah 55:1 “Come, all you who are thirsty,

come to the waters;

and you who have no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without cost.

2 Why spend money on what is not bread,

and your labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,

and you will delight in the richest of fare.

3 Give ear and come to me;

listen, that you may live.

I will make an everlasting covenant with you,

my faithful LOVE promised to David.

Media Fasts:

Fast from social media - remove social accounts from your phone and set aside regular times of reading Scripture and intentional prayer.

Fast from television and streaming and podcasts - spend time in the evenings reading/listening to Scripture, spiritually edifying books, and intentionally praying and listening for God's voice, and worshipping Him.

Fast from all media - remove social accounts from your phone, do not watch TV or stream movies or podcasts. Spend time in the evenings reading/listening to Scripture, spiritually edifying books, and intentionally praying and listening for God's voice, and worshipping Him.

If you do a media fast, it might be good to meditate on these verses at different points of the day:

Psalm 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart

that I might not sin against you.

12 Praise be to you, Lord;

teach me your decrees.

13 With my lips I recount

all the laws that come from your mouth.

14 I rejoice in following your statutes

as one rejoices in great riches.

15 I meditate on your precepts

and consider your ways.

16 I delight in your decrees;

I will not neglect your word.

Fasting from Consuming:

Fast from online shopping and impulse purchases - consider not buying any non-essential item during the week. Instead of online shopping/browsing, spend time reading/listening to Scripture, spiritually edifying books, and intentionally praying and listening for God's voice, and worshipping Him.

If you do a Consumer Culture Fast, it might be good to meditate on these verses at different points during the day:

Philippians 4:11b*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

Fasting from Caffeine and/or Alcohol

(Note, if you are dependent on caffeine, it may be painful to go cold-turkey, so you could limit your intake to one cup of coffee/soda in the morning to stave off a headache. There is no need to inflict physical pain on yourself here.) When you feel tired and like you need a pick-me-up, seek the Lord in prayer. Ask Him to renew Your strength.

If you do a caffeine/alcohol fast, it might be good to meditate on these verses:

Isaiah 40:28 Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

**The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.**

**He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.**

**29 He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.**

**30 Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;**

**31 but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.**

**They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.**

Parent Guide

Parents, consider these ideas when inviting your kids and students to take part.

- Explain to your kids what a fast is and why you are doing it. Review Marshall's guide to help with this. Big idea: we fast not to get God to love us more, but to create more space for us to know Him and love HIM more.
- Ask them to think of one thing that they really enjoy doing every day. Based on their answer, ask them to think about giving up that thing to make space to spend time thinking about God and praying. For example, if tablet time is their favorite thing, ask them how much tablet time would be a good amount to give up for the fast. An hour is a great starting time for kids and students to put their devices down.
- Help them think about how they could spend the hour. 5-10 minutes for kids and 10-20 minutes for students would be a good amount of time to spend reading their Bibles and praying. Help them think about centering activities that they could do with the rest of the hour. Creating, taking a prayer walk, singing or dancing to worship songs are some ideas of things you could do.

How could they illustrate or show WHOLEHEARTEDNESS, AWAKENING, and OUTPOURING?

- If your family decides to do a food fast, think about the calories your kids need for the development their bodies are doing. You could think about doing a global fast for a day or two if your kids really want to give up food. A global fast limits the foods you eat to rice and beans. Rice for breakfast. Rice and cheese for lunch and Rice and beans for dinner. This is called a global fast because so much of the world eat primarily these two things.
- Or you could commit as a family to only drinking water during the week.
- Encourage your kids to try and memorize and pray this verse:
Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.