

# READY And REACHING

## 21 Day Fast January 4 - January 25

As excited as we all may be about the opportunities that can arise in the new year, it won't mean much if we don't match that excitement with a serious time of consecration and fasting. This year, I believe God wants us to focus on staying ready to walk in the will of God while we focus our efforts on reaching for Jesus despite the obstacles around us. In addition to that, we'll be fasting and praying to seek God's power, His will, and wisdom concerning the following:

- Our Greater New Haven Community
- Our nation & government
- COTR, COTR Global, and the worldwide body of Christ
- Health and healing in marriages and families
- Mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health and well-being

### Types of Fasts

Fasting is a key spiritual discipline that communicates to God that we love, trust, and need Him more than mere words ever could. Join us starting January 4th for any of three types of fasts:

- No food, just water, from dawn until 4 pm (consult physician)
- No meats or sweets for 21 days (consult physician)
- No recreational technology (TV streaming, phone, tablet, video games, etc.)

### Things to consider as you fast

#### 1) Pray and confess your sins

A necessary step in fasting is to humble yourself before God. Prayer should be our sustenance throughout the fast, but it is imperative we begin the fast with a contrite heart.

#### 2) Turn to scripture

Spend additional time meditating on God's word, before and during the fast.

#### 3) Keep it secret

Matthew 6:16-18 lets us know that fasting is unbiblical and even spiritually harmful when we do it to show off our spirituality or when we focus more on our own fasting than on the clear needs of others. Don't boast about your fast. Inform people that you won't be eating only if it's mentioned and necessary. Additionally, fasting should not be undertaken when imposed for false or ungodly motives, as seen in 1 Samuel 14:24-30.

#### 4) Prepare your body

Fasting from food, especially for days or weeks, can have unexpected and even detrimental effects on your health. There is no scriptural warrant for harming yourself to undergo a fast. Be sure to consult a doctor before starting any fasting regimen to make sure you can fast in a healthy manner.

Fasting is an appropriate bodily reaction to the grievous state of our soul. If it is done correctly, you can expect many results, including growing closer to God, feeling more solidarity with those who suffer, and increasing self-control.

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## FASTING TO GROW CLOSER TO CHRIST

Without coupling this time of fasting with increased prayer, this fast will feel like a random inconvenience at best. This fast presents us with the opportunity to intentionally shut down the noise of life and focus on what God is saying and doing like never before.

To aid and encourage us during this fast, you will receive weekly encouragement from our Pastoral staff to help you understand why fasting is an important part of your growth and intimacy with God.

What better way to begin 2026 than to declare with more than words that we desire and clamor for His will to be done in this new year? I look forward to seeing what God will do as we remain ready and reaching for Jesus and His plans for our lives. Let's do this! COTR! "All In"

## 7 REASONS TO FAST

1. Preparation for ministry: Coupled with prayer, fasting helps us to focus on our dependence and the need for Holy Spirit power over the desires of our flesh. In Luke 4:1-14, Jesus modeled this as He fasted and prayed for forty days and nights in the wilderness, fully depending on His power in the Spirit before He began ministry in Galilee.

2. Seeking God's wisdom: As with prayer, fasting to seek God's wisdom and direction gets us ready and receptive to His guidance. In Judges 20:26, amidst a civil war amongst Israel, a time of fasting and seeking God's will resulted in receiving God's wisdom concerning the strategy for victory.

3. Seeking God's will amidst grief: When we feel saddened by a tragedy, fasting during a time of grief is important in seeking God's will, strength, and peace amidst a difficult time. In Nehemiah 1:1-4, Nehemiah mourned, fasted, and prayed when he learned Jerusalem's walls had been broken down, leaving the Israelites vulnerable and disgraced.

4. Seeking deliverance & protection: When we face opposition of various kinds, fasting is an act of humility and obedience that communicates our dependence on God's strength over our own. In Ezra 8:21-23, Ezra declared a corporate fast and prayed for a safe journey for the Israelites as they made the nine-hundred-mile trek to Jerusalem from Babylon.

5. Fasting & repentance: Repentance is when you seek God's forgiveness for a sin you have committed. True repentance also requires making a sincere and conscious decision to avoid falling into the same temptation in the future. After Jonah pronounced judgment against the city of Nineveh, fearful of the wrath of God, the king ordered the people to fast and pray. Jonah 3:10 says, "When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He relented and did not bring on them the destruction He had threatened."

6. Operating in victory and authority: We are in constant spiritual warfare against unseen enemies in the spirit. These enemies cannot be defeated with physical attacks. They are defeated with spiritual aggression in the form of fasting and prayer. In Matthew 17:14-16, we read that the disciples were unable to deliver a boy from demonic possession despite their attempts. When the disciples asked Jesus why they were ineffective, Jesus responded in Matthew 17:21 by saying, "This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

7. Expressing worship to God: Luke 2 tells the story of an eighty-four-year-old prophetess named Anna. Verse 37 says, "She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying." Anna was devoted to God, and fasting was how she expressed with more than words that she valued God above everything.