

Fasting & Prayer Guide

WEEK ONE

31 Dec 2023 to 6 Jan 2024

1
Day

Focus our attention on the presence of God



- Matthew 4:4
- Deuteronomy 8:3
- Proverbs 11:2

Whether we fast for one meal, one day, or an extended period of time - **fasting is an act of surrender sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

When we fast, we surrender our mind, body, and spirit to God, acknowledging the words of Jesus, *“Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”*
Matthew 4:4

Dallas Willard once wrote, *“Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in him a source of sustenance beyond food.”*



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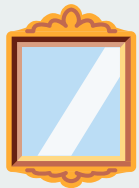
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1
Day

Focus our attention on the presence of God



- Matthew 4:4
- Deuteronomy 8:3
- Proverbs 11:2



Reflection:

- Repent over any personal prayerlessness, complacency, or pride.
- What do you need to do today to be fully surrendered to Him?

End with a time of worship:

In Your Presence

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aW6E8g-4Gx8>



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● Isaiah 58: 1-6

2
Day

A Posture of Surrender

Biblical Fasting is an act of surrender. We are reminded of our utter dependence on God for all we have, posture we need to have as we approach the practice of fasting.

Jesus warns the religious people of His day who had turned fasting into a public show focused on bringing attention to themselves.



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● Isaiah 58: 1-6

2
Day

A Posture of Surrender

Read Matthew 6:16-18

We may not disfigure ourselves but we often fall into the trap of turning our religious practices into an opportunity to bring attention to ourselves, taking the focus off of God.

“God-centred fasting always has as its motive to create an opening for God’s revelation and mercy. It is not to coerce God or change his mind. Our doing something does not condition God’s response.” - (Dr. Siang-Yang Tan & Dr. Douglas H. Gregg)



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● Isaiah 58: 1-6

2
Day

A Posture of Surrender



Reflection:

- Are we guilty of turning our religious practices into an opportunity to bring attention to ourselves?
- When we enter into this spiritual discipline of fasting, have we fallen into the trap of bartering with God?

End with a time of worship:

I Surrender

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLMPmoupyEY>



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- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
- 2 Peter 1:5-7

3
Day

Surrendering our bodies

The practice of fasting helps us surrender our bodies before God allowing Him to transform us in a way that only He can. This transformation is often expressed in the form of increased self-control, not just in the areas of food but in many of the cravings we are tempted to give in to.

FASTING disciplines the mind and, by extension, the body so that in times of **FEASTING**, we are able to remain within healthy boundaries, resisting the temptation to over-indulge.

“Fasting teaches temperance or self-control and therefore teaches moderation and restraint with regard to all our fundamental drives.” - Dallas Willard



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- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
- 2 Peter 1:5-7

3
Day

Surrendering our bodies



Reflection:

- Have you surrendered your body to the Lord?
- Do you acknowledge that you have been bought with a price and that your body is not your own?
- Will you ask God to lead and guide you into a healthy rhythms of FEASTING and FASTING so that you might grow in self-control resisting the temptation to over-indulge?

End with a time of worship:

I Surrender All (Hymn)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSPcuV5Sli8>



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Fasting & Prayer in times of crisis



● Esther 4:1-17; 8:1-17

Over the next few days, we want to turn our attention to the Old Testament to explore the circumstances that led God's people into a time of prayer and fasting. Today we want to look at Queen Esther.

Queen Esther understood that in times of extreme danger, the spiritual discipline of fasting allows us to seek God in a **COMMITTED, UNDIVIDED** way. When we fast, we humble ourselves, breaking from our regular rhythms as we pursue the deliverance that only God can provide.



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4
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Fasting & Prayer in times of crisis



● Esther 4:1-17; 8:1-17

Read Esther 4:15-17.

Looking closer at Queen Esther's words, "and if I perish, I perish," we see how fasting is an act of surrender reminding us of our utter dependence on God for even our very lives.

With the lives of Queen Esther and the Jews hanging in the balance due to Haman's plot, Queen Esther calls for the most extreme version of fasting - a **3 day absolute fast** without food or water.

(Do NOT attempt this without checking with your doctor)

After the 3 days of fasting, Queen Esther and the Jews were spared from Haman's plot.



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Fasting & Prayer in times of crisis



● Esther 4:1-17; 8:1-17



Reflection:

- Pray and surrender PCC's circumstances and the outcome to the Lord.

End with a time of worship:

Our Father

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajMqhFz3Flk>



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- 1 Samuel 7:3-6
- Judges 10:10

5
Day

Let your light shine

We all have patterns in our lives, things we do without even thinking like sleeping, eating, work and rest. When we practice the discipline of fasting, we create space in the presence of God to reflect upon these patterns in our lives.

“More than any other Discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us. This is a wonderful benefit to the true disciple who longs to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We cover up what is inside with food and other good things, but in fasting these things surface.” - Richard Foster



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- 1 Samuel 7:3-6
- Judges 10:10

5
Day

Let your light shine

1 Samuel 7:3-6 gives us an example.

We see that God's people fasted and prayed opening their souls to a deeper understanding of their need for repentance and restoration. They confessed their sin, returned to the Lord, and put away their idols - choosing again to serve the Lord only.



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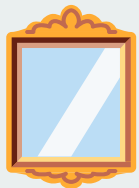
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- 1 Samuel 7:3-6
- Judges 10:10

5
Day

Let your light shine



Reflection:

- Repent for any thoughts, attitudes and actions that do not align with who you are as His child.

Reflect with this song:

Purify My Heart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfH9j-TLg3U>



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Purify my heart



- Daniel 9:1-6
- Joel 2:12-14

God cares deeply about each decision we make. He desires for us to turn to Him in prayer, seeking guidance no matter how insignificant the decision might feel to us. For those life altering decisions that require more time and consideration, He often will draw us into an intentional time of prayer and fasting - a time of waiting patiently in His presence until He reveal our next step forward.



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Purify my heart



- Daniel 9:1-6
- Joel 2:12-14

Today, we look at Daniel and recount how he seeks out God's wisdom in a posture of prayer and fasting. Read Daniel 9:1-6.

Like Daniel, when you and I find ourselves in a time of discernment unsure of which way to turn, we would do well to lean into the practice of prayer and fasting. As we do, God, in His perfect timing, will be faithful to lead and guide our next steps.



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Purify my heart



- Daniel 9:1-6
- Joel 2:12-14



Reflection:

- Pray the prayer that Daniel prayed in Daniel 9:4-6:
 - Worship Him - He is a great and awesome and covenant keeping God
 - Confess your wrongdoings specifically - "done wrong, acted wickedly, rebelled, turned aside from His commandments, not listened to God's servants.

End with this song:

Purify my Heart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfH9j-TLg3U>



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● Isaiah 58:6-7

7
Day

Where's the Love

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun once wrote, *“Fasting clears us out and opens us up to intentionally seeking God’s will and grace in a way that goes beyond normal habits of worship and prayer. While fasting, we are one-on-one with God, offering him the time and attentiveness we might otherwise be giving to eating.”*

One of the ways that God clears us out is by identifying the areas of excess in our lives that consume so much of our time and resources. In a hustle and bustle culture, fasting slows us down to see the needs of the poor and oppressed living in our communities. This kind of fasting is what Isaiah is talking about in Isaiah 58:6-7.



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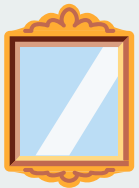
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● Isaiah 58:6-7

7
Day

Where's the Love



Reflection:

- Look closely at your own life. What areas of excess have become unnecessary?
- How might God be leading you into a life of simplicity so that you might freely give the resources He has entrusted you with?
- Is God leading you into the regular practice of fasting so that you might see and respond to the needs of the poor and oppressed in your community?

End with this song:

Draw me close to You

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h561DdhNutQ>

