

# Fasting in your Small Group

## WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that is taught in the Bible. Jesus expected His followers to fast, and He said that God rewards fasting. According to the Bible, 'fasting' means to voluntarily reduce or eliminate your intake of food for a specific time and purpose.

*"When you give up eating, don't put on a sad face like the hypocrites. They make their faces look sad to show people they are giving up eating. I tell you the truth, those hypocrites already have their full reward. So when you give up eating, comb your hair and wash your face. Then people will not know that you are giving up eating, but your Father, whom you cannot see, will see you. Your Father sees what is done in secret, and he will reward you."* Matthew 6:16-18 (NCV)

## WHY FAST?

There are many good reasons, including health benefits, for fasting. Here are 3 primary reasons:

### 1. Fasting gives you more time for prayer

You can use the time you would normally spend eating as time in prayer for what God wants to do in you. In the Bible, fasting is always connected with prayer.

*"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off."* Acts 13:2-3 (NIV)

### 2. Fasting demonstrates the depth of your desire when praying for something

It shows you that you are serious enough about your prayer request to pay a personal price. God honors deep desire and praying in faith.

*"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 1:14 (NIV)

*"'Even now,'" declares the Lord, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.'" Joel 2:12 (NASB)*

### 3. Fasting releases God's supernatural power

It is a tool we can use when there is opposition to God's will. Satan would like nothing better than to cause division, discouragement, defeat, depression, and doubt among us. United prayer and fasting has always been used by God to deal a decisive blow to the enemy.

*"So we fasted and earnestly prayed that our God would take care of us, and he heard our prayer."* Ezra 8:23 (NLT)

*"God says, 'Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?'"*  
Isaiah 58:6 (NIV)

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FASTING

Often in the Bible, God's people fasted immediately before a major victory, miracle, or answer to prayer. It prepared them for a blessing!

- **Moses fasted before he received the Ten Commandments** Exodus 34:28
- **The Israelites fasted before a miraculous victory** 2 Chronicles 20:2-3
- **Daniel fasted in order to receive guidance from God** Daniel 9:3, 21-22
- **Nehemiah fasted before beginning a major building project** Nehemiah 1:4
- **Jesus fasted during His victory over temptation** Luke 4:2
- **The first Christians fasted during-decision making times** Acts 13:2-3

## TYPES OF FASTING

1. **A Normal Fast** - skip the next three meals
2. **A Partial Fast** - skip one or two meals
3. **A Juice Fast** - drink only fruit or vegetable juices during mealtimes
4. **A Sunset to Sunset Fast** - skip dinner the night before, then skip breakfast and lunch the next day
5. **A Sunrise to Sunrise Fast** - skip breakfast, lunch, and dinner on the same day

## 3 CAUTIONS ABOUT FASTING

1. **Remember that fasting is not "earning" an answer to prayer**

God cannot be blackmailed by human effort. God wants to answer our prayers and He answers out of grace. Fasting simply prepares us for God's answer.

2. **Fast only if your health allows it at this time**

If you are pregnant, diabetic, or in bad health, you should not do a full fast. You might consider doing a partial fast. If you are able only to do a partial fast, do it in faith and God will honor your intentions.

3. **Always drink a lot of water while fasting**

## 3 STEPS FOR SMALL GROUP FASTING

1. **Decide why you all will be fasting**
2. **Decide what type of fast you all will be doing**
3. **Decide when you all will begin**

## 4 TRUTHS ABOUT FASTING

1. **Fasting is not so much about food as it is about focus**
2. **Fasting is not so much about saying "no" to the body as it is about saying "yes" to the Spirit**
3. **Fasting is not so much about doing without as it is about looking within**
4. **Fasting is an outward response to an inward attitude**

## If you have any questions:

Please contact your Small Groups Pastor or Community Leader. If you do not know who they are, email us at [SmallGroups@saddleback.com](mailto:SmallGroups@saddleback.com) and we will get you their info.