

January 9-15, 2017

PRAYER  
AND  
FASTING

Isaiah 58:1-14

Malvern Christian Assembly  
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## **The Discipline of Fasting**

### **What is fasting?**

The biblical definition of fasting is a voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes. The motive and purposes must always be God-centered. Fasting is not to be a crash diet.

Fasting is to let go of the normal and natural daily nourishment of this world in order to reach out and grasp the empowering of God needed to live righteously in this world.

The true reason for fasting is not ritualistic but for spiritual strength that brings liberation to God's people.

1. To loosen the bonds of wickedness.
2. To undo the bands of the yoke
3. To let the oppressed go free

True fasting will change the heart and make it compassionate.

### **Are we commanded to fast?**

Although Jesus never commands the believer to fast, His teachings show that He expects us to fast. There are 77 references to fasting in the Bible. Fasting has always been a discipline practiced in biblical times, and all through the history of the Church.

"When you fast..." Mt.6:6

"...The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast." Mt.9:15

### **Who should fast?**

- People who want a deeper hunger for God
- People who need guidance
- People who need healing
- People concerned about community, city, country
- People who need to be set free

### **Kinds of fasts**

Normal fast - Abstaining from food, but not water. Mt.4:2, Luke 4:2

Partial fast - Abstaining from some, but not all foods. Dan.1:12, Mt.3:4

Absolute fast - Abstaining from all food and water up to 3 days Ezra 10:6, Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9

Supernatural fast- Only 2 instances, no food or water for 40 days Deut.9:9, 1Kings 19:8

### Types of Fasts in Bible

Private fast - Between you and God Mt.6:16-18

Regular fast - Fasting as a regular practice such as weekly, monthly, annually  
Lev.16:29-31, Zech.8:19

Congregational fast - Congregation fasting together Joel 2:15-16,  
Acts 13:2

National fast - The whole nation called together to fast 2Chr.20:3, Neh.9:1,  
Esther 4:16

Occasional fast- On special occasions as need arises Mt.9:15

### The purpose of fasting

Fasting must be God-centered, and there must be a spiritual purpose in fasting:

To strengthen prayer

To seek God's guidance

To seek deliverance and protection

To express repentance and return to God

To humble oneself before God

To express concern for the work of God

To minister to the needs of others

To overcome temptation and dedicate yourself to God

To express love and worship to God

### Practical Suggestions

1. Determine your spiritual objectives
2. Develop an expectancy in your heart
3. Be ready for spiritual opposition
4. Attend corporate prayer meetings when possible
5. If you have any medical condition, consult your doctor.
6. Drink lots of water
7. Stay warm- you tend to feel cold when you fast
8. Fasting causes bad breath, sucking on cloves helps, carry your toothbrush
9. Headaches are common due to withdrawal from caffeine and sugar
10. Break your fast gradually (juice, soups)

Prepare your heart, your mind and especially your spirit to hear what God is saying for the personal goals he has inspired you to set for this year, as well as whatever role you will play in MCA's direction and growth in 2017.