

■ “Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am’” (Isaiah 58:8-9).

PRAYER & fasting

a beautiful sacrifice





Fasting expresses our desire to “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness,” as Jesus urged in Matthew 6:33.

Christian fasting is more than denying ourselves food or something else of the flesh - it's a sacrificial lifestyle before God. In Isaiah 58, we learn what a “true fast” is. It's not just a one-time act of humility and denial before God; it's a lifestyle of servant ministry to others. As Isaiah tells us, fasting encourages humility, loosens the chains of injustice, unties the chords of the yoke, frees the oppressed, feeds the hungry, provides for the poor, and clothes the naked. This concept of fasting is a lifestyle of servant living for God and others.

For maximum spiritual benefit, set aside ample time to be alone with the Lord. Listen for His leading through reading and meditation on His Word. The more time you spend with Him, the more meaningful your fast will be.

When possible, begin and end each day on your knees with your spouse or friend for a brief time of praise and thanksgiving to God. Longer periods of time with our Lord in prayer and study of His Word are often better spent alone.

Fasting is the conscious choice to use self-control to abstain from normal, everyday activities in order to devote more time and focused attention to prayer. Typically, fasting involves abstaining from one or more meals or from eating any food at all for a set time (for example, one or more meals a day for forty days or all meals on a pre-determined day of the week for several weeks).

Some people choose to fast by denying themselves of specific types of foods for a time, such as sweets or heavily seasoned foods, choosing only very basic, plain foods instead. The idea is to create a vivid,

personal reminder to seek ultimate satisfaction from greater intimacy with Jesus Christ – the true Bread of Life. Due to medical or other health concerns, you may need to consult your physician before attempting to fast. It should not include abstinence from essential liquids or medications.

Fasting may also involve self-denial of things other than food for a predetermined time – such as sexual relations, personal entertainment (television, leisure reading, sports, hobbies, etc.), or other routine activities that preoccupy our minds and absorb our attention. Each time we catch ourselves thinking of the thing we have chosen to forego is an opportunity to breathe a prayer for the Lord to fill an even greater need in our lives.

The time freed from ordinary routines is time to use, instead, for prayer, meditation, Scripture reading or special service to others. *Consider this schedule:*

Morning

- Begin your day in praise and worship.
- Read and meditate on God's Word.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to work in you to will and to do His good pleasure according to Philippians 2:13.
- Invite God to use you. Ask Him to show you how to influence your world, your family, your church, your community, your country, and beyond.
- Pray for His vision for your life and empowerment to do His will.

Noon

- Return to prayer and God's Word.
- Take a short prayer walk.
- Spend time in intercessory prayer for your community's and nation's leaders, for the world's unreached millions, for your family or special needs.

Evening

- Get alone for an unhurried time of “seeking His face.”
- Meet together for prayer with others who are fasting.
- Avoid television or any other distraction that may dampen your spiritual focus.