



Prayer & Fasting



7-Day Guide • Winter 2024 • Freshwater Church

What is Fasting? And why are we doing it?

Fasting is giving up something good to intensify our expression of need for something greater, namely God and His transformative presence.

Historically, food was often given up during a period of fasting since preparing meals throughout the day required hours of time and energy. Fasting from food meant that you could devote that time and energy to prayer and seeking God. We can still choose to fast from food, but there are many other “good things” which occupy our time and energy that we can prayerfully consider giving up. As we continue following after Jesus together, we want to fast and pray as a church family with a desire to see personal and corporate renewal; growing closer to God and to each other.

Our attitude during a fast should be one of surrender with an acceptance of the temporary discomfort we experience. We should listen for and to the Spirit’s “still, small voice” to guide us into deep communion with God. Times of fasting can be exciting with God’s voice ringing loudly, and other times it can seem melancholy and quiet. Either way, we should pursue the deep and exciting things of God. Be prepared for God to do something unexpected in your life, in our church family, and in our surrounding communities.

Please know that if you choose not to fast, no one will look down on you. If you are new to this, consider reviewing what Scripture has to say about fasting, including: **Matthew 6:16-18, Matthew 9:14-17, 1 Samuel 7:5-6, 2 Samuel 12:16, Nehemiah 1:4, Daniel 10:3 and Acts 13:1-3.**

Instructions

While types of fasts and length of time can vary, we have chosen a one-week fast for our church family to seek renewal and to receive a fresh indwelling of the Holy Spirit. During this time, please intercede for our Freshwater community, family, friends and neighbors. And since we aren’t meant to follow Jesus alone, we encourage you to fast in community by gathering with others during the week to pray with and encourage each other.

If you are sensing that you should fast from food, there are numerous ways you could consider: a full fast, one meal a day, or cutting out certain foods or beverages that we desire (such as a “Daniel” type of fast: no meat, dairy, alcohol or any rich foods). But keep in mind that food is not the only thing that we can fast from – anything that occupies our time, energy and attention (electronics, entertainment, social media, etc.) could be considered.

Regardless of what you are led to fast from, it must be coupled with prayer – otherwise it's just a diet or an extended period of charging your mobile device. Remember, this is about surrendering to God and seeking Him and His transformative presence in our lives, individually and as a church family!

Depending on your level of fasting, be prepared. Spiritually, be ready for God to show up and to move. Be prepared to pray for extended periods of time along the themes prepared for each day of the week. Use the suggested daily prayer and the meditation guides as prompts for Scripture reading and prayer, but add to it as the Holy Spirit leads. If He brings other things to mind (people, situations, etc.) that are strongly consuming your thoughts even if you don't know why, spend extended time in prayer about that. However God leads your time through this, that is the right way to do it.

Physically, you should plan ahead. For example, if you eliminate caffeine (could it be that some of us rely on caffeine more than we rely on God?), consider beginning to wean yourself off it prior to the week starting. If you plan to skip a certain meal every day, make a plan ahead of time. If certain foods will be off limits (sugar, anyone?), you may want to tell the others in your household and put those foods in a different place. You will likely get hungry and cranky (“hangry”), so consider increasing your water intake. And, of course, if you have health issues/chronic medical conditions, please consult your physician before partaking in a substantial fast.

Finally, consider writing down what God reveals and speaks to you during the week. When we are in His presence, He will often provide supernatural words of encouragement, love and direction. You will want to hang onto those and not lose them to a foggy memory as life returns to normal.

A beginning reflection

“So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?’” **Luke 24:28-32**

*Lord, we urge you to stay with us, speak to us, open your Scriptures to us, feed us, bless us, open our eyes, and make us **BURN** for you!*

Day 1: Goodness and faithfulness

We begin by remembering and seeing, asking the Holy Spirit to remind us how we have seen God's goodness and faithfulness on display in our lives, personally and as a church family. Prayerfully reflect on God's goodness toward you today; his great love for you and the richness of a good and faithful love that restored us to God through Christ Jesus' death and resurrection. As an "apprentice" of our Master, Jesus, we are called into a way of life that produces beauty, order and abundance and that reflects HIS goodness and faithfulness. Ask God to show you how to more fully reflect His goodness and faithfulness into the places you find yourself today.

- "And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.'"

Exodus 34:6-7

- "Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." **Lamentations 3:2-23**
- "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful."

Hebrews 10:23

Starting Prayer

We praise you, Lord, for your unfailing love and compassion. Despite all the times we waver, you continue to be gracious, compassionate and slow to anger; faithful as you have promised to be, generation after generation. Have mercy on me, Lord; forgive me for the times when I have not been good or faithful. Your goodness and faithfulness were demonstrated in the death and resurrection of Your Son and our faith in Jesus is sealed in us by the Holy Spirit. The hope I have in you, Lord, is strengthened by remembering all You have done in my own life and seeing how You are moving and working among Your people. Good and faithful is who You are and You have called me to reflect Your goodness and faithfulness everywhere I go, even when I might not feel like it. Holy Spirit, show me today how I can shine the light of your goodness and faithfulness in the dark places so that others might see who You are and join in glorifying you as the One who is gracious, compassionate and abounding in love and faithfulness. AMEN!

Day 2: Love

Dwell on and receive God's love for *you*! The Father's love for you is not only for every human created in His image, but it is personal and everlasting. He loves *you* personally! Receive that and remember where you stand with the Father since Jesus' blood has justified you and the Holy Spirit lives inside you. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you and confess the ways you have not loved others the way you have been called to love them (having a critical spirit, unforgiveness, sharp words, not extending grace), which is shown by how Jesus loved the world (see John 13 below). Maybe you need to go to someone and confess the times you were unloving so God may restore and renew that relationship in ways that you may not even understand right now.

- "But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him." **Psalms 103:17**
- "And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." **Colossians 3:14**
- "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." **John 13:34-35**

Starting Prayer

Lord, it's amazing and unbelievable that the Creator of the universe loves ME! You know me inside and out, you know everything I've done, said and thought – and you still love me! Me, personally! You love my personality, my quirks, my unique attributes that all show your creativity and desire to make me special. I receive more of your love today. I confess that I am often unloving toward others who were also created in your image – even those who are part of your family. Lord, please show me those people whom I have treated or spoken to in an unloving way, so that I can confess and repent; so that You can renew and restore relationships. Holy Spirit, show me more clearly the love of my Heavenly Father so that I can reflect it everywhere I go, that it would touch everyone I meet! In Jesus' name, AMEN!

Day 3: Humility

Remembering his goodness and faithfulness, and dwelling in His love for us, we now move to surrendering our pride and the ways that we have tried to take control and be in charge. There is only one King – Jesus – and we should confess our pride and pursue a humble spirit. God loves a humble spirit! It makes Him want to make a shining example of that person (see Scriptures from James and 1 Peter below if you don't believe it!). Pride is sneaky and infects the intention of so much that we do. It is destructive and we should not tolerate it in our lives. Come to the Lord in humility, surrender your pride to God's good, faithful and trustworthy hand, and watch as He smiles on your life as you allow Him to take control as the only One who can be King.

- "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you." **James 4:10**
- "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you." **1 Peter 5:5-6**
- "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." **Philippians 2:3**

Starting Prayer

Lord, you are good and faithful, gracious and compassionate. Thank you for making a way for me to come to you. I confess that too often I try to take over and I think too highly of myself. I am full of pride and I often think that I've got this – even though I know I don't. I receive your forgiveness for my pride and instead ask that you would teach me humility in a fresh way. I ask that you would continue to form in me a humble spirit that would excite you! I recognize that you are the King of my life and I humbly ask for you to show me the ways in which I have exercised pride instead of humility. I humbly ask that Jesus, the perfect example of humility, be more fully formed in my life. Remove all the barriers and stumbling blocks of pride that hinder my walk with you. In Jesus' name, AMEN!

Day 4: Grace

Grace is not opposed to effort, but to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action. Grace is not just about forgiveness — if we had never sinned we would still need grace! **Grace is God acting in our life to do what we cannot do on our own.**” – Dallas Willard

With a humble spirit we must recognize there is much we cannot do on our own. All we can do is come to our Lord with this understanding, accepting of what we are unable to do and accepting of what He has done and can do for us. Primary among this is salvation - both the forgiveness of our sin and the ongoing life with God that we live here and now, participating in what Jesus is doing here on earth. We should always recognize that every good work and the fruit it bears is because of grace and grace alone. We should confess our need to earn and the boastful and prideful spirit that can grow from that soil, hearing as the Spirit reminds us that this is “not of ourselves.”

- “Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given to Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” **John 1:16-17**
- “For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith – and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” **Ephesians 2:8-9**
- “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all time, you may abound in every good work.” **2 Corinthians 9:8**

Starting Prayer

Out of the fullness of who you are, Jesus, I receive your grace. Thank you for your saving grace in my life and that I did not have to do anything to earn it. I confess my insecurity and the desire to act out of this insecurity and do it on my own. It is your grace that gives me “all sufficiency in all things at all times,” and it’s not something that I am capable of producing. Holy Spirit, show me where I am striving to earn and where I need to let you do what only you can do. Your yoke is easy and your burden is light, so please show me your unforced rhythms of grace and how to live that out. Lord, I recognize that you alone have the power and authority to act in incredible ways, beyond my understanding, for your glory. AMEN!

Day 5: Holiness

Paul wrote to Timothy in his second letter that we are called to a holy life because of God's grace. Jesus' death and the power of his resurrection give us the confidence to live a life that is blameless and pure. We should hold nothing back from the Lord and should be pure vessels.

Scripture teaches us and shows us that sin creates a barrier between us and the Lord; preventing Him from hearing our prayers and from being effective for His kingdom. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind those things that are sinful or even just unhealthy practices and get in the way of spiritual growth. Listen for that still, small voice to point things out – and don't argue! The Holy Spirit is wiser than we are, so even if something seems trivial or unimportant, don't just dismiss the thought. This could be an incredible turning point in your walk with the Lord as you submit to his prompting and redirect your life.

- "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

Romans 12:1

- "...let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely..." **Hebrews 12:1**
- "...walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called..."

Ephesians 4:1

Starting Prayer

Lord, I confess that I often sin – sometimes without realizing it, but sometimes completely aware of what I am doing. I do not want to hold anything back from you; I desire to be a clean vessel before you. I humbly ask that you show me areas of my life in which I am holding back. I confess fear or feelings of inadequacy in my spirit which cause me to hold back from all you have for me. I submit to your gentle words and your nudge to show me where I am harboring sin, where I have addiction, or where I simply have unhealthy practices in my life that keep me from experiencing you more fully. I choose, with your power and in your authority, to release these things in Jesus' name and for you to replace these things with the beauty of who You are. In Jesus' name, AMEN!

Day 6: Discernment

Whose voice do you listen to? Whose voice directs your attention and time? Is it the voice of a friend or family member, your job, the voice of a celebrity (even a well-known Christian!), the “voice” of the media, a political party, or even your own voice? Many of these voices have interests that compete with those of our “good Shepherd,” Jesus. As a sheep is raised to respond to only the voice and presence of its shepherd, so should we be “raised up” to respond to only the presence and voice of Jesus. Why? His wisdom is “from above and is pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy and good fruits.” Scripture says he will “make our paths straight” if we submit to him instead of leaning on our own understanding. Pray that the Holy Spirit helps you discern the voice of Jesus from the multitude of voices vying for your attention and loyalty so your complete devotion belongs only to Jesus!

- “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight.” **Proverbs 3:5-6**
- “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.... My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me.” **John 10:14, 27**
- “Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” **James 3:13-18**

Starting Prayer

Lord, I confess that I often find myself going astray – distracted by voices other than yours. Please train my heart to your presence and give me ears to hear only your voice and follow only after you, the good Shepherd. I know that following you leads to life and flourishing. Your wisdom is pure, peaceable, gentle and full of mercy and good fruit. Help me resist the call of voices that are not yours and which lead to disorder and vile practices. Lord, I want to trust in you with my whole being and submit to you because you are the only one who can lead me down paths of righteousness, for your glory and honor. AMEN!

Day 7: Unity

We finish our week by praying for unity and praying against division. As Jesus spoke in Mark 3:25, “if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.” The Apostle Paul used the picture of the body – different parts working together – to describe the family of God. Are you working together with those in this church to advance God’s Kingdom by ministering to others using your Holy Spirit-given gifts? Are you contributing or are you just consuming? While we can disagree on nonessentials as long as we maintain the harmonious workings of the body, we **MUST** remain unified in Christ on the essentials. Are you contributing to unity and harmony, or sowing seeds of division and disorder?

- “But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” **1 Corinthians 12:24-27**
- “...I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one...” **John 17:23**
- “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” **Ephesians 4:1-3**

Starting Prayer

Lord, I pray our Freshwater church family would walk in unity, in step with the Spirit. I ask that we as humble, loving and holy servants of Jesus Christ – brothers and sisters, members of the same body – would be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Please keep us unified in Christ – listening to his voice only. I pray against a spirit of division and disunity as Satan knows a house divided against itself will not stand. I pray that the Freshwater church family will stand together! I pray that we would become more in love with you, Jesus, so that we may become more united together as we follow after you and are daily formed to look more like you. Lord, I am a part of the body of Christ so show me what it looks like to be a part of that body, working in unity for your glory and honor. In Jesus’ name, AMEN!

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

“When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?’”

Luke 24:30-32



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