

# PRAYER&FASTING

*"She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying."* — Luke 2:37

## THE PRAYER

Fasting brings a sacrificial dimension to prayer. Biblical fasting is most often the abstaining from food for a spiritual purpose; and there are various ways to fast. Some people also fast a non-food item.

A partial food fast refers to giving up either a meal or two or a type of food (like meat or sweets) over a period of time.

A full food fast refers to giving up all food except water and/or juices over a period of time.

An absolute food fast is refraining from both food and drink, but should only be done for three days.

Non-food fasts include giving up something (such as television) that interferes with your spiritual life.

Anyone with medical conditions or on medications should consult their physician before a food fast; and anyone attempting a full or absolute fast should consult their physician.

(Prayer and Fasting Tips pages 14 & 15.)

Times of prayer for the denomination while fasting could be focused on

the following suggestions or something similar.

1) Pray that the eternal truth and practical teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 – 7) will be fulfilled in BIC people, households, congregations, leaders and ministries.

2) Also pray that the values, mission, vision, priorities, and outcomes as encapsulated in the Impact 2010 booklet will be brought to fruition throughout the North American BIC church.

Times of personal prayer while fasting should focus on the scripture of your choosing and your personal concerns.

A guide to help pray through scriptures and church-wide vision is available in this booklet on pages 20 – 21.

## THE RIGHTEOUS

Decide what type of fast would be best for you. The combinations of the type of fast (partial, full, absolute, or non-food) with the frequency of your fasting (1 day a week, one week a month etc) provide almost limitless options.

### You could fast

- 1 or more days a month
- 1 or 2 days a week
- 1 week a month,
- Several weeks a year
- 1 or more months a year



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- For an extended period of 3, 7, 21 or 40 days

### **Your food fast could be**

- giving up a certain type of food (meats, sweets)
- giving up one meal a day
- giving up two meals a day
- giving up all solid food, drinking only juices (an absolute fast should be done no longer than 3 days)

### **Your non-food fast could be**

- give up television or entertainment media
- give up something that distracts you from prayer and spiritual pursuits

Using the options above you can tailor a prayer and fasting regimen that works for you. If this is new to you, begin with a partial fast. For example: You could fast one meal a day for a week or a month. You could fast all food except drinks one day each week for a month or a year. You could fast television for a month.

## **THE POWERFUL EFFECT**

Biblical fasting appears in both the old and new testaments and while there is no command for Christians to fast, it was a practice that Jesus assumed and taught. Moses, David, Elijah, Esther,

Daniel, Anna the prophetess, Paul, and Jesus all fasted. Leviticus called for public fasting on the Day of Atonement. In Joel fasting was called at a time of national emergency. Daniel practiced a partial fast when he abstained from meat, choice food, and wine for three weeks. In a non-food fast, he also “used no lotions.” Esther asked the people to observe an absolute fast. “Do not eat or drink for three days.” Jesus fasted for 40 days before his public ministry began in earnest.

Just like prayer, fasting is not a tool we use to get God to do something for us. Fasting is something we do for him. John Wesley said, “First, let it [fasting] be done unto the Lord with our eye singly fixed on Him. Let our intention herein be this, and this alone, to glorify our Father which is in heaven....” (John Wesley, Sermons on Several Occasions). When the point of the fast is fixed on God, he can begin to reveal the things in our lives that control us, to show us the nonessentials in our lives, and we may experience increased effectiveness in spiritual disciplines or deliverance from bondage.

*“The prayers of the righteous are powerful and effective.”*

— James 5:16