



UNITED CITY CHURCH

PRAYER AND FASTING GUIDE

WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline the Bible teaches. According to the Bible, fasting is voluntarily reducing or eliminating your intake of food for a specific time and purpose. When Jesus spoke about fasting in Matthew 6, He said “when you fast,” because He fully expected this would be a normal part of the prayer life of His followers; He even said God rewards fasting.

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” — Matthew 6:6-18

WHY FAST?

Our time of fasting and prayer is for three primary reasons:

1. Fasting increases your dependence on God. The simple act of eliminating food as our sustenance is an act of worship declaring that God is the One who sustains us. In the Bible, fasting and prayer go together, so use the time you’d normally spend eating as more time in prayer.

“I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my portion of food.” — Job 23:12

2. Fasting demonstrates the depth of your desire when praying for something. It shows you are serious enough about your prayer request to pay a personal price. God honors deep desire and praying in faith.

“‘Even now,’ declares the Lord, ‘return to Me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.’” — Joel 2:12

3. Fasting releases God’s supernatural power. Satan would like nothing better than to cause division, discouragement, defeat, depression and doubt among us. God has always used united fasting and prayer to deal decisive blows to the enemy!

“So we fasted and pleaded with our God about this, and He granted our request.” — Ezra 8:23



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.**

“Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments.” — Exodus 34:28

» **The Israelites fasted before a miraculous victory.**

“Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, ‘A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Sea. It is already in Hazazon Tamar’ (that is, En Gedi). Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.” — 2 Chronicles 20:2-3

» **Daniel fasted to receive God's guidance.**

“So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with Him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.” — Daniel 9:3

“While I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and said to me, ‘Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding.’” — Daniel 9:21-22

» **Nehemiah fasted before beginning a major project.**

“When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.” — Nehemiah 1:4

» **Jesus fasted during His victory over temptation.**

“For forty wilderness days and nights He was tested by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when the time was up He was hungry.” — Luke 4:2

» **The first Christians fasted during decision making.**

“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

CAUTIONS TO CONSIDER

Entering into a fast takes thought regarding intention and ability, so be sure to examine what's in your heart and the status of your health before doing so!

» **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 changes us.

» **Fast only if your health allows at this time.** If you're able to do only a partial fast, do it in faith, and God will honor your intentions.



MORNING PRAYER

Prepare the night before by setting your alarm for earlier than usual to begin the day in extra time with God. In the morning, instead of having your meal, spend time in worship and prayer.

» **We praise You, God, for Your presence with us!**

■ “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?” — Psalm 139:7

■ “The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save.” — Zephaniah 3:17

■ “If disaster comes upon us—sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine—we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name is in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.” — 2 Chronicles 20:9

» **We praise You, God, for Your power!**

■ “O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?” — 2 Chronicles 20:6

■ “And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might.” — 1 Chronicles 29:12

■ “But I will sing of Your power; yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; For You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble.” — Psalm 59:16

» **God, stir the hearts of your people at United City Church with a desire to reach the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

■ “When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” — Matthew 9:36-38

» **God, give us opportunities to share the good news with our “one” and many more.**

■ Pray specifically for your “one,” and ask God to bring to your mind others who don’t know Him, and pray for their salvation.

» **God, make United City a church that crosses every divide to reach the lost, and let us rejoice with the angels over one sinner who turns to you!**

Scripture for further meditation: Luke 15



MIDDAY PRAYER

Instead of your midday meal, spend time in worship and prayer.

» **We praise You, God, for Your healing.**

“If disaster comes upon us—sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine—we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name is in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.” — 2 Chronicles 20:9

■ “For I am the Lord who heals you.” — Exodus 15:26

■ “Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for You are my praise.” — Jeremiah 17:14

» **We pray for the sick, vulnerable and grieving.** We pray for those suffering from COVID-19 or other illnesses, the elderly and at-risk, and those who have lost loved ones.

» **We pray for protection and wisdom for healthcare workers, first responders, researchers, food supply workers, students, teachers, and those facing fear, discouragement or mental illness.**

» **We pray for families, including parents, grandparents and children.** We pray Christ will be the center of homes and relationships.

» **We pray for leaders in homes, churches, conferences, schools and governments.**

Scripture for further meditation: Psalm 91

EVENING PRAYER

Instead of your evening meal, spend time in worship and prayer.

» **We praise You, God, for Your wisdom!**

■ “O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.” — 2 Chronicles 20:12

■ “He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly.” — Proverbs 2:7

■ “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His.” — Daniel 2:20

» **God, you are wise above all others, and we call out to you for wisdom for the leaders You have placed in our lives:**

- Grant wisdom to our local, state and federal government leaders to guide us in righteousness.
- Grant wisdom to our church leaders so they may lead us by example.
- Grant wisdom to me, that all my decisions would reflect who You are.

» **God, in your wisdom, show me my sin, and give me grace to surrender everything to you!**

» **God, help me trust the wisdom found in your Word will always guide me in the right paths.**

Scripture for further meditation: Psalm 1, Psalm 128



BEDTIME PRAYER

As you close your day, spend time in worship and prayer.

» **We praise You, God, for Your care in the future.**

“Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.” — 2 Chronicles 20:20

“This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.” — Lamentations 3:21-23

» **God, You have an amazing future in heaven for all who believe in You; make United City Church a reflection of heaven on earth.**

» **God, truly unite us in every way so we will together proclaim You are God.**

» **God, deepen our love for the Bride of Christ, and give us hearts willing to serve Your Church with the gifts you have given us by Your Spirit.**

» **God, ignite our worship so Your great name is glorified on the earth and our love for you would grow.**

Scripture for further meditation: Revelation 19

RESOURCES

You can find more great resources on fasting and prayer at the following:

www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting.html

Parts of this guide were adapted from “Day of Fasting and Prayer” by Pastor Rick Warren.