



WHY FAST?

The goal of fasting is to draw nearer to God. Biblical fasting always has to do with eliminating distractions for a spiritual purpose; it hits the reset button of our soul and renews us from the inside out. Fasting also allows us to create space in our minds and hearts for more of God's presence.

We want Lifeline to be spiritually prepared for what is next for us, so we've decided to enter into this season with a church-wide focus on prayer and fasting. From **January 7th through January 27th**, we are challenging one another to explore God's character, to come to know him better, and discover who he has called us to be as individuals and as a community.

Fasting is one of the oldest and most prevalent spiritual practices in the Bible. Great leaders in the Bible fasted routinely, including Moses, David, Jeremiah, Isaiah, John the Baptist, Jesus and the disciples. Jesus expects that we will fast regularly. In Matthew 6:16, Jesus addresses fasting specifically when he tells the disciples, "**When you fast...**" Notice Jesus says "**when**" not "**if.**" Jesus assumes that we will fast. Though fasting is assumed, it is not required. We don't have to fast. We get to fast. Like all intentional spiritual practices, fasting should not be legalistic – we are not earning approval from God through fasting.

TYPES OF FASTS

There are several different ways you can practice fasting. Here are some examples:

COMPLETE FAST

In this type of fast, you drink only liquids, typically water with light juices as an option.

SELECTIVE FAST

This type of fast involves removing certain elements from your diet. One example of a selective fast is the Daniel Fast, during which you remove meat, sweets, and bread from your diet and consume water and juice for fluids and fruits and vegetables for food.

PARTIAL FAST

This fast is sometimes called the "Jewish Fast" and involves abstaining from eating any type of food in the morning and afternoon. This can either correlate to specific times of the day, such as 6:00 am to 3:00 pm, or from sunup to sundown.

SOUL FAST

This fast is a great option if you do not have much experience fasting food, have health issues that prevent you from fasting food, or if you wish to refocus certain areas of your life that are out of balance. For example, you might choose to stop using social media or watching television for the duration of the fast and then carefully bring that element back into your life in healthy doses at the conclusion of the fast.

During this 21 day fast, you can choose to fast for one day, one day a week, one meal multiple days a week, multiple days per week, etc. Your personal fast should present a level of challenge, but it is very important to know your body, your options, and most importantly, to seek God in prayer and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

PRAYER & FASTING

Fasting goes hand-in-hand with prayer. Plan to set aside the time you would normally spend on meal preparation and eating (or whatever you choose to fast from) for focused time with God.

During these 21 Days, we are encouraging you to pray **three specific areas**:

□ **DEPEND Daily on God**

- God, help me to experience and be aware of Your presence today.
- God, what do you want to teach me today?

*Jesus said (John 15:5), "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." **"Depend daily on God" is about investing vertically in the priority relationship with God, learning to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.***

□ **NURTURE Relationships**

- What new people do you want me to connect with?
- Who do you want me to invest in and add value to today?

*Humans were never created to be alone. We are social beings who were made for relationships. Our relational orientation is a reflection of the image of God in us. God Himself is relational and exists in a community—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is love because God is relational. **"Nurture Relationships" is about investing horizontally with the people in our lives and allowing them to invest in us.***

□ **ADVANCE Jesus' Mission**

- How can I share hope and the greatness of God with someone today with my words and actions?
- Where can I utilize my spiritual gifts to serve God's purposes today?
- What do I feel God is prompting me to do?

*We are here for a purpose. We have been commissioned by God to make disciples of all the nations. Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus spoke to His disciples and said, "As the Father has sent me, so send I you." (John 20:21) His mission boils down to two commands: love God & love people. At Lifeline we call that "sharing HOPE & adding VALUE". That is a call to both serve WITHIN Lifeline as well as BEYOND Lifeline. **"Advance Jesus' mission" is about moving beyond success to significance by fulfilling the purpose we were designed for: sharing HOPE (leading people to love God) and adding VALUE (demonstrating God's love in practical ways to others).***

At Lifeline, we are encouraging fasting for 21 days as part of Explore God series. You may also choose to fast at other times during the year for your own spiritual development. It's very typical to fast a single meal, a whole day, or three days or more. The timing of your fast is not as important as the strength of your focus on God as you fast.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

During a fast, you may feel weaker than usual, irritable, and find difficulty concentrating. You may also get a headache. This is normal. You may need to restrict certain physical or social activities during your fast. Let your physical challenges draw you to a deeper dependence on God.

Do not be discouraged if you struggle the first few times you fast. It takes time to build your spiritual fasting muscles. God will honor your desire to experience his presence through this practice.

After the fast, share any insights or promptings you sensed from God during your fast with someone in your Life Group or a friend or a Lifeline team leader. Let's encourage and challenge each other by sharing what we hear from God as we enter into these 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting!