

# HOW (AND WHY) TO FAST

Fasting is the Christian discipline of abstaining from food and drink (besides water) for a period of time, for a *specific spiritual purpose*. While there may be physical or mental benefits from fasting, *Christian fasting* is concerned primarily with a spiritual purpose.

## WHY SHOULD WE FAST?

- Jesus exemplified fasting (Matthew 4:2) and expected fasting (Matthew 6:16–18).
- When we don't spend time preparing food, we can devote more time to prayer.
- When we don't eat, we add urgency to our prayers, as if we are saying, "God, I want you to \_\_\_\_\_ more than I want food."
- When we don't eat, we add devotion to our prayers, as if we are saying, "God I want you more than I want food."
- When we abstain from food for a prolonged period, we add focus to our prayers.
- God has a pattern of blessing his people when they fast together (e.g., Acts 13:2).

## TIPS FOR FASTING

- **Make a Plan** — Before fasting, determine how long you will fast, when and how you will pray during your fast, and what purpose you will fast for.
- **Choose a Specific, Single Purpose** — Examples include the salvation of a non-Christian you know, the end of a specific sin in your life or another's life, the healing of an illness in someone's life, guidance from God, the success of missionaries, an unreached people group, expressing deep repentance, and to know God more deeply.
- **Replace Meal Times with Prayer** — The time that you save from not preparing and eating food can be replaced with extended times of prayer.
- **Work Together** — If you have children who are too young to fast, consider swapping meal times with your spouse or a friend (e.g., You can cook breakfast while your spouse or friend devotes extended time to prayer; and then your spouse or friend can cook lunch). Women, consider helping a single mom on our days of corporate fasting.
- **Pray Every Time Your Stomach Grumbles** — Your hunger pangs will be a reminder of the specific purpose you are fasting for. Every time you feel hungry, pray a short prayer like "God I want you to \_\_\_\_\_ more than I want food."
- **Ask Your Doctor** — If you have a medical condition that may affect your ability to fast (e.g., diabetes, pregnancy, nursing), consult a doctor before making plans. Fasting should be spiritual helpful, not physically harmful.
- **Don't Boast** — Our fasting should be private. We are fasting for God's glory, not our own. Don't brag about how often you fast or complain about being hungry (Matthew 6:16–18).

## EXAMPLE

John plans to fast on Wednesday for the salvation of his friend Jane. On Wednesday, instead of cooking and eating breakfast and lunch, he devotes extra time to prayer for Jane. At work, he sits in his car during lunch to have private, uninterrupted prayer. He breaks his fast at dinnertime by eating a normal meal (not overeating to make up for lost time).

## FASTING TOGETHER AT PILLAR

We will fast together on the *fourth Wednesday of every month*. During this time, we ask every member who is able to abstain from food until dinnertime, when we will break our fast.