

Jesus implied that all of His followers should fast (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14,15).

*For Him it was a matter of **when** believers would fast, not **if** they would do it.*

As we enter into a season of fasting, prayer, and spiritual renewal here at New Life—we want to help you be prepared. This brochure is being provided to help guide you in both preparation and in participation of our upcoming season of fasting.

If you have additional questions about fasting, please don't hesitate to ask your location pastor or other location leaders.

Step 1—Set Your Objective

Why are you fasting? Is it for spiritual renewal, for guidance, for healing, for the resolution of problems, for special grace to handle a difficult situation? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically.

Step 2—Make Your Commitment

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Before you fast, decide the following up front:

- How long you will fast - one meal, one day, a week, several weeks, forty days (Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts.)
- The type of fast God wants you to undertake (such as water only, or water and juices; what kinds of juices you will drink and how often)
- What physical or social activities you will restrict
- How much time each day you will devote to prayer and God's Word

Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

THINK FAST

*Steps to help you prepare
for a time of fasting*

 **newlife**
Community Church
www.newlifechicago.org

Adapted from "7 Basic Steps to Successful Fasting and Prayer" by Bill Bright

Step 3—Prepare Yourself Spiritually

The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin will hinder your prayers. Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:

- Ask God to help you make a complete list of your sins.
- Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (1 Jn 1:9).
- Seek forgiveness from those you've offended, and forgive all who hurt you (Mk 11:25; Lk 11:4; 17:3,4).
- Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you.
- Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit according to His command in Eph 5:18 and His promise in 1 Jn 5:14,15.
- Surrender your life to Jesus Christ as your Lord & Master; refuse to obey your worldly nature (Rom 12:1-2).
- Meditate on God's attributes: His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, etc.
- Begin fasting & prayer with an expectant heart (Heb 11:6).
- Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16,17).

Step 4—Prepare Yourself Physically

Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision. Physical prep makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so that you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer.

- Do not rush into your fast.
- Prepare your body. Eat smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high-fat and sugary foods.

Eat raw fruit and vegetables for two days before starting a fast. When your time of fasting has come, here are some helpful suggestions to consider:

- Avoid drugs, even natural herbal drugs & homeopathic remedies. **Medication should be withdrawn only with your physician's supervision!**
- Limit your activity. Exercise only moderately. Walk one to three miles each day if convenient and comfortable.
- Rest as much as your schedule will permit.
- Prepare yourself for temporary mental discomforts, such as impatience, crankiness, and anxiety.

Expect some physical discomforts, especially on the second day. You may have fleeting hunger pains, dizziness, or the "blahs." Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches. Physical annoyances may also include weakness, tiredness, or sleeplessness. The first two or three days are usually the hardest. As you continue to fast, you will likely experience a sense of well-being both physically and spiritually. However, should you feel hunger pains, increase your liquid intake.

Step 5—Put yourself on a schedule

For maximum spiritual benefit, set aside ample time to be alone with the Lord. Listen for His leading. The more time you spend with Him, the more meaningful your fast will be.

Morning

- Begin the day in worship, read & meditate on God's Word.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to work in you to will and to do His good pleasure according to Philippians 2:13.
- Invite God to use you. Ask Him to show you how to influence your family, your church, your community, your country, and beyond.
- Pray for His vision for your life and empowerment to do His will.

Noon

- Return to prayer and God's Word.
- Take a short prayer walk. Spend time in intercessory prayer for your community's and nation's leaders, for the world's unreached millions, for your family or special needs.

Evening

- Get alone for an unhurried time of "seeking His face."
- If others are fasting with you, meet together for prayer.

Avoid television or other distractions that may dampen your spiritual focus. When possible, spend brief times of prayer with significant others. Longer periods of time with our Lord in prayer and study of His Word are often better spent alone.

Tips on Juice Fasting

- Drinking fruit juice will decrease your hunger pains and give you some natural sugar energy. The taste and lift will motivate and strengthen you to continue.
- The best juices are made from fresh watermelon, lemons, grapes, apples, cabbage, beets, carrots, celery, or leafy green vegetables. In cold weather, you may enjoy a warm vegetable broth.
- Mix acidic juices (orange and tomato) with water for your stomach's sake.

Avoid caffeinated drinks. And avoid chewing gum or mints, even if your breath is bad. They stimulate digestive action in your stomach. When your designated time for fasting is finished, you will begin to eat again. But how you break your fast is extremely important for your physical and spiritual well-being.

Step 6—End Your Fast Gradually

Begin eating gradually. Do not eat solid foods immediately after your fast. Suddenly reintroducing solid food to your stomach and digestive tract will likely have negative, even dangerous, consequences. Try several smaller meals or snacks each day. If you end your fast gradually, the beneficial physical and spiritual effects will result in continued good health.

Here are some suggestions to help you end your fast properly:

- Break a long water fast with fruit such as watermelon.
- While continuing to drink fruit or vegetable juices, add the following: *First day:* Add a raw salad. *Second day:* Add baked or boiled potato, no butter or seasoning. *Third day:* Add a steamed vegetable. *Thereafter:* Begin to reintroduce your normal diet.

Gradually return to regular eating with several small snacks during the first few days. Start with a little soup and fresh fruit such as watermelon and cantaloupe. Advance to a few tablespoons of solid foods such as raw fruits and vegetables or a raw salad and baked potato.

Step 7—Expect Results

If you sincerely humble yourself before the Lord, repent, pray, and seek God's face; if you consistently meditate on His Word, you will experience a heightened awareness of His presence (John 14:21). The Lord will give you fresh, new spiritual insights. Your confidence and faith in God will be strengthened. You will feel mentally, spiritually, and physically refreshed. You will see answers to your prayers.

A single fast, however, is not a spiritual cure-all. Just as we need fresh infillings of the Holy Spirit daily, we also need new times of fasting before God. A 24-hour fast each week has been greatly rewarding to many Christians.

It takes time to build your spiritual fasting muscles. If you fail to make it through your first fast, do not be discouraged. You may have tried to fast too long the first time out, or you may need to strengthen your understanding and resolve. As soon as possible, undertake another fast until you do succeed. God will honor you for your faithfulness.