

Harvest Fellowship Teaching Series

Pastor CW Turner

Fasting Articles 2 of 3

“Ways We Can Fast”

Dear Friends,

As you prepare for this time of intensive prayer and fasting with God, I want to give you all the tools for your success. Any pastor who asks his or her people to go through a time of intense prayer and fasting should do all they can do to prepare them for the journey. This is my attempt to help you get the most out of this time and see why you should really participate seriously and sincerely.

I want to tell you that you shouldn't do this just so you can lose weight or change your eating habits. There are diets for that. We should all probably lose weight and change our eating habits, but this is not the purpose behind this. This time of fasting is solely for our connection with God and our preparation for the year to come. It is mine and Terri's prayer that we all gain so much spiritual understanding and insight that we will be forever changed into His image.

In this second article I want to talk about a very practical part of fasting and prayer. I want to give you some simple ways you can participate in this fast. My heart's desire for this time is that we will all as a church family participate in this time. You don't have to do what everybody else is doing. You only need to do what God wants you to do as an individual. God may not want you to completely abstain from food. You may not be physically able to do that. Any of us can abstain from a meal, or a type of food. Fasting is about denying your appetite. It is about connecting with God on a deeper level. We need this. Thank you for reading this article and for joining us on this great journey of faith

Psalm 42:1-2, “As a deer longs for the streams of water, so I long for God, the living God. When can I go stand before Him?”

This is our time to go and stand before Him. He will wash us. He will renew us. He will purge us. He will prepare us. Terri and I are looking forward to this very special time with you all.

Love and Peace

Pastors CW and Terri

Ways We Can Fast

No one is excluded from the blessing of fasting. Fasting is like Giving and Praying. God assumes we will do it. God will never expect us to do something that we can't do. No matter your physical condition or circumstances we can all fast and pray.

- **Fasting is Always About Food**

*****The reason I bring this up is because there have been those who thought fasting was about abstaining from a certain activity. For instance, too much TV or Internet or social media. While we should all abstain or limit our activities on these and other things, none of these are what the Bible calls fasting. We should limit these activities during the time of fasting so we can focus on God. Take some of that time you are spending on TV or social media etc. and spend it in the Word or in Prayer. Add this to your fasting.**

*****Fasting is to limit or abstain from physical food for the purpose of deepening our connection to God. Some may ask, "What does this have to do with my connection to God?"**

- **It is a demonstration of priorities**

*****When we fast food for connecting to God it is us saying to Him, nothing is more important to me than connecting with You. I am intently listening to you for the answers I am seeking. It is also our demonstration to God that our Spiritual Life is more important to us than our Physical Life.**

- **It is an act of surrender and humility**

*****When we fast, we are humbling ourselves before God. James, said; "God resists the proud and gives grace to the Humble." He also said, "Humble yourselves in the eyes of the Lord and he will lift you up."**

- **It is a show of desperation**

*****Fasting before the Lord shows a desperation to seek and connect with Him. It will amaze you to experience these days of fasting and how your prayer time increases and how your thought life becomes more and more about Him.**

(Psalm 37:5) "Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass."

Fasting is a time for committing your way to the Lord.

Ways We Can Fast

Six Ways you Can Participate in Fasting

1) You Can Fast Certain Foods

*****You don't have to totally abstain from food to participate or practice Biblical Fasting. You can abstain from certain foods that are bad for you or just things that you particularly enjoy. Really, fasting is about denial of one thing so you can enhance the other things. It's a tradeoff of the physical for the spiritual.**

If we abstain from certain "delicacies for a season it can actually improve our health. We will lose unwanted pounds. We will gain flexibility and movement. Back and joint pain will decrease or even disappear. This is what we might call a "Daniel Fast" referring to the time when King Nebuchadnezzar was trying to force his captives to eat his delicacies to increase their strength and vitality so they could serve him better. Daniel and his friends told the king if he would allow them to abstain from his foods and eat only vegetables and not drink his wine, they would be healthier at the end of the time than all the others. The king allowed them, and they were stronger and healthier than all those who had indulged in all the king's rich foods.

- **Fast Sweets**
- **Fast Meat or Certain Kinds of Meat**
- **Fast, Sugar, Salt, Dressings, Flavor Enhancers Etc.**

This is a mild version of fasting but works very well for those with health issues or those who are just getting started in this spiritual activity.

2) You Can Fast Certain Meals

*****I've always suggested to folks who choose this method to take the time they would spend on that meal they are fasting and use it for Bible Study or Prayer or both. Or Listen to some good Praise and Worship Music.**

This is a good one for those who are on jobs and have a lunch or supper break. You can go somewhere alone for that period and spend this time in prayer and Bible reading or worship. This can be a very special time.

If a couple chooses to fast Supper together, they could spend this time in prayer or worship or reading or even listening to some good Bible teaching or preaching. This is a time we can do as Paul told the Ephesians.

(Ephesians 5:18-19) "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; But be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

This is really a good way to get that essential time with the Lord while you fast. If you skip a meal that in and of itself is going to remind you to pray and spend that time with God.

3) You Can “Mix it Up” During the 21 Days

*****I was talking to someone the other day about this one. I told them they could fast a certain kind of food for the first week. They could fast a certain meal the second week and on the third week maybe they could fast a day or two from food and then go back to a Daniel type fast to finish with.**

Remember, it’s all about the dismissal of one thing and the bringing in of the other thing that takes you to God. I promise you, if you have a plan for you fasting that you have committed to do and you stay with it. You will during those times of denial turn to God in a new way during those times of self-denial. Remember what Jesus said.

(Luke 9:23) Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

I underlined where Jesus said this to them all. This was for all His disciples not just a few of them. We are living in a culture that does anything but self-denial. Jesus said self-denial is a part of following Him. He is not asking us to do something that he hasn’t already done. Philippians 2: 5-6 says, “He denied Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant and became obedient to death. Even the death of the Cross...”

4) You Can Do A “Juice Fast”

*****I had a friend who did this actually for 40 days. Certain juices can give you needed nutrition for extended periods of fasting. You need to be careful about certain sugars that are added to juices. Drink only 100 % juice.**

Also, a better alternative to fruit juices is to actually “juice” which a person can actually live on for extended periods. If you have a blender or a juicer you can juice certain vegetables and fruits maybe once or twice a day. Your body will get what it needs and you will be able to focus on God and enjoy your intimacy with Him.

*****During an extending time of fasting like this one you may want to supplement with some kind of broth occasionally. Sometimes when your body is shouting the loudest you can drink a cup of broth to satisfy the longing and provide your body with some protein or nutrition. It’s amazing how appreciative we can get on a long fast just for a cup of broth. Boullion is a good way to get this. Just beware of the sodium especially if you have blood pressure issues.**

5) You Can Do A “Water Only” Fast

*****This is to abstain from any kind of drinks other than water. You definitely should drink water whatever kind of fast you do. If you choose to drink only water, it will be very helpful for you. Our bodies long for water. We drink too many sugary drinks and drinks filled with chemical additives. This would be a good time to get off carbonated drinks or sweet tea or caffeine.**

If you choose this fast, I advise you also to fast some kind of food i.e., meat or sweets. During a fast we should not indulge ourselves with the rich foods we may be accustomed to. Remember, fasting is a time of self-denial. It is a time for us to give our bodies as living sacrifices to God.

(Romans 12:1-2 NIV) "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God---this is your true and proper worship. 2) Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is---His good, pleasing and perfect will."

****It is through the act of laying down your life to God that you will find His good and perfect will. The more you deny yourself the great His increase in your life and awareness. Renew your mind and your way of thinking as you come into His presence.*

6) You Can Do A "Total Food Fast"

****I saved this one for last because it is the most drastic. Depending on your health and your ability will determine whether you can do this one. To totally abstain from food is something that few of us are experienced with. Earlier I said, "Fasting is all about Food". I have said since we started fasting many years ago that a person can go without food for way longer than they think. Terri and I have fasted multiple times for 21 days on a total food fast. It can be done.*

You have to decide if you are able to do this. I would also say, be careful not to set too high a goal for yourself. Many times, we set ourselves up for failure by doing this. Also, don't gauge what you do by what someone else is doing. God will lead you into this fast the way He wants you to do it.

NO MATTER WHAT METHOD YOU CHOOSE, YOU WILL ALWAYS NEED TO DRINK PLENTY OF WATER

We can all do with less food, but no one can do without water. If you choose to do a total food fast you will need to adjust your activities for the 21 days. You are definitely going to be less able to do strenuous activities. Your stamina is going to be less and so will your strength. Your spirit will be strong. Your mind will be sharper. You will lose fat and become more flexible, and your joints will feel better. All of these are benefits of this and all kinds of fasting.

(Matthew 4:1-4) "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2) And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward he was hungry. 3) Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." 4) But he answered and said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

****Physical food is important to us we know, but more important than that is the sustaining power of the Word of God in our lives. This time of fasting is a time for us to be spiritually nourished by God and to change the very way we live and know Him.*

.....

During this time of Connecting with God and Each other I want to encourage you to contact me and let me know how you're doing. Ask me to pray for you. Ask your brothers and sisters to pray with you. As a matter of fact, it would be great for you to team up with a trusted friend who is involved in this fast for encouragement and prayer.

We are fasting as a church so during this time we won't be serving any food during our services.