WHITE WING
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FASTING

Why Fasting? | The Missing Piece |
Benefits of Biblical Fasting

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FASTING PRAYER GUIDE

Prayer Points January 2019

Fasting was an expectation of Christ for His disciples. In Matthew 6:16, He said, "When you fast" not "If you fast." He modelled fasting as an effective and necessary part of His prayer life with the Father.

Although many Christians participate in fasting for dietary and physical reasons, there are benefits reserved for those participating in fasting as a spiritual discipline. All too often Christians approach fasting as a strength of determination, a sacrifice, or an overcoming of self-will. Fasting, however, is ultimately an emptying of one's self to be filled with God achieved not by our own strength but from God's work in us (Philippians 2:12, 13) through the strength he provides (1 Peter 4:11).

Fasting serves as a compliment to the prayers we pray. In many ways it adds an extra dimension of intensity and earnest desire than our routine, normal prayers. It also moves us beyond a simple tool for seeking those things we desire and moves us toward something greater than provision, protection, or guidance—God Himself.

As you empty yourself through fasting, God promises "open wide your mouth and I will fill it." Through fasting, God promises to reward us by aligning our hearts with His purposes and desires, as "He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things" (Psalm 107:9).

PRAYER DIRECTIVES:

- Thank the Father that as you fast and earnestly seek after His purposes, He hears your prayers and responds (Ezra 8:23).
- Ask the Father to reveal His purposes to you, naming specific areas where your need His guidance (Judges 20:26).
- Tell the Father about situations in which you or your loved ones need deliverance or protection (2 Chronicles 20:3–4; Ezra 8:21–23).
- Ask the Father reveals areas of your life that are not pleasing to Him. "Pour out" your heart to Him and repent (1 Samuel 7:6; Jonah 3:5–8).
- Surrender yourself entirely to the Father's will asking that He use you for His glory (Matthew 4:1–11).
- Spend time in worship, expressing your love and devotion to the Father (Luke 2:37, Psalm 107:9).

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For more information, visit www.cogop.org unless otherwise noted.

January 6-26, 2019
21 Days of Prayer
Church-wide

January 12, 2019
CM One-day Training Intensive
Freedom Fellowship Church
Nashville, TN

January 14, 2019
AMD-12 week online certificate course
(TS 201) Pentecostal Spirituality & Theology Certificate

January 20, 2019
Prayer Simulcast
Online

January 24-26, 2019
Pentecostal Distinctives of the COGOP
Queens, New York

January 29, 2019
First Assembly Commemoration Service
First Assembly House
Murphy, North Carolina

February 19, 2019
CM LIVE! Webinar
Online

March 9, 2019
CM One-day Training Intensive
New Haven, CT

LEADING CHILDREN IN FASTING

Many churches participate in a season of prayer and fasting at the beginning of each new year. The fasts vary in length with some lasting only a day, others three days, and some twenty-one days or longer. Participants can be found fasting all foods, others only certain foods (also known as the Daniel fast), while some fast items like television, social media, and more.

While there seems to be an increased, united focus on fasting in the Church, it is very rare to hear that children are being taught about this spiritual discipline. Furthermore, often we find that children are not encouraged and invited to participate in fasting.

As a key spiritual discipline, fasting is a practical step in our Christian walk that, when complemented by prayer, helps us to empty ourselves to make room for God. It helps align our hearts with His purposes as we seek His blessing, provision, and guidance. By introducing children to fasting at an early age, we help them understand and practice this important discipline, given to us by Jesus (Matthew 6:16). If children are to be fully devoted followers of Christ, then we must encourage them to experience His presence—and what better way for them to experience His presence than through prayer and fasting?

When children participate in a fast, it should be under the watch, care, and guidance of their parents. The church can serve parents in this effort by correctly explaining to children what fasting is and the options they have for participating.

LEADING CHILDREN IN FASTING

Leading children to experience and understand the discipline of fasting is a unique opportunity for every parent and children's minister. Fasting can be taught to older children in age-appropriate and relevant ways that can lay a foundation for a child's faith to grow intelligently and purposefully. To be intentional in training children about fasting, we must consider the following:

- Proper understanding. Make sure children understand that fasting is about centering ourselves on God. It is a time that we seek after Him. We can share with them those in the Bible that participated in fasting and benefited from it. The accounts include Daniel, Jesus, Paul, Nehemiah, Anna in the Temple, Esther, Moses, and Elijah.

- Timeframe. A goal for introducing children to fasting is to encourage their success. So, don't implement a long-term fast that they will be unable to maintain. Keep their first few experiences short. Start small and build to longer periods of time.

- Give the children focus. Ask children to identify a specific need, concern, or issue that they will focus on throughout their time of prayer and fasting. Encourage them to write this down and refer to it throughout their fast.

- Model fasting. Whether you are parent or children's ministry worker, you should model for children the discipline of fasting. Let them know you are fasting and share honestly about your experience.

- Communicate with parents. For children's ministers encouraging children to participate in a time of fasting, it is always best to inform and prepare parents. Let them know that you are encouraging their child to fast and provide them with an outline of ways their child might participate.

PRACTICAL WAYS

For children, fasting all food is not encouraged. However, there are several practical ways that we can invite our children to experience fasting. While we might give children options, it is best to allow them to seek the Holy Spirit on what fast He would have them choose.

- Abstaining from certain foods. Children can participate in fasting by abstaining totally from their favorite foods. Often this will be something sugar based, such as candy, ice cream, cake, or pastries.

- Making alternate choices. For a limited time, children may choose healthier options for their meals and snacks. Just as Daniel and his friends refused to eat the King's food and chose the healthier alternatives, children may participate in fasting by choosing vegetables instead of sweets or water instead of soda.

- Unplugging from media and technology. Children can choose to fast television, video games, tablets, or the Internet for a period of time.

God desires to do a work in the hearts of our children, and He can do so through prayer and fasting. We should not ignore or be negligent in teaching our children about fasting. Through fasting, our children will learn how to hear God, respond to Him, and grow spiritually.