

January 3rd, 2016

God's best to you friend!

“Fasting? I thought that was for the super-duper Christians!” Or, “I’ve never fasted before .” Whatever your take is on fasting, I want to encourage you to prayerfully engage this coming week in a focused seeking after our Saviour and Creator. The blessings that await are worth the discipline. Jesus said, “Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5

As you seek the LORD on how you will fast from food this week, choose to step away from social media and entertainment. Turn off the TV and replace this time with prayer and reading of God's Word.

The daily readings in this guide will take us through the book of Ephesians. Take time to slow down and let the LORD speak to you. Meditate on his Word and pray back to him what you hear him saying to you.

Our great Saviour and Leader says in Matthew 7.. “When you fast..” This week of seeking the LORD in fasting and prayer is designed to re-position us to be tight in relationship with God as we prepare for the days ahead.

Each night at 6:30 pm there will be prayer at the church. Join us as we call up to God.

God's leading to you, Pastor Scott

“The greatest enemy of hunger for God  
is not poison but apple pie.

It is not the banquet of the wicked that dulls our appetite for heaven, but endless nibbling at the table of the world. It is not the X-rated video, but the prime-time dribble of triviality we drink in every night.”

— John Piper, A Hunger for God

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting.. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Matthew 6:16-18

“Fasting from any nourishment, activity, involvement or pursuit—for any season—sets the stage for God to appear. Fasting is not a tool to pry wisdom out of God's hands or to force needed insight about a decision. Fasting is not a tool for gaining discipline or developing piety (whatever that might be). Instead, fasting is the bulimic act of ridding ourselves of our fullness to attune our senses to the mysteries that swirl in and around us.”—

— Dan B. Allender, To Be Told: Know Your Story, Shape Your Future

### Questions to ask of a Bible passage:

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

## Day 7 Sunday, January 10th

**As you prepare for Sunday Worship, pray and ask God to sensitize your heart to hear from him. Read over Ephesians 1-6 in the morning before heading out. What are a few things the LORD has pressed on your heart deeply?**

**What way can you continue to fast for the rest of the year?**

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## Prayer & Fasting

Fasting to the LORD is not easy, but stepping away from food and the entanglements of the world to deepen our relationship with him is worth it. Big time.

*In 2 Chronicles 7:14, God says, "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."*

Prayer and fasting are spiritual disciplines that demonstrate our humility and desire for God. Giving up food and media for a period of time say, "I want you God more than the necessities of physical life."

As you fast, you will find yourself being humbled. You will discover more time to pray and seek God's face. And as he leads you to recognize and repent of unconfessed sin, you will experience his blessings. Fasting is a part of a disciple's life of faith in Christ.

Pause reading now and from your heart tell the LORD: "I want to know you better. Give me direction as I enter this week of giving up to get more of you.. Lead me Lord Jesus as I seek after you."

The following pages will unpack why to fast, the types of fasting and daily readings to follow and journal as you go through this week.

# Fasting in the Bible

## Old Testament

Moses fasted 40 days on behalf of Israel's sin: Deut 9:9, 18, 25-29; 10:10.

David fasted and mourned the death of Saul: 2 Sam.1:12.  
David fasted and mourned the death of Abner: 2 Sam 3:35.

David fasted and mourned the death of his child: 2 Sam 12:16.

Elijah fasted 40 days after fleeing from Jezebel: 1 Kings 19:7-18.

Ahab fasted and humbled himself before God: 1 Kings 21:27-29.

Darius fasted in concern for Daniel: Daniel 6:18-24.

Daniel fasted on behalf of Judah's sin while reading Jeremiah's prophecy: Daniel 9:1-19.

Daniel fasted regarding a mysterious vision from God: Daniel 10:3-13.

Esther fasted on behalf of her people: Esther 4:13-16.

Ezra fasted and wept for the sins of the returning remnant: Ezra 10:6-17.

Nehemiah fasted and mourned over the broken walls of Jerusalem: Nehemiah 1:4-2:10.

The people of Ninevah fasted after hearing the message of Jonah: Jonah 3.

## New Testament

Anna fasted for the redemption of Jerusalem through the com: Messiah: Luke 2:37.

Jesus fasted 40 days before his temptation and the beginning of his ministry: Matthew 4:1-11.

The disciples of John the Baptist fasted: Matthew 9:14-15.

The elders in Antioch fasted before sending off Paul and Barnabas: Acts 13:1-5.

Cornelius fasted and sought God's plan of salvation: Acts 10:30.

Paul fasted three day fast after his Damascus Road encounter: Acts 9:9.

Paul fasted 14 days while at sea on a sinking ship: Acts 27:33-34.

# Day 6 Saturday, January 9th

## Read Ephesians 6.

In vv1-9 Paul gives instructions for children/ parents and family relationships. Use this as a springboard for praying for your part in these commands. As you read the passage on spiritual armour visualize yourself putting on the armour one piece at a time.

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Prayer: for Dads and Moms, children, Grandparents.  
Any spiritual warfare item the Lord is raising..

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**Read Ephesians 5.**

As you read this chapter ask the LORD to spotlight anything that needs to be confessed as sin. How can you encourage someone else using vv 18-21?

And finally, how are you doing at submitting your whole life to Jesus and showing respect/ love to your spouse or close friends?

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Prayer: Pray for married couples/ your spouse, stronger marriages in Christ, What opportunity is the LORD calling you to make the most of?

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**God wants his disciples to fast.**

Matthew 6:16-17

“And whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face.

Jesus said “when you fast” in the context of also saying “when you pray” and “when you give”.

**Jesus fasted.**

Matthew 4:2

“And after he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he then became hungry.”

At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry he fasted forty days. He knew he was going to need spiritual strength to fulfill his purposes. Fasting may make us physically weak, but we will become spiritually stronger and more prepared to do God’s work.

**The early church fasted.**

Acts 13:3 (also Acts 14:23)

“Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they sent them away.”

The church fasted for Paul and Barnabas whom the Holy Spirit had set apart for his use. Later, leaders were appointed after a season of prayer and fasting.

**Fasting demonstrates humility before God.**

Psalms 35:13

“But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer kept returning to my bosom.

Humility allows us to experience the grace of God, who delights in answering the prayers of his children.

# Four kinds of Fasting

Here are four ways to fast:

## 1. Normal fast.

In a normal fast, a person goes without food for a predetermined amount of time—1 day, 3 days, 1 week or longer. Water is allowed and necessary of course. Extreme care should be taken with long fasts, especially if there are any underlying medical conditions. It is wise to consult your doctor if you are planning on embarking on a long fast.

## 2. Partial fast.

This fast allows certain foods, or is on a schedule that includes limited eating, possibly one meal or two meals a day, or only eating vegetables for several days. Daniel and John the Baptist followed this sort of fast, while John Wesley ate only bread and water for many days as his fast. This is a better option for those who cannot do a water fast.

## 3. Juice fast.

This is the same as 'normal' fast, except the one fasting also eats fresh vegetables or drinks fruit juice.

## 4. Object fast.

Some people decide to fast from something completely unrelated to food: novels, entertainment (television, movies, facebook, social media)

# Day 4 Thursday, January 7th

## Reading Ephesians 4.

Of the character traits listed of the Christian calling in vv1-3, which ones are you stronger in? One hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.. What does this tell you about God? Check out the practical applications at the end of this chapter, what do your hear from the LORD?

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Prayer: Unity at Ambassador Baptist Church—treating others well, Prayer for our Haitian brothers and sisters, Pastor Sanon.

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### Reading Ephesians 3.

What is the mystery Paul speaks of that God has revealed to him? V6. In vv14-21 Paul prays one of the most powerful prayers that we are invited to pray as well. Meditate on this prayer. What is it that God wants to bring into our lives in a deeper way?

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Prayer: Strength to keep on fasting, Prayer that this experience of Christ's love would increase in my inner person.

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### 1. Set your objective and commit to a type of fast.

- Choose the type of fast God wants you to undertake: water only, water and juices, what kinds of juices, how often?
- Determine how much time and when you will daily devote to prayer and God's Word.

### 2. Be Expectant

Be reminded that the Lord listens to a prayer from the heart. Be true and contrite as we expect to hear direction from our God.

### 3. Prepare yourself spiritually.

The very foundation of fasting is repentance. Unconfessed sin hinders your prayers. Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended and forgive all who have hurt you. Make things right as the Holy Spirit leads.

### 4. Prepare yourself physically.

Fasting requires physical precautions. If you are taking medication or have a chronic ailment, consult your doctor first before beginning the fast.

### 5. Lessen physical activities.

Limit your physical and social activity during this period. Conserve your energy and devote more time to prayer and reading the Bible.

### 6. Be in faith.

Be strong and focused in prayer as you dedicate more time in fellowship with the Father. Expect God to answer. Maintain a thankful heart throughout the fast and after. Be clear about your faith goals believing God to meet them.

## Caution

In spite of the absolute safety and benefits of fasting, there are certain persons who should not fast without professional supervision.

For example:

- Persons who are physically too thin or emaciated.
- Persons who are prone to anorexia, bulimia, or other eating disorders.
- Those who suffer weakness or anemia.
- Persons who have tumors, bleeding ulcers, cancer, blood diseases, or who have heart disease.
- Those who suffer chronic problems with kidneys, liver, lungs, heart, or other important organs.
- Individuals who take insulin for diabetes, or suffer any other blood sugar problem such as hyperglycemia.
- Women who are pregnant or nursing.
- For people taking prescription drugs, do not abruptly stop without consulting your doctor.

Consult your doctor before you begin your fast but be aware that many doctors have not been trained in this area and so their understanding may be limited.

Fasting can be a painful admission that I am not free, that my life is enslaved, obsessed or addicted to external things such as food, drink, co-dependent relationships, sex, television, privacy and the like.

Albert Hasse

## Day 2 Tuesday, January 5th

### Reading Ephesians 2

This chapter gives us a before and after picture of who we are in relationship with Jesus Christ. Write down below what strikes you today about your position before and after Christ became real to you.

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Ephesians 2:11-22 focus on the new unified group being brought near to God. What is the unifying factor, and what is our role in this?

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Prayer: one character trait of God revealed in this passage, pray for our missionaries: Bruno, Kathleen Soucy in Latin America, Conrad and Fiona Kwok in Thailand.

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**Reading Ephesians 1** (audio version [Biblegateway.com](http://Biblegateway.com))

As we begin a new year it is good to be reminded of our true identity in Christ. What God says about us. In Ephesians 1, Paul identifies specifically how we are blessed in God in vv. 3-14. Read over these verses slowly asking the Lord to impress 1 or 2 of these blessings into your life.

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What does the Lord want us to know from the prayer in vv15-23?

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Prayer: people to pray for, a trait of God to thank him for, a direction in life the Lord is calling you into.

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**1. Seek the Lord.**

Commit to prayer and Bible reading during the times you usually allocate for meals. Join us in the evenings for prayer from 6:30–7:30 PM. Remain accountable to someone you know is fasting. Ask for prayer and strength from a fellow faster.

**2. Commit to change.**

Whatever God tells you or puts his finger upon, apply it immediately. If you need to make restitution, immediately contact people you have broken relationships with. If there are habits that need to change, make the adjustment immediately.

**3. Pray for suggested items.**

Pray for people listed in our bulletin and pray specifically for direction from God in your own life. Pray for direction on where God is taking Ambassador Baptist Church. Be prepared to write down what you are sensing from him.

**4. Saturate your mind with the Word of the LORD**

We must fill our mind with the Word of God and saturate it fully. Although our body may hunger, our soul must be filled with the spiritual food that we crave and that is enough to strengthen us to deny our flesh. Consider a fast from food as a spiritual feast.

Follow the daily Bible reading guides as we go through Ephesians over the week.

## During a Fast

### 5. Put yourself on a schedule.

For maximum spiritual benefit, set aside a good amount of time each day to be alone with the LORD. Listen for his leading. The more time you spend with him the more meaningful your fast will be.

- Praise and worship
- Confession and repentance of sin
- Read and meditate on God's Word, on knees?
- Pray for his vision for your life and empowerment to do his will.
- Spend time in intercessory prayer for your family, church, world's needs, etc.
- Take spiritual prayer walks
- If others are fasting with you, meet together for prayer.
- Avoid television, computer games, internet entertainment surfing, movies, parties or other distractions that may dampen your spiritual focus.

### 6. Attend Prayer meetings.

Work at coming out to our prayer gatherings from 6:30–7:30 PM each night of the week.

### 7. Have the Right Motive.

Remember that your motive in fasting is to glorify God, to listen to him and be more intimate with him and to bring your burdens to him. When your motives are right, God will honour your seeking heart and bless your time with him in a special way.

## Breaking a Fast

### 1. End your fast gradually.

Begin eating gradually. Do not eat solid foods immediately after your fast. Suddenly reintroducing solid food to your stomach and your digestive tract will likely have negative, even dangerous, consequences. Try several smaller meals or snacks. If you end your fast gradually, the beneficial spiritual and physical effect will result in continued good health. You may start with fruits, fruit juice, salads, and soups, then gradually eat more solid foods.

Overall, the following four factors represent what we are trying to accomplish when breaking a fast.

- frequent meals to less frequent meals
- Small meals to larger meals
- Easy to digest to harder to digest
- Less variety to more variety
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### 2. Continue to pray.

Don't let your prayer end on the day you finish your fast. Build from the momentum you gained during your fast. Let it transform your prayer and devotional life. Carry the newfound passion with you throughout the year.

### 3. Expect greater intimacy with God.

Pray for the items on your prayer list and other items as God the Spirit leads you. Lift up requests using a prayer list at the back for our church family, our city, government etc..

### 4. Expect the joy of God's presence.

Psalm 16:11 Let us bask in the fullness of joy in the