

## United Day of Fasting and Prayer Thursday, September 28, 2000

### A GUIDE TO FASTING By Pastor Rick Warren

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that is taught in the Bible. Jesus expected His followers to fast (Matthew 6:16-18) and He said that God rewards fasting.

#### WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting, according to the Bible, means to voluntarily reduce or eliminate your intake of food for a specific time and purpose. There are many types of fasts:

- A Normal Fast – means to abstain from all food
- A Partial Fast – means to eliminate certain foods or specific meals

#### WHY FAST?

There are many good reasons, and even health benefits to fasting. However, our UNITED DAY OF FASTING for the Leadership Retreat is for three primary reasons:

1. **Fasting gives you more time for prayer.** You can use the time you'd normally spend eating in prayer for what God wants to do among us this weekend. In the Bible, fasting was always connected with prayer. Acts 13:2-3 *While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.*
2. **Fasting demonstrates the depth of your desire when praying for something.** It shows you mean business with God – you are serious enough about your prayer request to pay a personal price. God honors deep desire and praying in faith.  
Joel 1:14 *Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord.*  
Joel 2:12 *"Even now," declares the Lord, "return to Me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning."*
3. **Fasting releases God's supernatural power.** It is a tool we can use when there is opposition to God's will. Satan would like nothing better than to cause division, discouragement, defeat, depression and doubt among us. United prayer and fasting has always been used by God to deal a decisive blow to the enemy!  
Ezra 8:23 *"So we fasted and prayed to God about this, and He answered our prayer."*  
Isaiah 58:6 *God says, "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?"*

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF FASTING

Often in the Bible, God's people fasted immediately before a major victory, miracle, or answer to prayer. It prepared them for a blessing!

- Moses fasted before he received the Ten Commandments. Exodus 34:28

- The Israelites fasted before a miraculous victory. 2 Chronicles 20:2
- Daniel fasted in order to receive guidance from God. Daniel 9:3, 21-22
- Nehemiah fasted before beginning a major building project. Nehemiah 1:4
- Jesus fasted during His victory over temptation. Luke 4:2
- The first Christians fasted during decision making times. Acts 13:2-3

## **TWO CAUTIONS:**

1. Remember that fasting is not “earning” an answer to prayer. God cannot be blackmailed by human effort. God wants to answer our prayers and He answers out of grace. Fasting simply prepares us for God’s answer.
2. Fast only if your health allows it at this time. If you are able only to do a partial fast - do it in faith and God will honor your intentions.

## **NOW, DECIDE WHAT TYPE OF FAST YOU’LL FOLLOW:**

Possible Options:

- A Normal Fast – skip the next three meals
- A Partial Fast – skip one or two meals
- A “Juice” Fast – drink only fruit or vegetable juices during meal times

**Note:** You should always drink water while fasting

## **NEXT, DECIDE WHERE YOU WILL GO TO FAST AND PRAY:**

Draw apart as often as possible today and get alone with the Lord. Plan where you will go to be with Him. If your schedule permits consider going to a favorite place that draws you closer to the Lord. Jesus often went to a mountaintop or the Garden of Gethsemane to be alone with the Father! You might want to come to church and find a quiet place of prayer with Him. Take your Bible and use this Prayer Guide to go back over what you have written each day. Write out your prayer for what you are expecting God to do in your life this weekend. Pray for our pastors, staff and one another as leaders within our church, as well as the families coming to:

- Get closer to God!
- Get closer to each other!
- Go deeper with God!

*For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom His whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than we all ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

Ephesians 3:14-21