

Preparing For Your Fast



January 7-27, 2024



COMMUNITY CHURCH
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Make plans to begin 2024 in prayer!

The way we start always matters. At Community, we have set our hearts to be “pray first” people. We believe that prayer isn’t the last resort but our first response to everything. Together, we faithfully seek God first, trusting in His power alone to create a lasting impact in our lives, church, and community. Our Lord made it clear in Matthew 6:33 that we should always seek His kingdom first.

For this reason, during the month of January, we spend 21 days pressing into His presence through prayer and fasting. We will seek God collectively as a church from January 7th until January 27th, believing in Him to do all He wants to do in and through us.

We pray because we believe the power of prayer deepens our dependence on Him, gives us spiritual clarity, and strengthens our faith. When we pray, we choose to put everything in God’s hands, knowing that He will show up in every aspect of our lives and in the lives of those around us. Prayer also deepens our intimacy with a God who hears us and invites us to be involved in His plan. We pray with confidence, knowing our prayers are powerful and can bring about change in any circumstance.

We fast because there is a connection between sacrificing comfort and greater clarity and revelation from God. The motivation for fasting is to draw closer to the heart of God. Fasting helps us break the power of the flesh in our lives and leads us to feed on the Spirit of God.

Biblical fasting always has to do with eliminating distractions for a spiritual purpose. It hits the reset button of our soul and renews us from the inside out.

Perhaps you might fast one meal a day or one whole day a week. Maybe there are certain elements in your diet that you might remove, such as meats, sweets, or bread. You might want to refocus on certain areas in your life that are out of balance. For instance, you could choose to stop using social media or watch television for the duration of the fast.

Our desire is for you to love and live like Jesus – not because it's something you ought to do, but because it is the path to abundant life.

What is Fasting?

"Fasting is a wonderful discipline and a habit God has given his people. We see many different spiritual purposes in Scripture: repentance, humility, devotion in worship, and seeking the Spirit's guidance. We also see in scripture that it's done both collectively and individually.

Matthew 6:16-18 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶ When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others 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 9:14-15 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁴ Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"

¹⁵ Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast."

Luke 18:9-14 New International Version (NIV)

⁹ To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' ¹³ "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

¹⁴ "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Acts 27:33-37 New International Version (NIV)

³³ Just before dawn, Paul urged them all to eat. "For the last fourteen days," he said, "you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food—you haven't eaten anything. ³⁴ Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head." ³⁵ After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶ They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. ³⁷ Altogether, there were 276 of us on board.

Nehemiah 9:1-3 New International Version (NIV)

¹On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and putting dust on their heads. ² Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the sins of their ancestors. ³ They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day and spent another quarter in confession and in worshipping the Lord their God.

1. In fasting, we repent and turn away from those things which suck us in and draw us away from God.
2. In fasting, we humble ourselves. We recognize our need for God to meet us and change us.
3. In fasting, we devote ourselves to worship. We are made for worship of God and nothing else. We truly live when we are worshipping Him.
4. In fasting, we are seeking God's guidance and leading through the times we are now living in and those still ahead of us.
5. Fasting does not change God. Fasting changes us. We fast in order that all things that cling to our spirit, soul, and body can be stripped away, and only Jesus remains.

Fasting Guidelines

Fasting may be a new thing for you, so we have some instructions below to guide you on how to go about fasting and what to do during that time.

Types of Fast

Selective Fast

This type of fasting involves removing certain elements from your diet. An example of a selective fast is the Daniel Fast, during which you remove meat, sweets, and bread from your diet and consume water and juice for fluids and fruits and vegetables for food.

Partial Fast

This fast is sometimes called the "Jewish Fast" and involves abstaining from eating any type of food in the morning and afternoon. This can correlate to specific times of the day, such as 6:00 am to 3:00 pm or from sunup to sundown.

Complete Fast

In this type of fast, you drink only liquids, typically water, with light juices as an option.

Soul Fast

This fast is a great option if you do not have much experience fasting food, have health issues that prevent you from fasting food, or if you wish to refocus certain areas of your life that are out of balance.

For example, you might choose to stop using social media or watching television for the duration of the fast and then carefully bring that element back into your life in healthy doses at the conclusion of the fast.

The timing of your fast is not as important as the strength of your focus on God as you fast.

You may also choose to fast at other times during the year for your own spiritual development. It's typical to fast a single meal, a whole day, or three days or more.

What to do during the Fast

It's important that you use the time you are sacrificing to focus on God. Although you are stripping away some things, the purpose is to replace them with the most important things. What will those things be? They should be the foundations of prayer, worship, and the Word of God.

1. Set apart/schedule a time each day to

Read the Word/Devotional Guide

Mediate- reread and think on a particular passage(s)

Memorize scripture

Pray

Worship through song.

Join in for daily devotionals with Pastor Nate on Jumpstart at 7 am

Sit in silence – "Be still and know that He is God."

Preparing for a fast

1. If you have never fasted, here are a few options to consider

a. Start by skipping a single meal

b. Skip breakfast and lunch but eat dinner.

c. Many find it helpful to fast for 24 hours, skipping dinner on day one and breakfast and lunch on day two, but then eating dinner on the second day.

2. When the groans and pains come, remember you are intentionally fasting and that you're doing it to focus on God. Let the hunger pains remind you of your spiritual hunger, and intentionally use that to feed on Christ (focus on Him and your need for Him).

Ending a fast

Toward the end of your fast, you might want to introduce small portions of foods that are more easily digested; that way, you don't overwhelm your digestive system. Drink plenty of water and supplement with electrolytes as you transition.

1. Below are a few examples of what to eat to break your fast.

Smoothies, Dried fruits, Soups, Vegetables, Healthy fats.

2. Ending Non-food fast

Do not jump back into the same amount of consumption or time spent on what you gave up (like social media). Maintain habits formed during the fast

3. Set new boundaries based on what the Lord did in your heart

Consider continuing to fast one or two days a week consistently, putting limits on time spent on things that turn us from good, even good things. Set/schedule that time to be with God in prayer and the Word.

Remember, this is about His Glory!