Fasting and Prayer for Spiritual Breakthroughs
Adapted from The Guide to Prayer and Fasting,
The Student Volunteer Movement 2

Generally when the Bible talks about fasting, it is referring to the abstaining from food, certain foods or meals, and even at times water (though this was only done rarely and for short periods of time). Fasting is one of the great foundation pillars of the Christian faith. It was a vital part of the practice of the early church and the great results that accompanied it were evidently seen and indisputable in those days.

The apostle Paul lived a fasted lifestyle, in fact 2 Corinthians 11:27, which is a verse in the midst of his litany of experiences for the gospel’s sake, reads, “…In weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” It wasn’t enough for him to communicate that he merely fasted, but that he did so often.

Jesus fasted (Matthew 4:2). In fact His ministry did not commence until two occurrences took place. The first was His baptism by John and the Holy Spirit descending upon Him, and the second was His 40 days in the wilderness where He fasted and was tempted by the devil. No miracle or healing had taken place until after both of these events happened. The first revealed His divinity and chosen Sonship by the Father, and the second revealed how as a common human being spiritual power can be unveiled. In Joel 2:15 we are given a challenge that was completely normal for the Israelite community to receive. “Blow the trumpet in Zion. Consecrate a fast. Call a sacred assembly.” The Lord was communicating a lot in the whole of chapter 2, but specifically was highlighting the place and priority of the discipline of fasting, specifically in the days nearing when the Lord returns.

To see our campuses impacted with a spirit of revival, to see our fellowships consumed with wholeheartedness toward Jesus, to see our churches living as if they really believed the Bible, to see people from every people group given the opportunity to respond to Jesus’ unconditional acceptance and love, we must embrace what these Biblical examples understood and lived by…the reality of God’s call to fasting and prayer.

Some Benefits of Fasting
The benefits of fasting are quite extensive and the Scripture points to numerous results of the person who fasts. Here are a few of them:

🌟 Delighting ourselves in the Lord (Psalm 37:4)
🌟 An increase of spiritual fervor and zeal
Answered prayer – Ezra 8:23
Increase of spiritual fruit
Increase of faith and belief
Increase of miracles in our midst
A greater sensitivity to the things of God – Jeremiah 29:13,14
A greater revelation of the scriptures – Daniel 9:2,3,21,22
Aids us in overcoming temptations and trials
Prepares us to meet and defeat the attacks of the enemy – Jeremiah 29:10-13
It switches our basic disposition from a natural focus to an elevated spiritual focus
Can increase our humility before God and others – Psalm 39:10

How Do I Fast?
The kind of fast you choose should be based on the leading of the Holy Spirit and your particular circumstances.

1. “Daniel” Fast. Dan. 1:8-13 The focus here is not on a complete abstaining from all food, but on the restriction of one’s diet. Generally this highlights a fast from animal and fish products and extravagant foods (i.e. Sweetened foods, foods with yeast, etc.) seeks to focus instead on fruits and vegetables. Another form of the partial fast might include omitting a particular meal each day, thus limiting the quantity of food consumed.

2. Partial Fast. In a partial fast there is an abstaining of food from sundown to sun up. There is an evening meal. The meal is not to gorge oneself but to eat normally. This is also usually accompanied by abstaining from alcohol.

2. Normal Fast. Matt. 6:16-17 In a normal fast, we continue to drink water or liquids but abstain from all food and we attempt to spend the time normally used in eating to seek the Lord. It is also possible to fast from one or meals for a period of time, perhaps eating one meal, while maintaining liquids.

3. Complete Fast. Acts 9:9 There is the complete abstaining from both food and water. This cannot be done for more than a day or two without the possibility of some serious health concerns.

The beginning of a fast is always the toughest. Our bodies are used to a certain amount of food intake and when we change that intake, it responds. The process of a fast can be broken into 4 stages.

Stage 1 is the starting portion of the fast and requires 100% effort and will power to get started. You feel hungry often, your mouth might dry out, you have little energy, and you might get headaches. Your body is cleaning out the toxins in your system and these can be the results. Once you get beyond the third or fourth day, hunger actually will subside
and eventually leave. The headaches will also cease. This is where the fast moves into Stage 2.

This stage is much easier to continue with as you actually gain a bit of strength after having lost much of it (don’t go and workout or anything, however). It takes about 30% effort and self-will to continue with the fast at this stage.

Stage 3 moves you into more strength as the weakness continues to leave your body even though you are not necessarily putting a ton of food back in. The fast can actually become routine in this stage. Then Stage 4 highlights the breaking of the fast. This is an important part. Many people say it takes about as much effort (100%) to break it as it does to begin it.

Our appetites for food will need to be overcome and overruled during the fast. This is only done through self-will and from the assistance of the Lord. Do not think that the Lord will simply take away a desire for food. He will give strength, but we must make an active choice to fast and to remain committed to the fast. If you fail early on, give yourself grace, commit yourself again and continue on with the fast. Often it takes 2 or 3 starts to keep on a fast. The key is getting through those first few days that prove extremely difficult and coming to the place where you’ve fasted long enough for hunger to start to leave. The body craves food at stated and regular times, but the mind also becomes on edge and reminds the body of the time for a meal. It’s both a physical and mental battle.

You will find that your mind constantly tries to think of food (imagine that). This can be overcome through distracting yourself and by entering into a spirit of prayer as often as possible. It is imperative that you drink lots of water and other liquids during the fast. Hydration is very important to maintaining health. Each time a regular meal time comes around deliberately drink a glass or two of water and distract yourself in some purposeful activity.

* Much of this writing has been adapted from Franklin Hall’s article “Atomic Power With God Through Prayer and Fasting”.

Some Practical notes from Pastor Glenn

- Read God’s Word, Reflect, and Pray. **This is not an exercise in self discipline and endurance, or simply trying to lose weight, but obedience to God and a time to seek God’s face.** God may use this time to bring to your attention things he has been wanting to reveal to you. Jot notes of impressions you get in prayer. Repent of any sin he brings to mind.
• Expect to not feel real spiritual during the first 2-3 days of a normal fast, if you are fasting that long. You may actually feel more irritable, this is an opportunity to rely on God’s Spirit to fill you in fresh ways. Your body will go through several stages, and in the first day or two you may have to take more will power to maintain your fast. You may sense God’s presence more after the normal fast.

• Stop drinking caffeine – 3-4 days before you fast if you consume caffeine with any regularity. You won’t be dealing with a caffeine withdrawal along with everything else. Caffeine is also mild diuretic. Or you may cut down gradually in the midst of the fast so as not to suffer caffeine headaches.

• Drink lots of water, at least 8-10 glasses a day. Some people drink real fruit or vegetable juice to maintain electrolyte balance. 1-3 times in the day.

• Don’t do strenuous work outs. Your body is going through adjustments and the extra strain is probably not best.

• Begin small. Fast for a day, or two. Or do a Daniel Fast or partial fast.

• Partial Fasts –& Daniel - he simply ate fruits and vegetables for an extended period of time (Daniel 1:8-17). Or eat one regular meal a day and fast for the other two meals. For instance just eating dinner (regular portions) and fasting during the day.

• Give any money you may save from not eating out to the poor or a ministry that meets the needs of the poor. Isaiah 58:6-7 We suggest giving to our Food Pantry, The River of Life Mission or Compassion International. If you would like NHK to help you designate it as a special offering on the tithe envelope with “River of Life” or “Compassion” and we will forward the amount to them.

• Other kinds of Fasts: we can also fast from other things, TV, Sex – only with the mutual agreement of your spouse for a limited time, if you aren’t married, you should already abstain.

• If you have a medical condition – consult your physician before undertaking this adventure.

• Don’t be legalistic. Prayerfully consider if you need to customize your fast for health reasons or as the Lord directs. It is meant to be an exercise to draw us closer to God, not to display our discipline.
Prepare our Hearts as we Pray

- **Day 1** “Strengthen My Hands” (Nehemiah 6:9)
  (Praying for God’s power for the tasks that are before us)

  A. **PRAISE:**
  We confess that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with You, O God, and the Word was You. The Word was in the beginning with You. (John 1:1-2)

  You are but one God, the Father from whom all things came and for whom I live; and there is but one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom I live. (1 Corinthians 8:6)

  I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forever. For great is Your love toward me, and you have delivered my soul from the depths of the grave. (Psalm 86:12-13)

  B. **CONFESSION:**
  Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)

  Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you do not desire sacrifice, or I would bring it; You do not delight in burnt offerings. The sacrifices You desire are a broken spirit; a broken spirit and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. (Psalm 51:14-17)

  C. **PETITION:**
  May I consider the members of my earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, O God, Your wrath is coming. I used to walk in these ways, in the life I once lived. (Colossians 3:5-7)

  May I be strong and courageous and careful to obey Your Word; may I not turn from it to the right or to the left, that I may act wisely wherever I go. (Joshua 1:7)

- **Day 2** “Go With Us” (Exodus 33:15)
  (Praying for God’s presence for the journey that lies ahead)

  A. **PRAISE:**
  I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and faithfulness You have shown Your servant. (Genesis 32:10)

  You are the God who answered me in the day of my distress and have been with me wherever I have gone. (Genesis 35:3)

  God Almighty, You are the shepherd, the Rock of Israel, who helps me and blesses me with blessings from heaven above. (Genesis 49:24-25)

  B. **CONFESSION:**
  My trespasses are multiplied before You, and my sins testify against me. For my transgressions are with me, and I know my iniquities; transgressing and lying against You, O Lord, turning my back on You, Speaking oppression and revolt, uttering lies my heart has conceived. (Isaiah 59:12-13)

  We have sinned with our fathers; we have committed iniquity and have acted wickedly. (Psalm 106:6)
C. PETITION:

O Lord, I pray, let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and to the prayer of Your servants who delight in revering Your name. (Nehemiah 1:11)

Guard my soul and rescue me; let me not be ashamed, for I take refuge in You. May integrity and uprightness protect me, for I wait for You. (Psalm 25:20-21)

Day 3 “Protect Them From The Evil One” (John 17:15)
(Praying for God’s protection unto the purposes of His kingdom)

Praise - (Psalm 89: 1-2, 5-8)
Confession- (Psalm 33:15, Numbers 14:17-18)
Petition- (2 Corinthians 1:12, Proverbs 4:14)