

Saint Philip
PRAYER
and Fasting
It's A LIFESTYLE



Reverend William D. Watley, Ph.D., Senior Pastor

240 Candler Road, SE
Atlanta, Georgia 30317

(404) 371-0749
www.saintphilip.org

THE FASTING LIFESTYLE

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What is Fasting?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline, practice or method that consists of denying our bodies of certain necessities (such as food and liquid) or enjoyments or pleasures, for a specified period of time, for the purpose of building and strengthening our relationship with God. Even though we may be seeking certain blessings or requests from God, the purpose of fasting is not our will or wants but deepening, expanding, broadening, lengthening and heightening our relationship with the fullness of who God is as incarnate and manifest in our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, who is God's abiding, gifting, empowering and comforting presence among us. When we engage in a fast we are saying to God, "Above any and everyone else, and above any and everything else, I love you; I want you and I want your will for my life and I want to do your will as I seek to walk in the vision you have for my life that is greater than any vision I can have for myself or others can have for me."

Sacrifice of certain food and liquids will have an impact on our health and will produce many positive benefits. However, fasting is more than a diet for better health. The health benefits and other blessings we receive from fasting are secondary not the primary focus. Since our focus is on God, prayer is a fundamental, foundational, and necessary ingredient of fasting. Prayer not only consists of speaking to God but it can also involve spending some time meditating or just being still as we seek to tune in, connect with or log on to the presence of God. We should also spend some time reading and meditating on the word of God as we fast.

Fasting in the Bible

According to some scholars and researchers, fasting as a way of connecting with God is mentioned over 70 times in the Bible. As the ancients sought to build, strengthen and deepen their relationship with God they fasted to seek God's intercession in a crisis; they fasted to receive power to defeat the devil, who is the biblical embodiment and symbol of the reality of evil. They also fasted as a way of expressing grief and sorrow for loss. The Lord Jesus Christ fasted to seek clarity and strength for his life and ministry (Matthew 4: 1-4). Our Lord also instructed his disciples and followers regarding the proper way to fast (Matthew 6: 16-18). The members of the early church also fasted to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their decision making (Acts 13: 1-3; 14: 21-13).

Fasting and Spiritual Warfare

Ephesians 6: 10-20 teaches us that as believers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are engaged in spiritual warfare as we seek to do greater works in his name and for his kingdom and as we seek to walk in God's vision for our lives. Fasting when combined with prayer as a means of self-denial that seeks greater revelation and power from God can help sharpen our focus and strengthen our resolve to pray through certain situations to victory as we engage evil in its multifarious manifestations that range from the subtle and hidden to outright attacks. An old saint who prayed and fasted often was once asked by her grandchild why she fasted or "turned her plate down" so often. She replied, "I fast and deny myself so the Lord will know how serious and earnest I am about what I am praying for." Great breakthroughs and victories require great sacrifices.

I am a personal witness of the power of prayer, fasting and seeking to spend quality time in the presence of God on a regular basis. I have been engaged in prayer, fasting and meditation for over 40 years. I can tell a distinct difference in my walk with the Lord, in my boldness in

spiritual warfare, in the power to proclaim the word of God (as a pastor and prophetically), and in miracles, signs and wonders I have seen God perform, when I am engaged in some kind of fasting on a regular basis.

Fasting here at Saint Philip

Over the past few years, we, as a community of faith, have engaged in two seasons of fasting. In September as we prepared ourselves for the Fall Revival, we have participated in a 10 day Daniel Fast (Daniel 1: 1-16). At the beginning of the year as we have sought God's direction for the New Year, we have committed ourselves to the 21 day Daniel Fast (Daniel 10: 1-19).

During the most recent 21 day Daniel Fast, I, like a number of you, began to sense a spiritual shift in the atmosphere of our church. I began to feel that God was preparing us for a new move of the Holy Spirit in our midst. When the Daniel Fast ended, I felt we were on the threshold of a new season of spiritual breakthroughs, both in this congregation and in many of our own individual lives. After some time of prayer and reflection, I have been lead to believe fasting as a spiritual discipline and regimen should continue as an ongoing practice of our regular lives. Fasting should be more than a biannual observance; rather it should be a basic aspect of our regular weekly lifestyle. Therefore, every Tuesday will be **Fast Day** here at Saint Philip. I have chosen Tuesday as **Fast Day** because our church-wide Bible Study, under the leadership of the Pastor, takes place on Tuesday evening. I have made a commitment that every Tuesday I am in town, or do not have a denominational conflict, to be present at Bible Study on Tuesday. Hopefully more of us will make the commitment to be present in Bible Study or online on Tuesday. Bible Study participation is desired, but not necessary to participate in the Tuesday **Fast Day**.

I also recognize with family, travel, work and community commitments a number of us have, every Tuesday will be a challenge or impossible for a number of us on any given week. Therefore, when Tuesday is not

feasible or possible, we are encouraged to pick another day of the week, and fast on that day until our Tuesdays become available or feasible.

Types of Fasts

When we participate in the Daniel Fast for a specified time period, the food choices are prescribed:

All fruits: These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned. Fruits include but are not limited to apples, apricots, bananas, blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, cantaloupes, cherries, cranberries, figs, grapefruits, grapes, guavas, honeydew melons, kiwis, lemons, limes, mangoes, nectarines, oranges, papayas, peaches, pears, pineapples, plums, prunes, raisins, raspberries, strawberries, tangelos, tangerines, watermelon

All vegetables: These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned. Vegetables include but are not limited to artichokes, asparagus, beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, chili peppers, collard greens, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, ginger root, kale, leeks, lettuce, mushrooms, mustard greens, okra, onions, parsley, potatoes, radishes, rutabagas, scallions, spinach, sprouts, squashes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, turnips, watercress, yams, zucchini, veggie burgers are an option if you are not allergic to soy.

All whole grains: including but not limited to whole wheat, brown rice, millet, quinoa, oats, barley, grits, whole wheat pasta, rice cakes and popcorn.

All nuts and seeds: including but not limited to sunflower seeds, cashews, peanuts, sesame. Also nut butters including peanut butter without sugar.

All legumes: These can be canned or dried. Legumes include but are not limited to dried beans, pinto beans, green beans, split peas,

lentils, black eyed peas, kidney beans, black beans, cannellini beans, and white beans.

All quality oils: including but not limited to olive, canola, grape seed, peanut, and sesame.

Beverages: spring water, distilled water and pure juices.

Other: tofu, soy products, vinegar, seasonings, salt, herbs and spices.

However, when we are fasting on a regular basis, when one considers the size and variety of age groups, schedules and lifestyles in this congregation, we offer several types of fasts or fasting options for your prayerful consideration:

1. Juice and water on Tuesday or another day every week
2. The Daniel Fast on Tuesday or another day every week
3. Fasting from 6am to 6pm, or from sun up to sun down and then eating a light meal, on Tuesday or another day every week
4. Fasting from meat, caffeine and/or sugar on Tuesday or another day every week
5. One meal a day whether breakfast, lunch or dinner on Tuesday or another day every week

Fasting Concerns

During the Fast, we will be praying as a church and as individuals for the following concerns:

1. We will be praying and fasting that the presence of God will be so powerful among us that every seat for every worship service and every bible study will be filled with persons hungering and seeking a closer walk and deeper relationship with God.
2. We will be praying and fasting for peace, justice, righteousness, civility in our nation and the world. We will be praying for the destruction of racism, sexism, economic exploitation and all manner of hostility and prejudice regarding color, class and religious belief. We will be praying for biblical morality that is loving, tolerant and merciful. We will be praying for the realization of the vision of Isaiah 11: 1-9 and 65: 17-25.
3. We will be praying and fasting for our own spiritual, physical, mental and emotional health that includes deliverance from any weight or sin that has us in bondage or any generational curse with which we must battle.
4. We will be praying and fasting for the health and wellbeing of our families, loved ones and relationships.
5. We will be praying and fasting for financial solvency that not only involves overflow that comes from giving according to the Bible (tithes and offering), but also includes sound financial management and deliverance from debt.
6. We will be praying and fasting for deliverance and resolution from closely held situations, circumstances, issues and dilemmas only we and God know about that we do not feel free to share with anyone else.

Guidelines for Fasting

1. Before you begin to fast on a regular basis, consult a qualified medical professional. If you are in poor health or if you have concerns about your ability to fast, consult a qualified medical professional first. There are several fasting options available to you. (see page 3)
2. We must be careful not to become so focused on whatever we are sacrificing that we fail to pray as we fast. Fasting has no spiritual power, no spiritual purpose, and no divine blessing or sanction without prayer. As we pray through our six petitions, we should ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in our praying. Saints of another age used to pray, “Lord teach me how to pray and what to pray for.”
3. Find an appropriate fasting partner. Everyone at some point gets weak and feels tempted to stray from fasting commitments. A person who is close to you, who understands the spiritual discipline of fasting and who can encourage you when you become weary on your fasting journey.
4. There may be times when we will miss our **Fast Day** because of preoccupation with emergencies or other things that come up unexpectedly in our lives. Sometimes we may become weary on our prayer journey. If we miss a **Fast Day** or fail to be as diligent as we should, do not give up. If we fall down on our prayer journey, if a week goes by and other things have crowded out our **Fast Day** or the enemy has discouraged our spirit, when the next week rolls around, get back up and pick up where we left off. If failure or problems or discouragement knock you down, don't let them keep you down. When the next week rolls around, get back on the wagon, get back into the race, get back into the battle and

keep pressing, fighting, praying and fasting your way to the new you God is unfolding through your prayer and fasting.

5. Enjoy the Journey! The Lord Jesus told those who were listening to him, “And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show they are fasting. Truly, I tell you they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you (Matthew 6: 16-18, NRSV).” Even with the food or other sacrifices that may be occasionally involved, even with the inconveniences that will sometimes interfere with our schedules, building a relationship with God, seeking to become closer to God, anticipating a new move of God, should essentially be an enjoyable and exciting process.

Prayer and fasting should not make us mean and miserable. Our fast should not be our favorite topic of conversation with everyone around us, everyone on our jobs, and everyone we meet. To begin with, most people are not interested in hearing, don't care about, and don't really understand why we are doing something that makes us such a bore to be around and seems to cause us so much anxiety. When we need support, and want to share our joy, we should find those who have like spirits, like minds and are engaged on the same journey as we are.

When fasting becomes another joy sapping and life draining burden and problem, perhaps we should take a fasting break or concentrate more on prayer and ask the Lord to restore the exhilaration and the expectation that those who have discovered the joy of fasting as a lifestyle can bring to those who have the right mind and spirit.

Prayer and Fasting Encouragement Scriptures

- Isaiah 58: 5-12
- Matthew 6: 16-18
- Matthew 17:14-21, **KJV**
- Luke 18: 1-14
- Galatians 6: 9-10
- I John 5: 14

Prayer and Fasting References

The Holy Bible

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Elmer Towns, The Beginner's Guide to Fasting, Servant Publications

Elmer Towns, Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough, Regal Books

Elmer Towns, The Daniel Fast for Spiritual Breakthrough, Regal Books

Arthur Wallis, God's Chosen Fast, Christian Literature Crusade

William Watley, A Prayer a Day: 366 Days in the Presence of God, New Seasons Press



SAINT PHILIP CHURCH
EXALTING CHRIST and EMPOWERING PEOPLE

Sundays

Worship Services
8:00 A.M. and 11:00 A.M.

Risen Generation Youth Church
11:00 A.M.

SPC Church School
9:45 A.M.

Tuesdays

Bible Study
7:00 P.M.