

# PRAYER AND FASTING GUIDE

NOVEMBER 15–17, 2004  
LIBERTY BAPTIST CHURCH

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We are entering an exciting time in the life of Liberty Baptist Church. While we may be without a lead pastor, we are not without a master. Jesus is still with us and He is leading our church. The staff and lay leaders at Liberty have such a great desire to see our church seek the Lord with all our might and follow His lead. Throughout the Old and New Testaments we have read that, when the people of God were faced with major decisions and wanted to seek after God's answers for their people, they would call a fast. God answers the call of His people. The church historian, J. Edwin Orr, noted in his teaching that all revival movements were preceded by a movement of prayer. People would fast and pray for God to move in their churches or countries, and God would answer with a mighty revival.

In our modern world, many churches and Christians have come to rely upon things other than prayer to seek the Lord and to see things move forward. Many times, we tend to substitute advertising, good programming, nice buildings, and good teaching in place of the power of God. Lasting movements and change come from God, not man. We want to see a movement of God that is lasting and permanent and cannot be attributed to our plans and programs. We desire to see a true revival begin right here at Liberty Baptist Church.

Therefore, we would like to invite the people of Liberty to join us in seeking after God and His power. While we want to pray for the new pastor to come, and to pray that God would provide all our needs, our main goal is to ask Him to move in a mighty way among our people at Liberty Baptist. We would love to see a mighty revival begin right here at Liberty — one that cannot be attributed to anything but God answering our prayers, when we humble ourselves before Him.

## WHAT ARE WE ASKING THE CHURCH BODY TO DO?

The leaders of Liberty Baptist Church are asking for the people of Liberty to consider joining us in a time of prayer and fasting for our church and the future of Liberty Baptist. We are seeking those who are led to join us from November 15-17 in some form of fasting. (See below) A person could opt to fast on one, two, or all three of the days. It could be a fast of one meal or two meals on a given day. The key is to do only what the Lord is leading you to do. Our highest recommendation is to not do this, if God is not leading you to do it.

Here are several suggestions for you to consider concerning fasting.

**Consider fasting three days** — Please do not attempt this, if there are any health problems. See your doctor before beginning such a fast. This fast would consist of not eating food from Monday until you break the fast on Wednesday night, November 17. Sunday night would be your last meal for three days.

**Partial fast** — Try refraining from eating anything that has become a food addiction. An example could be to stop eating desserts. One example from the Bible is Daniel, Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego. They ate only vegetables and drank only water (Daniel 1:15) and later on, Daniel alone practiced a limited diet for three weeks (Daniel 10:3). Some people would argue that this isn't really a fast at all, but Daniel 10:3 does use the word "mourned," which is a Biblical occasion for fasting and a common synonym for fasting.

**Electronic fast** — Some people may want to do an electronic fast. This is where a person chooses to give up TV, movies, video games, radio, the internet, or something else similar, for the full three days.

**Refraining from something you love to do.** For some, that may be refraining from woodworking or participating in sports. Others may sense the need to refrain from something else entirely.

**Your specialized fast** — God may be pressing you about something entirely different from what we have mentioned. It may be something far from any of the above-mentioned types of fasts. God may be pressing you in another area to give up and pray over. Then, our encouragement is to follow Him and be obedient to what He is saying.

**The key:** Do not feel compelled to do this, if God is not leading you to do it. Also, those doing it need to remember to not be arrogant toward those not doing it. This is key!

## WHAT IS FASTING?

First of all, let's look at the root word that is used for "fasting." The Greek word for fasting is *nesteia* — a compound of *ne* (a negative prefix) and *estho*, which means "to eat." So, the basic root meaning of the word simply means, "not to eat."

But what does this "not eating" food mean? Why did people in the Bible "not eat?" We find a clue in Leviticus 16:29. This verse says that fasting is synonymous with "afflicting one's soul." We gain some insight here about how the Hebrews viewed fasting. Fasting is more than just "afflicting one's body." It is "afflicting one's soul." In other words, fasting, in the Hebrew mind, is something my soul participates in. Fasting is denying myself. It is denying not only my own body, but also my own wants. It is a way of saying that food and my desires are secondary to something else. Fasting is "afflicting one's soul" — an act of self-denial. But it is not only an act of self-denial, and here is where the monks and hermits went wrong.

**Biblical fasting is "not eating" with spiritual communication in mind.** How do we know this? Because Biblical fasting usually occurs together with prayer in the Bible. You can pray without fasting, but you cannot fast (Biblically speaking) without praying. Biblical fasting is deliberately abstaining from food for a spiritual reason: communication and relationship with the Father.

## WHAT DO I PRAY DURING THIS TIME OF FASTING?

1. Pray that God would speak to you individually as to His desire for you and your life.
2. Pray for the Holy Spirit to move mightily among the people at Liberty Baptist.
3. Pray that we would turn from our sin and remove anything from our personal lives and our church that is not pleasing to Him.
4. Pray we would be passionate about making disciples, both here and around the world.
5. Pray that God would lead our Pastor Search Committee to God's man for this church.
6. Pray that we would be unified as a church body and that Satan would have no influence over our church.
7. Pray that God would meet our financial needs in an awesome and mighty way.

## WHY FAST?

1. To break the bonds of sin. (Isaiah 58:6)
2. For prayer and meditation. When fasting is mentioned in scripture, it is usually mentioned in connection with prayer.
3. As part of repentance and confession of sins.
  - a. Fasting frequently accompanied repentance as an outward and genuine indication of contrition for spiritual rebellion. (1 Samuel 7:6)
  - b. The people of Nineveh proclaimed a fast, when brought to a recognition of their sins. (Jonah 3:5)
  - c. The prophets often called Israel to a fast as a means of producing repentance. (Joel 2:12)
4. Important decisions. The Book of Acts records believers fasting before they made important decisions. (Acts 13:4; 14:23)
5. Before sending people out. The church fasted before sending Barnabas and Saul on that perilous first missionary campaign. (Acts 13:2-3)

## WHY NOT TO FAST

1. To diet — Some say fasting can be very healthy for the body, but the purpose is not to further boost our egos by losing weight. Losing weight may be a side benefit that comes, but it should not be the focus.
2. To manipulate God — Our goal is to seek and know Him. We should be open to hearing from Him. If we are trying to get Him to do our agenda, then we are missing the point entirely.
3. Someone else is compelling you to fast — (Matthew 6:16-18). The Pharisees were very hypocritical in their approach to fasting. They did it to be seen and looked upon favorably by others. You should not fast just because someone else is telling you to fast. Fasting is not something we do just to follow others.
4. To show you are "spiritual" — (Luke 18:9-14) The rigors of fasting must not be allowed to ignite a spirit of religious smugness and self-righteousness, like we see in the Pharisees. This certainly could be a temptation.

## SCRIPTURES ON FASTING AND PRAYER

- Isaiah 58 — The whole chapter is about fasting and the rewards of fasting.
- II Chronicles 7:14 — If we humble ourselves . . .
- Matthew 6:16-18 — Jesus says "when" we fast, not "if" we fast.
- I Kings 21:9 — "Proclaim a day of fasting and set Naboth in a prominent place among the people."
- Nehemiah 9:1 — "On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and having dust on their heads."
- Esther 4:3 — "In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes."
- Psalm 35:13 — "Yet, when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting."
- Daniel 9:3 — "So, I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with Him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes."
- Joel 2:12 — "'Even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.'"
- Matthew 4:2 — "After fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry."
- Mark 2:18 — "Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, 'How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?'"
- Acts 13:2 — "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.'"
- Acts 14:23 — "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."

## TIPS ON FASTING

(Consult a doctor before beginning)

1. Drink plenty of water. Do not drink a lot of caffeine products, as this is a diuretic and could cause problems.
2. Memorize scripture to plant God's Word in your mind.
3. If possible, take quick cat naps, if your energy subsides.
4. Keep busy, to keep your mind off the initial hunger pangs.
5. Limit TV. There are a lot of food ads on television that can spur hunger.

## **RESOURCE MATERIALS**

A few suggested Christian books on prayer and fasting:

- *Celebration of Discipline*, by Dr. Richard Foster
- *The Transforming Power of Fasting and Prayer*, by Dr. Bill Bright
- *Hunger for God*, by Dr. John Piper
- *The Power of Prayer and Fasting*, by Dr. Ronnie Floyd
- *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough*, by Dr. Elmer Towns

Internet Prayer and Fasting Web Sites:

- *Campus Crusade for Christ*: <http://www.billbright.com/howtofast/index.html>
- *Great Listing of Articles on Fasting*:  
<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/topic/prayer.html>
- *John Piper's web site has several articles on prayer and fasting*  
[http://www.desiringgod.org/library/topics/prayer/prayer\\_index.html](http://www.desiringgod.org/library/topics/prayer/prayer_index.html)

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