

**BETHEL AME CHURCH, BOSTON**  
**2022 CORPORATE FAST**  
**Led by Bethel's Prayer Ministry**

**A GUIDE TO FASTING and INFORMATION SHEET**

*January 2022 ( v1)*

**What are we doing?**

*We are entering this New Year of 2022 with the theme of "Returning Forward & Moving Forward" (Exodus 14:15). This is because we want to be clearer about what God is asking us to do. Therefore, we are embarking on a corporate all-church fasting and prayer practice for the first month of 2022 – all of January 2022. This will include a call (not a requirement) for all members and friends of Bethel to practice some type of fasting and prayer practice for a 30-day period. The fasting period is January 2-31. The fast/increased prayer practice will begin on January 2 and end on January 31st. You can fast for any period and from anything (1 day, 1 week, 2 weeks, 1 day per week for 4 weeks, etc.) and begin at any time during the 30-day fast. Fast only as you are able and only after you consult your physician.*

**Why are we doing a corporate fast?:**

*As we start the new year with so much uncertainty, pain, loss, and lack of clarity, we believe this is a time of contemplation and intercession. Scripture teaches us that biblical fasting allows us to focus on our spiritual growth and allows us to commit more time to prayer, seeking the Lord and studying the Bible. As a church community, fasting in solidarity is powerful, affirming and supportive. Our prayers of agreement are honored by God.*

**What if I can't start the corporate fast on January 2<sup>nd</sup>?**

*The fast will start on January 2<sup>nd</sup> and we hope that everyone can start on or close to that time. However, you can start any time during the corporate fast period. We are glad to have you in concert with us whenever you choose to start.*

**What are we asked to do as we fast?:**

*The fast will officially start on January 2<sup>nd</sup> and each person is asked to do the following ( after consulting with their physician):*

- 1. **Choose** the type of fast they are committing to, the time frame you will fast in (see attached Fasting Guide) and the purpose of YOUR fast*
- 2. **Commit to** a time of day, each day, where you will have a personal prayer time and Bible reading (a weekly devotional sheet will be shared as a supplement or you may use a book (see suggestions below).*
- 3. **Commit to (and attend)** one of the virtual prayer conference call times that are held during each week. When you join the conference line you will not be required to pray or speak (only to*

let us know you are joining) unless you want to. Here is a list of prayer times with the call-in number:

- Tuesday morning, 6:00-7:00am
- Tuesday evening, 6:30-7:00pm
- Wednesday morning 6:30-7:00am
- Wednesday evening, 6:00-7:00pm
- Thursday morning, 6:00-7:00am
- Thursday evening, 6:30-7:00pm
- Friday morning, 7:00-7:30am
- Saturday morning, (3rd Saturday each month) 9:00-10:00am , Daughters of Eva
- Sunday mornings during worship service times ( prompts during the Zoom service

**Call-in number for ALL Prayer times: 605-313-4802, Access code-126391#**

4. **Attend** Wednesday night virtual Bible studies and take note of Pastor Ray's Sunday Sermons during January worship services where there will be teaching and conversation about fasting.

5. **Prepare** to celebrate what God has done and will do as we celebrate our corporate fast on Sunday, January 30<sup>th</sup> during our worship services as the fast closes on January 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Will there be instructions on how to pray or what to pray for?**

When you pray or join a prayer call, and how you pray in your personal prayer time is up to you as you are led by God's Holy Spirit. God honors our obedience. We believe that as you seek the Lord you will have direction about what to pray for as personal requests. For corporate requests, specific to Bethel, we ask that you:

1. Ask the Lord to give our church and leadership direction for our transition to being a "hybrid Church" which reaches, teaches, connects with and cares for people both in-person and virtually.
2. Ask the Lord to use our church to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and bring healing and comfort to our world.
3. Pray for each person/member to have a commitment to and a plan for their Discipleship and mature in their faith walk.

**Each week we will share a devotional** on the listserv with scriptures to meditate on that may give wisdom as you fast and direct you as you pray – both personally and during the prayer conference times.

**Where can I learn more about fasting, prayer or the corporate fast?**

- To learn more about the corporate fast, along with reviewing this handout, please see any member of the Prayer ministry
- To learn more about fasting, take a look at any of these resources:
  1. The attached Fasting Guide
  2. The following is a partial list of books on fasting and prayer you may purchase

1. *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough: A Practical Guide to Nine Biblical Fasts*, by Elmer Towns
2. *A Hunger for God (Redesign): Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer* by John Piper
3. *Tony Evans Speaks out on Fasting*, by Dr. Tony Evans
4. *Praying the Lord's Prayer for Spiritual Breakthrough* by Elmer Towns
5. *Praying the Psalms: The Touch of God and Be Touched By Him ( Praying the Scriptures)* by Elmer Towns
6. *God's Chosen Fast*, by Arthur Wallis
7. *The Celebration of Discipline*, by Richard Foster
8. *The Spirit of Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* by Dallas Willard
9. *Prayers that Avail Much*, by Germaine Copeland

***This is a partial list of available works and texts. Feel free to suggest others***

## **BETHEL AME CHURCH**

### **A GUIDE TO BIBLICAL FASTING**

#### **A Study of Fasts**

**From Pastor Ray Hammond**

#### Introduction

*What is fasting? It is abstaining from food (and sometimes fluids) for **spiritual** purposes. In Jesus's day and throughout much of church history, it was a practice that was assumed. Increasingly, it has become a practice that was lost. That's true, perhaps, for many reasons, including the following:*

- 1. We misinterpret Jesus' teachings (Read Matthew 9:14; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33-35 carefully) and think that Jesus is abolishing fasting when he is correcting the abuses of fasting.*
- 2. We live in a time when the culture promotes absolute freedom, not abstinence; self-indulgence, not self-denial; and satisfaction, not sacrifice - Philippians 3:18-19; 1 Corinthians 10:31*

*Fasting is a part of many religious traditions, and certainly the Jewish tradition, including:*

- 1. Times of distress - war (Judges 20:26; 1 Samuel 7:6); sickness (David and his son - 2 Samuel 12:16ff; Psalmist - Ps 35:13); mourning (for Saul and Jonathan - 1 Sam 31:13; 2 Samuel 1:12); penitence (Ahab - 1 Kings 21:27; people of Israel - Nehemiah 9:1); impending crisis or danger (Jehoshaphat - 2 Chronicles 20:3; Esther and Mordecai - Esther 4:16)*
- 2. Preparation for revelation - Moses (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9,18) and Daniel (Daniel 9:3)*
- 3. Themes – confession, repentance, mourning, intercession, revelation, discernment, preparation for service (esp. in NT)*

#### Fasting Is Not Just an Old Testament Custom

- 1. John the Baptist fasted (Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33).*
- 2. Jesus fasted and expected us to fast - Matthew 4:2; 6:16ff - "When you fast..." not if you fast.*
- 3. The early Church fasted in preparation for revelation and service - Acts 13:2ff.*

#### Why Should You Fast?

- 1. Because God commands it.*
- 2. Because you want to focus on the spiritual while abstaining from the physical - Luke 12:22ff.*
- 3. Because you want to free of time and attention for prayer, meditation, study. Did you know that eating takes up 6 years in a 70-yr. lifespan.*

4. *Because you want to overcome the “lusts of the flesh,” incl gluttony - Psalms 69:10; Colossians 3:5; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 9:27.*
5. *Because you want to preparation yourself for guidance and service.*

#### How Should You Fast?

1. *Normal fast - Matthew 4:2ff; Luke 4:2ff (Jesus) – fluids, but no solids*
2. *Absolute fast - Acts 9:9 (Paul) – nothing at all; 3 days is the usual maximum*
3. *Partial (Daniel) fast - Dan 10:2ff – (see <http://daystar.com/danielfast.htm> or “Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough: A Guide to Nine Biblical Fasts” by Elmer Towns [Ventura, CA: Regal Books. 1996]for more info)*
  1. *Leads to spiritual insight*
  2. *Lasts longer than one day*
  3. *Requires abstinence from choice foods – e.g. large quantities of meat (or meat at all), fried/fatty foods, caffeine, carbonated beverages, sweets & desserts, etc.*

#### Practical Approaches to Fasting

1. *AS THE SPIRIT LEADS - 2 Corinthians 3:6*
2. *Married couples may want to consider sexual abstinence during fasting- 1 Corinthians 7:5 (This should be a mutual decision)*
3. *Avoid external show - Matthew 6:16 ff*
4. *Anticipate and plan for potential distractions/temptations – people/places/and things*
5. *Use the power of partnership – Ecclesiastes 4:9-12*
6. *TAKE YOUR MEDICATION and consult with your physician if you have a chronic illnesses*
7. *Break the fast gradually if you are fasting more than three days.*

#### References

1. *Arthur Wallis. God's Chosen Fast.*
2. *Richard Foster. Celebration of Discipline . pp. 41-53*
3. *Dallas Willard. The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*

**BETHEL AME CHURCH**  
**A GUIDE TO BIBLICAL FASTING**

**TYPES OF FASTS**  
*(partially excerpted)*

**What are the different types of fasting?**

Since there are countless types of fasting, it would take a lifetime to lay out all the options, but I can share the basics to help you find the type of fasting that will help you draw nearer to God. Know that each one has pros and cons and you should weigh them wisely. In all honesty, as I practiced various types of fasting and prayer I learned a lot from each form. Most of the time I failed at the fast, but I learned from it nonetheless.

Be okay with failing. See each attempt at fasting as a practice run to find the right path forward toward a spiritual breakthrough.

**1. A Normal Fast - (No Food)**

The duration of a complete fast, where one abstains from all food and drink, could range from part of a day to an entire day to several days or weeks. This was the most common and strictest type of fasting in the scripture. Notice in the texts, after fasting, Jesus became hungry and never thirsty so for common day, it is recommended to at least drink water. If you have any medical conditions, consult with your doctor before fasting from all food and water for more than 24 hours.

*“Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions. For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, “The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him.” So we fasted and sought our God concerning this matter, and He listened to our entreaty.” (Ezra 8:21-23 NASB)*

**2. A Partial Fast**

A partial fast can also vary in duration from part of a day to weeks. While the complete fast abstains from all food for a time, a partial fast abstains from certain foods or drinks for the time. The most common partial fasting is often called a 3-day spiritual fast while others fast 10 days, 14 days, 21 days, 30 days or even 40 days. In Daniel, we see believers who ate only fruit, veggies and drank water for 10 days to honor God while in captivity.

*“Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.” (Daniel 1:12 NASB)*

### 3. The Daniel Fast – a very common partial fast

What is the Daniel fast according to the Bible? The basic idea behind this fast is to have no meat, no tasty bread, no wine, no oils for one's skin, for 21 days.

*"I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were completed." (Daniel 10:3 NASB)*

These would have been things that satisfied Daniel. Why does the world latch onto the specifics of his fasting? There is observation of the power that came and the answers to prayer that he saw as an outcome – things we long for today. Note however, that fasting and prayer were his habits. The Daniel fast was not powerful because of what Daniel gave up, but rather because of the humility of Daniel's life and how it affected his relationship to God. For Christians who fast they "see" answers and feel refreshed regularly. Their faith walk is deepened.

### 4. A Non-Food Fast

For those of with a medical condition, the non-food fast is the safest way to practice this spiritual discipline. In Scripture, we see several examples of non-food fasts.

Some examples:

-Oils ([Daniel 10:3](#))

- Sex ([1 Corinthians 7:5](#); [Exodus 19:15](#))

- Unholy things such as foods, items, people, places, practices, etc. ([Joshua 3:5](#))

Here are samples of things people choose to fast from:

- Phone conversations
- Chocolate/Candy/Chips, etc.
- Facebook/Any social media
- People – Isolation - where possible
- Breakfast, lunch or dinner or snacking
- Red meat, soda, bread , etc.
- Movies/News programs, etc.

### 5. Group Fasting

A time of group fasting can be powerful on a personal and corporate level. This type of fasting can be a variation of any of the different types of Biblical fasting. The point is not that everyone is fasting from the same thing, but that they are fasting about the same thing.

At other times, a group may fast over a need in their church or the salvation of a loved one, or healing, direction, their marriage or children, etc. The concept is simple but the power that comes when two or more are gathered in His name, in agreement, is great! ([Matthew 18:20](#))

### 6. Isolation Fast

While Jesus does not give us a detailed outline of things to abstain from during a fast He does show us how effective isolation is for fasting. Jesus often withdrew from His disciples to spend time alone with God ([Luke 5:16](#)). Time alone with God is hard to find but it is one of the most effective of all the different types of Biblical fasting. In the 21st Century, time alone with God could look like:

- No other people around
- Your Bible (no Bible app with ads to distract you)
- Zero Internet
- A notebook (no tablet to distract you)
- No Radio, TV or social media
- Possibly device-free ( phone only in emergencies)

Alone. In solitude. No distractions from hearing God's voice. This type of fasting takes practice and great planning to achieve. Time alone with God is powerful for reaching spiritual breakthrough! Try it.

*Partially excerpted from A Beginners Guide to Fast and Pray, by Tiffany Montgomery*