

Dear Riverside Family,

As we move into a time of purposed preparation for our new ministry center many of us are feeling called to fast and pray. We all have different levels of experience with fasting but what's most important is to pray, seek God, and do what he says. Whether you would like to give something up for the first time, or if you are seasoned in the discipline of fasting, we suggest each person fast until you have breakthrough. Many of us will be fasting until our first service in the new building. Some may simply choose to fast until they have breakthrough around a specific issue. Whatever you decide, we hope that the following basic information is helpful.

To begin this fast you will find a prayer of repentance. We would suggest that you read this at the beginning of each day as you seek God's grace for strength and perseverance. We have provided two kinds of fasts in this handout. There is the One Day Fast and then there is the Daniel Fast. The One Day Fast is basically skipping two meals and drinking only water one day per week for the duration of your fast. The Daniel Fast includes, vegetables, fruits, nuts, brown rice, potatoes, corn, healthy oils and whole grains. (We have included a website with recipes to give you some ideas of creative ways to put meals together.)

These are only two ways to fast, but there are others. For example, you might want to fast from fast food or processed food, or breads, or desserts, or any number of things. We encourage you to pray and ask God what it is that He would like you to fast from.

Fasting is a way to humble ourselves before God to admit our dependency and reliance on Him and Him alone. As we begin this season of prayer and intercession, let us take this time to fully engage in our earnest seeking of God and His presence.

So today, if you would like to join in this community fast, we would ask you to make the commitment and begin.

During this period of fasting, we encourage you to go to the website and send in stories or testimonies of your experience during this season. If you have questions, please let us know or email: connect@connect2riverside.com and we will get back to you. We are excited to see how God will move in our midst in this coming season.

May God bless you and keep you.

Scott Heare
Linda Marceau

Suggestions for using this Prayer and Fasting handout:

- Allow your fast to lead you to prayer – remember to substitute prayer time for the food or activity you gave up for the day. Also use any regular prayer or devotion time you have set.
- Praise – spend some time just praising and worshipping God!
- Read the scriptures each day.
- Pray the Everyday Prayer printed at the end of this handout.
- Expand the day's prayer as the Holy Spirit directs you in your prayer time.
- Add any personal requests
- End with thanksgiving and praise!

Why Fast?

Fasting is the ancient practice of giving up food for a designated time period in order to make space in our lives for being more intentional about our relationship to God. In the Bible, people fasted for various reasons: guidance (Nehemiah 1:4), protection (II Chronicles 20:3), healing (Psalm 35:13), deliverance (Matthew 17:19-21), success in the Lord's work (Esther 4:16), in times of sorrow, defeat, or crisis (Judges 20:26), repentance (Joel 1:14; 2:15), to prepare for a coming event (Moses – Exodus 34:28; Jesus - Matthew 4:2), and while worshipping (Acts 13:2). Lenten fasts developed to prepare our minds and hearts for the glorious presence of Christ himself.

- Gerald May, in his book *Addiction and Grace* says that even though we long for God, we seem to avoid a relationship with God by filling our time with other activities.
- Jane Vennard, in her book *Praying with Body and Soul*, says, "Fasting gives us an experience of spaciousness. We might learn from our fast how to live with the emptiness and therefore begin to make more room in our lives and our hearts for God."
- Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), in *The Mind's Ascent to God*, wrote: "If the body goes without food and drink for even one day,....it immediately weeps and let's out a roar, and there is a great rush to bring it help. But the soul fasts for whole weeks from its food, or languishes under wounds received, or even lies dead, and no one takes care of it or shows it pity. Therefore, visit your soul more and more often...."
- "Fasting pinches us out of our slumber, rousing us to work compassionately for health of soul and body for ourselves and the whole creation." (John S. Mogabgab, Editor of *Weavings: A Journal of the Christian Spiritual Life*).

Different Ways to Fast

One common way to fast is to abstain from food for 24 hours, once a week. It is recommended that you use that time for focused prayer based on the prayer request for that day.

How to Conduct a One-Day Fast

- I. Know why you fast
 - A. There are many legitimate reasons to fast, yet any one of these is a “Secondary Focus”
 1. Spiritual renewal or breakthrough
 2. Guidance in a decision
 3. Healing
 4. Spiritual discipline
 5. Intercession, etc.
 - B. The “Primary Focus” of any fast should be to commune with the Lord.
- II. How to begin the fast
 - A. Begin after the evening meal (eat no food, drink water only.)
 - B. The next day, forego your morning meal. Try to spend extra time in prayer.
 - C. Set aside time at lunch to pray and spend time before Him in the Word.
 - D. Drink plenty of water throughout the day. This is necessary for your body and will help minimize hunger pains.
 - E. Break your fast with a normal evening meal. (Warning: Guard against the tendency to indulge yourself in a “catch-up” meal of over-eating. If you do so, you may well negate the value of your fast.)
- III. When you fast
 - A. Try to remain in an attitude of prayer and awareness of His presence through the day.
 - B. You may find you have a heightened sensitivity to spiritual things. Keep your focus on the Lord.
 - C. You may wish to keep a journal of your impressions or document a word the Lord speaks to you.

D. Hunger pains through the day can also be a call and reminder for prayer. Use “breath prayer” to help maintain an attitude of prayer throughout the day. A breath prayer is one that can be spoken in one breath.

Examples: “Lord Jesus, bless me with your presence.” “O Lord, open me to your spirit.”

How to Conduct a Daniel Fast

There are two anchoring scriptures for the Daniel Fast. In Daniel 1 the Prophet ate only vegetables (that would have included fruits) and drank only water. From these scriptures we get two of the guidelines for the fast:

1. Only fruits and vegetables
2. Only water for a beverage

Then in Daniel 10 we read that the Prophet ate no meat nor any precious breads or foods and he drank no wine for 21 days.

So from this scripture, we get a third guideline:

3. No sweeteners and no breads

Another important guideline is drawn from Jewish fasting principles, where no leaven is used during the fast. So that’s why yeast, baking powder and the like are not allowed on the Daniel Fast. Finally, with all the above puzzle pieces, we conclude that no artificial or processed foods nor any chemicals are allowed on the Daniel Fast. When asked about the eating plan on the Daniel Fast, I often say it is a “vegan diet with even more restrictions.”

Be sure to read the ingredients on labels of prepared foods to make sure they only include Daniel Fast friendly ingredients. For more information about the Daniel fast, go to www.daniel-fast.com. On the website, you can sign up for a daily email that will encourage you to continue the process as well as recipes that will help to enhance your fasting experience.

Prayer for Everyday (Begin each day’s prayer with this prayer): Eternal God , we praise Your Holy Name. (Psalm 146:1-2). Forgive me for [include personal prayers here].... “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10) In our time and in your time, Lord, “Your Kingdom come, Your will be done” in my life, our church, our buildings, community and nation. (Matthew 6:10) We ask for your protection and love to surround us during these days of prayer and fasting that all may be accomplished to Your Glory! In the name of Jesus, amen.