

FAST: TRAINING GUIDE

Abiding Practices for Missional Communities

Fast: Abstaining from food for a specific length of time while intentionally seeking the Lord in prayer, allowing hunger to steer our minds to his presence in complete dependence.

WHY WE FAST

We regularly fast as disciples of Jesus Christ in order to remember that the Father is all sufficient. This is the heart behind fasting in the Scriptures and what Jesus assumed his followers would continue to do in his absence ([Matthew 6:5-18](#)). It is also the heart Jesus demonstrates to us as he fasts for 40 days to inaugurate his earthly ministry ([Matthew 4:1-11](#)).

John Piper in his book [A Hunger for God](#) writes:

“Father, I am empty, but you are full. I am hungry, but you are the Bread of Heaven. I am thirsty, but you are the Fountain of Life. I am weak, but you are strong. I am poor, but you are rich. I am foolish, but you are wise. I am broken, but you are whole. I am dying, but your steadfast love is better than life.”

This is the heart that we strive for as we fast. We must not let the good gifts of God dull our hearts to the greater joy of relationship with the Father. We also find the blessing of hunger here knowing that our truest satisfaction will come in the kingdom of God ([Luke 6:21](#)).

Further, prayer and fasting will go hand-in-hand as believers lay themselves down in order to deepen their relationships with Christ, for how else can we do that if not in open communication with the one we seek? So as followers of Christ, it is imperative that we regularly abstain from God's good gifts so that we might more deeply know the Father in prayer.

FASTING IN COMMUNITY

In the Scriptures we see a variety of reasons and means by which the people of God abstained from food. But for the sake of this resource, we want to equip the members of a Missional Community to begin fasting through the three rhythms - Family Gatherings, DNA Groups, and Neighborhoods to Nations.

We want to clearly note that fasting may not be wise for some with extreme health conditions. If you are unsure, consult your healthcare physician prior to engaging in a fast. If you are unable to abstain from food then you can join in the fast by abstaining from other great pleasures from the Father in order to intentionally enjoy his presence (coffee, social media, etc.).

If this is your first time fasting then we would encourage you to start small. Try skipping a breakfast with the specific intent of focusing your heart and mind on the Father in prayer. From there you can move toward fasting for breakfast and lunch, fasting for an entire day, or even fasting for multiple days at a time.

Family Gatherings

As mentioned before, we want to explore fasting here in the context of community. Your Missional Community could decide to fast on the day of your Family Gathering and plan out some specific prayer initiatives for that particular day. Think through some of the regular prayer requests and themes that come up during a typical Family Gathering, write those down, and then commit to praying for those at certain times throughout the day. When you come together for your Family Gathering, you have the opportunity to break your fast together and celebrate corporately what God has been teaching you individually.

DNA Groups

Fasting within the context of the DNA Group is where we take it a step deeper. We want to think of the needs, confessions and themes that we regularly hear and discuss while meeting as a DNA Group, and then commit to praying for those at certain times throughout the day. Also, the DNA Group is where we want to promote accountability while fasting together.

Neighborhoods To Nations

Once our eyes are opened to the reality of so many sinners in desperate need of the joy we have found in Christ, then we know we must come before the Father in desperation on their behalf right now. We simply can't be responsible for the work of the Holy Spirit moving people toward salvation. So if we know this to be true, then we will exercise our dependence on God in prayer and fasting to lead us to neighbors who need him, and to lead our hearts, energy, and efforts toward reaching the nations.

SAMPLE COMMITMENT

Let us first be clear to say that the following example is not prescriptive, though fasting is prescriptive. This example simply serves as a starting point by which your Missional Community can pray through its own context, needs, and passions as a group. The only “one-size-fits-all” here is to start.

FASTING COMMITMENT

Missional Community Leaders: The Halperts and The Schrutes

Date of Commitment: October 9th

Date to Reevaluate Commitment: January 8th

Commitment

Our Missional Community is committed to fast together as a group on the first week of each month. Some will commit to fasting during breakfast and lunch while others will fast during lunch only.

Family Gatherings

First, we will abstain from food until breaking the fast over a dinner together as a family. We will pray for the specific members of our Missional Community for 30 minutes during meal times. Then, at the Family Gathering, we will begin the night by an extended time of prayer over the following requests:

- Pray for unity among our Missional Community family that demonstrates Christ
- Pray for Jim as he has surgery later this month
- Pray over recorded prayer request from our previous Family Gathering
- Pray through [Psalm 23](#) (See Donald Whitney's [Praying the Bible](#) for help on this.)

DNA Groups

Each member of the DNA Group will write out specific prayer requests regarding repeated sins or more intimate needs and share those with the fellow members of the DNA Group. They will commit to praying for one another during their typical lunch for several minutes per person.

- Pray for sins of omission and commission
- Pray for specific needs of the members in your DNA Group
- Send messages of encouragement to one another throughout the day as hunger pains grow

Neighborhoods To Nations

We will devote specific time to praying for our neighbors and the nations that our joy may be multiplied throughout the earth for the Father's glory. We will remind ourselves of the gift of God's salvation and ask the Father both at regular breakfast and lunch times to capture the hearts of unbelievers around the world.

- Write down three to five people we know or have recently met who we want to share the gospel with and pray specifically for their hearts. If we can't think of people to share the gospel with then we will pray that God leads us to others who need the gospel
- Pray as a group for 10 minutes at breakfast and 10 minutes at lunch for a missionary family sent by Summit Crossing Community Church. Pray specifically:
 - For their hearts
 - For their marriages if they're married
 - For their children if they have children
 - For the people group among which they live
 - For the things in their newsletter

Conclusion

Again, this is simply an example that your Missional Community can use to begin in obedience toward fasting. We have plenty of resources that we would love to provide you with if you have any questions about how to practically do some of these things. Simply email us at mc@summitcrossing.org.

FASTING RESOURCES

We would encourage you to engage with the following resources as you discuss how to implement the Abiding Practice of fasting.

Recommended Sermons

[Feasting While Fasting](#) - Matt Chandler

[Prayer, Fasting, and the Course of History](#) - John Piper

[When the Bridegroom is Taken Away, They Will Fast—With New Wineskins](#) - John Piper

[Fast/Feast - Life in the Vine: Practices for Abiding in Jesus](#) - Paul Whaley

Recommended Books

[Habits of Grace](#) - David Mathis

[A Hunger for God](#) - John Piper (quoted above)

[Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life](#) - Donald Whitney

Recommended Articles

[What is Biblical Fasting, and How Does it Work?](#) - CRU

[Fasting for Beginners](#) - Desiring God

[Fasting as a Spiritual Discipline](#) - Focus on the Family

[Awakening Your Appetite for God](#) - John Piper

[Fasting](#) - Practicing the Way

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