



### Why Pray?

Prayer is our greatest weapon. Not only does it draw us closer to God, it unleashes his power into our world. Through prayer we learn the heart of the Father in all the matters of our world and through spending time in his presence we begin to be conformed more and more into his image. Through discipline, prayer changes from being a duty to a delight. Simply said, the more you pray, the more you want to pray and the greater its impact.

Our Heavenly Father desires our love, our attention, our fellowship, and our worship and each of these begins in an attitude of prayer. When Jesus was asked by the disciples to teach them how to pray he taught them what we now call, "The Lord's Prayer." In that prayer Jesus acknowledges the sovereignty of God then prays that God's will and kingdom would come to earth as it is in heaven. Through prayer we literally bring God's desires and kingdom from the heavenly realm into our earthly realm.

### Why Fast?

Fasting is an act of willing abstinence from something for a period of time for spiritual purposes. It is a spiritual discipline that allows one to reset and refocus on God by removing something that we normally enjoy. The goal of fasting is to draw closer to God. Biblical fasting always has to do with eliminating distractions for a spiritual purpose; it hits the reset button of our soul and renews us from the inside out.



# Prayer Focuses

January 22-26, 2024

Monday, January 22 - SMBC Leadership

Tuesday, January 23 - Ministries

Wednesday, January 24 - Membership

Thursday, January 25 - Church Programming

Friday, January 26 - Business Meeting

The spiritual disciplines of prayer and fasting are practices of many faith traditions. Prayer, this intimate, authentic communication with the Divine, reveals our theological imagination, emotional vulnerability, and idealized values. Prayer is one of our love languages as the offspring of God and inheritors of daily eternity. Fasting can serve as a physical (fasting from food) reminder to pray and perhaps to pray more fervently. During times of crisis or decision-making, prayer and fasting offer the faithful an opportunity to meet with God. As evidenced in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, prayer and fasting are powerful tools.



**Types of Fasts and What They Require**  
**Using wisdom is always important in fasting**

1. Daniel Fast: No meat, sweet foods, or strong drinks (see Daniel 10:2-3). This can be done for an extended period of time. This could also be considered a vegetarian diet because there is no meat eaten.
2. Half-Day: This is a 12hour fast where you pick the same time to start and end. When breaking this fast you do so with a light meal (see Acts 10:30-31).
3. Partial Fast: This would be not eating one main meal you would usually eat on a daily routine, such as breakfast, or lunch, or dinner. This meal would be skipped until the fast was over.
4. Complete Fast: This would require you to abstain from all solid foods, liquids only. When Jesus fasted in the desert, the Bible says, After fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. This verse does not mention Jesus being thirsty (see Luke 4:1-2).
5. Total Fast: This is a full and complete fast, no food or drink. Acts 9:9 describes when Paul went on a full fast for three days following his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Esther also called for this type of fast in Esther 4:15-16. This type of fast should be done with extreme caution and not for extended periods of time.
6. Juice Fast: This is a fast where only fresh fruits and vegetables are used. If you can't juice your own fruits or veggies try buying juices without sugar or additives. When using fruits that are acidic, such as lemons, oranges, and even tomatoes dilute them with water for your stomach sake.

Although not mentioned in the Bible, we as Disciples of Jesus today can also commit to fasting from other activities: electronics, computers, TV, games, cell phone use, etc.



It also enables us to celebrate the goodness and mercy of God and prepare our hearts for all the good things God desires to bring into our lives. Remember, your personal fast should present a level of challenge. It is very important to know your body and your options, but most importantly, to seek God in prayer and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

Use this guide to direct you in your prayer and fast focus. You may also want to fast and pray for your family, friends, someone else or even a particular circumstance or situation.

God rewards fasting because when done with the right heart, in confesses that we are helpless without Him, and we require Him to give us the hope we need to press on in the things He has planned. This brings Glory to God!

**You Choose Your Fast**

James 4:8 says, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." Drawing closer to God is the goal of our fasting and prayer! He has amazing things in store for us, and I am encouraged and excited about this New Year.

