United Community Baptist Church

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“Sharing God’s Love”

**On Fasting and Prayer: Understanding It and What to Expect**

**Fasting in this 2022 Season of Lent**

In this Lenten season, it is my belief that God is calling believers in the faith together for a season of corporate worship, prayer, supplication and sacrifice. We are living in a time of globalization and events that occur on one side of this wonderful earth, affects the other side. Through Fasting and Prayer, we as believers in Christ should believe that our faith can impact the world. It is through Fasting and Praying that we are able to do the exceptional (Mark 9:29). Let us remain in corporate prayer and worship with expectation that God is doing something new and great, not only in our lives, but also in the lives of our families and communities.

I have prepared this compilation on Fasting and Prayer in preparation for this season of Lent, commencing on Ash Wednesday (March 2, 2022) and concluding on Resurrection Sunday (April 17, 2022). Our fast will end after morning worship service. This information will continue to be available during our periods of Fast and Prayer. If you have participated in our Fast and Prayer before and have this information, please look at the below guidelines, as they may change according to the Fast.

During this Lenten period of Fasting and Prayer, we will consecrate ourselves in prayer and supplication in remembrance of the sacrifice that Jesus paid on the cross. We must be prepared for the mental, social, spiritual, financial, emotional, as well as physical challenges that seem to overwhelm members of the body of Christ when we seek to move closer to God. We must not be tricked or trapped by anyone, or anything.

In this time of Fasting and Prayer, it is my belief that God will reveal and empower purpose, direction, and revelation within the church body here at United Community Baptist Church. If we are faithful to God, God will be faithful to us. If this is one’s first attempt of Fasting and Prayer for more than three (3) days, do not get discouraged and give up if you fail in keeping your fast commitment. If this happens, recommit yourself with sincerity and supplication to God. We serve a God of grace who knows our hearts.

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that is taught in the Bible. Through Fasting and Prayer, transformation takes place within one’s life. When God’s people fast with a proper Biblical motive and seek God’s face with a repentant and contrite heart, God will hear from heaven and God will provide healing and wholeness in our lives, churches, and communities. Here are some important facts on Fasting and Prayer:

* Fasting was an expected discipline in the Old and New Testament. For example, Moses fasted at least two recorded forty-day periods. Jesus fasted forty days and reminded His followers to fast. Jesus said, “When you fast.” Not *if* you fast.
* Fasting and prayer can restore the loss of the “first love” for the Lord and result in a more intimate relationship with Christ.
* Fasting is a Biblical way to truly humble yourself in the sight of God (Ps. 35:13; Ezra 8:21). King David said, “I humble myself through fasting”.
* Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance, and transformation in your life.
* Fasting can transform your prayer life into a richer and more personal experience.
* The Holy Spirit will quicken the Word of God in your heart, and the truth of God will become more meaningful in your life.
* Fasting gives us more time for prayer and releases God’s supernatural power.
* Through communal Fast and Prayer, God will heal situations, hearts, and lives.

In preparation for this special time with God, we must examine our hearts and confront unconfessed sin. Scripture records God’s desire for believers to repent of their sins before God will respond to their prayers (2 Chron. 7:14). In our prayers, confess not only to obvious sins, but less obvious ones as well.

As we prepare to enter this time of heightened spiritual devotion, be aware that Satan will do *everything* he can to pull you away from your time of prayer and Bible readings. When such times occur, immediately go to God in prayer and ask God to strengthen your resolve in the face of difficulties and temptations. The enemy makes you a target because the enemy knows that Fasting and Prayer is the most powerful of all Christian disciplines, and God may have something special to show you through supplication and seeking His face. Satan does not want you to grow in faith. You must make prayer a shield against the attacks of the enemy.

Many people are reluctant to tell others that they are fasting so they will avoid the sin of the Pharisees (fasting just to get recognition for themselves). Attitude is a result of wrong interpretation of our Lord’s teaching, and it is a trick of the enemy who does not want us to fast, nor share with loved ones, neighbors and friends the benefits of fasting. By isolating ourselves from the support of other Christians, we will be susceptible to doubts and negative influences (both human and demonic). We need the prayer shield of our Christian friends and family when we feel vulnerable and tempted.

In outside environments, Christians should be satisfied if you tell them you are not eating with them because you are fasting. Nonbelievers may be satisfied by telling them you have other plans for lunch. Usually, there are no reasons for telling strangers and casual acquaintances that you are fasting. If you do, you may be subject to numerous questions that you may not feel like answering.

If friends and family express concerns for your health, ease their fears by telling them that you will stop fasting the moment that you feel you are harming your body, and you are fasting under a doctor’s care, which I strongly urge if you have questions concerning your health. However, be aware that many doctors have not been trained in this area, so their understanding may be limited. If you are on medication or have a physical problem, consult with your doctor before changing your regiment.

Fasting is not always easy for everyone. The period of Fasting and Prayer is a time of discipline, self-sacrifice, and reflection. Do not be surprised if you experience mental and physical discomforts. There may be inner conflict when you deny yourself the pleasure of eating foods you enjoy. Fasting sometimes leaves one felling impatient and irritable. For example, during a 3-day fast, this struggle can intensify toward the end of the second day. That seems to be a favorite time for the “self” to rise up and say, “This is as far as I want to go”.

There are physical effects that coincide with fasting. Here are some common effects:

* Hunger Pangs – Usually greatest during the first three days. Your body is adjusting from using the food in your digestive tract to consuming stored food.
* Bad Breath, Body Odor – This occurs usually after the first two weeks of an extended fast, then these symptoms subside. However, I want to include this in case it is experienced. The body is eliminating toxins stored in fatty tissue in the body.
* Headaches or Stomachaches – This may be a result of salt, sugar, or caffeine withdrawal. This is best avoided by eliminating these items prior to fasting.
* Lower Back Pain – This indicates dehydration. Water consumption is needed.

During your fast, you may have struggles, discomforts, spiritual victories, and failures. In the morning you may feel like you are on top of the world, but by evening you may be wrestling with the flesh, tempted to raid the refrigerator and counting how much longer until the fast is lifted. This is especially true if you are new to fasting for more than three days. To counter temptations, go to God in prayer, step outside for fresh air and if possible, go for a moderate walk, and talk to the Lord as you walk along.

Three of the most popular fasts based on health status are: Water Fast (abstaining from all food and juices), Partial Fast (eliminating certain foods or specific meals), and Juice Fast (drink only fruit or vegetable juices during meals). For this fast, I am asking that we stick with a partial fast. Here is some information and suggestions for consumption that may help you in your fast.

* Avoid dairy products, especially milk because it is a pure food and therefore a violation of the fast. Products containing high protein, fat, as well as soy-based drinks should be avoided, because it restarts the digestion cycle and results in hunger pangs. For health reasons, avoid caffeinated beverages including coffee, tea and cola. Caffeine is a stimulant and has a powerful effect on the nervous system when you abstain from food.
* Fruit juices are “cleansers” and are best taken in the morning; vegetable juices are “restorers” and are best taken in the afternoon. The natural sugars in juices provide energy. Attempt to only drink juices that are 100% juice with no sugar or other additives. Because of their acidic content, most nutritionists do not advise orange or tomato juice. The best juices are fresh carrot, grape, apple, celery or beet. Green drinks from leafy vegetables are excellent detoxifiers.
* Avoid all fried foods, starch (rice, pasta, potatoes, and bread), pork, beef and goat.
* Exercise only moderately and rest as much as your schedule permits.
* Do eat fruit, vegetables, poultry, healthy soups, and drink lots of water.

Most experts agree that breaking a fast with steamed or raw vegetables is best. Your stomach is smaller at this point, so eat lightly and stop eating before you feel full. Introduce meats, starches, and dairy food slowly. Vegetable soup may be helpful. Resume regiment exercise slowly.

Fasting is not so much about food as it is focus. Fasting is not so much about saying no the body as it is about saying yes to the Spirit. Fasting is not about doing without, it is about looking within. Fasting is not a means of seeking God’s blessings, as much as it is a means of seeking God. Fasting is not a test for super saints, it is not a means of twisting God’s arm, and it is not a magical formula for getting through to God. Fasting is an outward response to an inward cry of the soul. Fasting is feasting on the Lord, looking for comfort, power, strength, guidance, forgiveness, and hope.

Likewise, we must be applying prayer to our problems, concerns, relationships, and responsibilities. Prayer is the tool that God has given us to use on all the disrepair in our lives, in our church body, and in our communities. Saints of United Community Baptist Church, let us use this opportunity and experience of Fasting and Prayer to restore our focus and revive the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Let us feast on the Word of God in this important time for us as a church body, remaining in one accord in seeking God’s face.

GUIDELINES FOR THIS FAST

Our fast will be for Twelve Hours during each day of the fast. During that time, you should stay hydrated and eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. Please be cognizant of your consumption and be guided by what foods you eat. The time observance of fast and prayer is as follows, depending upon your schedule.

* 6pm-6am (Your last meal will be at 6pm).
* 7pm-7am (Your last meal will be at 7pm).
* 8pm-8am (Your last meal will be at 8pm).

SCRIPTURE READINGS

* Please continue your Daily Bible Reading for the year on [www.ucbconline.com](http://www.ucbconline.com)