



St Mark's **GUIDE** to P L U M S T E A D **FASTING**

Ezra 8 ²³ “So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer”

Matthew 9 ¹⁵ “The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.”

Matthew 6 ¹⁷⁻¹⁸ “But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Fasting means to deliberately refrain from eating food for a set time. Fasting has always been a way God's people have used to commit themselves for him and bring special requests to him. Ezra called a fast for God's people before they embarked on the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Jesus instructed his disciples on how they should fast, and said that when he leaves them fasting is something they will do until he returns.

While fasting is not commanded in scripture, it is nonetheless a discipline that is encouraged and many Christians can testify how their spiritual walk is helped through regular times of fasting.

There are many good spiritual benefits to fasting...

1) Fasting helps to resist making idols of God's gifts.

Food is a good gift from God, but our sinful tendency is always to prioritize God's gifts before God himself, making them into idols. Fasting helps to reverse this tendency and discipline our soul to seek God before seeking what we get from Him.

2) Fasting helps you to look forward to the heavenly feast.

We live in a broken world where our desires are never fully satisfied. God has promise that one day, through Christ, all our desires will be satisfied in heaven. Fasting helps us to remember that we're not in this world to chase after our desires,

but to seek God's kingdom and trust God to fulfill our desires in his good time.

3) Fasting is a way of telling God that we desire him more than food.

As God's people in the Old Testament made willing sacrifices to express their devotion to God, so one way his people today do that is through fasting. It is a voluntary act of love which demonstrates that our hunger for God is greater than our hunger for food.

4) Fasting is a way of revealing hidden sins.

It is often during times of fasting and prayer for a specific blessing that God reveals to us particular sins that we must address before those blessings can be enjoyed.

5) Fasting is a way we honour what Jesus went through for us

Along with all that Jesus did for us, he also fasted for forty days in order to defeat Satan's attempts to distract him from his mission. It was through his fasting, and his ongoing willingness throughout his life to put aside his own comforts, that we were saved at all. To fast is to honour Jesus' fast and sacrifice of comforts for us,

and affirm that we are ready to sacrifice comforts for him in return.

These are just some of the benefits we can experience through fasting.



Every so often, church leadership may call the congregation to a day of prayer and fasting. This allows the whole church body to put aside worldly distractions and focus together on praying for specific items.

To carry out a day of prayer and fasting, you will typically choose a set time of the day to refrain from eating. It should be long enough for you to feel some hunger. A suggested period is between sunrise and sunset. You will also devote a set period of the day to praying through particular items. This can be whenever works for you. Try doing it during the times you would've otherwise been eating breakfast and lunch.

Make sure still to drink enough water and/or some tea or coffee if you need a boost. (It may also help to suck a breathmint from time to time!) If you have a health condition that requires regular eating, please talk with your GP before fasting.