**Joshua 3:5 (NIV)**

**5Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.”**

**GUIDELINES FOR LENTEN CHURCH-WIDE FAST\***

**(DANIEL FAST)**

**February 26 thru April 5, 2020**

The season of Lent is coming and God is calling. This year God is calling us to a 40 day Lenten Church-Wide Fast. Beginning February 26th to April 5th 2020 (excluding all Sundays), we will celebrate the disciple of prayer, fasting and giving. During the fast, eat 3-4 small, well-balanced meals each day using the following Suggested Food Guidelines. If you are used to drinking a lot of coffee, tea and other caffeinated beverages, you may experience a headache, a common withdrawal symptom. This should gradually diminish after the first few days.

Do not let your outward appearance or behavior indicate you are fasting. Remember, this is a personal commitment between you and God. Continue to dress appropriately, as a Christian should, and as your setting dictates. On occasion you may be placed in a business or social setting when it is necessary to eat a little rather than call attention to yourself by not eating. If this happens, avoid red meat, try to stick to simple foods and skip dessert. However, since many people in society are already dieting (or so it seems), your omission of dessert and high calorie foods may not even be noticed.

If you happen to inadvertently eat something on the “Avoid” list, don’t be discouraged and do not quit the fast. Ask the Lord to help you, realizing you will need more of His strength to make it the remainder of the 40 days.

**Frequently Asked Questions and Answers Regarding Fasting**

* Is fasting for everyone?

Fasting is beneficial for anyone who desires to draw closer to Christ. Every Christian should do some sort of fast at least once a month. It is recorded that the Apostle Paul fasted often and John Wesley fasted every Thursday.

* What if I don’t feel called to fasting?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline, just like prayer and reading the Bible. It is not something we are always called to do, rather we choose to obey Christ and sacrifice some of the pleasures of this life in order to draw closer to God. Fasting trains us in self-control and produces fruits of peace and righteousness.

* Why is fasting so important?

It reduces our appetite for carnal or fleshly pleasures and creates a hunger for God’s treasures. We are commanded to walk in the Spirit so we won’t fulfill the desires of the flesh (godless human nature). Fasting helps us to resist the flesh and walk uprightly before the Lord - to live a life which is pleasing to Him.

* What should I do while fasting?

Spend as much time with Jesus as possible. This is how we become more and more like Him. Read your Bible, pray, worship with song and thanksgiving, be silent and listen. Silent reverence with repentance is powerful!

* Should I fast if I have dietary restrictions or am on medication?

You should seek the Lord and consult your physician if you have any concerns. Medical science has known for some time that our bodies purge toxins while we fast. Chapter 58 of Isaiah mentions healing as one of the many benefits of fasting. However, use discretion when doing a food fast and consider an alternate fast if you are medically restricted in any way.

* Why do I get headaches when I try to fast?

Your body is purging toxins which have accumulated from years of a poor diet, prescription drugs and bad habits. Headaches are one of the results of this cleansing process (usually the second day). Prepare your system prior to a fast by eating healthier. Avoid red meat, sugar, caffeine and bread. Eat lots of fruit and vegetables three or four days before going on a fast of more than one day.

**How will I benefit from fasting**?

The benefits of fasting are many for those who continue faithfully in this discipline. Here are just a few.

1. A significant increase of understanding and revelation from the Word of God
2. Addictions and strongholds are broken--permanent changes take place
3. Recognition of sinful attitudes or conditions of your heart that you haven’t noticed before
4. Decrease of self-indulgence and self-righteousness
5. An increase of faith; Fear and doubt diminish because of confidence in God rather than your flesh
6. Supernatural release from bitterness and an ability to forgive others
7. A much greater sensitivity to God’s presence
8. The ability to hear God is greatly enhanced
9. You increasingly become more like Jesus with a notable increase of love, humility, wisdom and focus.

**Will all of my prayers be granted if I fast and pray the right way?**

Not necessarily. Fasting and praying does not force God to do something He otherwise would not do. However, there is no wasted time or energy when seeking God through fasting, prayer and worship. Fasting will change You! God will soften your heart and give you a healthy perspective of your circumstances and relationships.

**Minors/Children Alternative**

Minors should only enter this season of consecration under parental supervision. Minors who desire to fast are encouraged to consider non-food abstentions, such as TV, movies, Internet surfing, video games and other entertainment.

**Get on a schedule**

**For Personal Growth:**

For maximum spiritual benefit set aside ample time to be with the Lord. Listen for His leading. The more time you spend with Him the more meaningful your fast will be. Below is an example of a routine that if followed throughout our 40 days will become a lifestyle for you.

**Morning** (spend at least 15 minutes) Begin your day in praise and worship. Read and meditate on God’s word preferably on your knees.

Invite the Holy Spirit to work in you to will and to do His good pleasure according to Philippians 2:13.

Invite God to use you. Ask Him to show you how to influence your world, your family, your church, your community, your country and beyond.

**Noon** (spend at least 15 minutes)

Return to prayer and God’s word

Take a short prayer walk

Spend time intercessory prayer for your community’s and nation’s leaders, for the world’s unreached millions, for your family or special needs.

**Evening** (spend at least 20 minutes) Get alone for an unhurried time of “seeking His face.” Avoid television or any other distraction that may dampen your spiritual focus.

