



WHITE OAK GROVE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Transforming Lives While Building the Kingdom

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Corporate Fast

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?” Isaiah 58:6

Fasting is not a term that most of us are accustomed to using, with the exception of maybe only once a year. However, fasting is a biblical term frequently mentioned in both the Old and the New Testament.

God’s word assumes that fasting will be a regular part of a Christian’s life. Yet for most of us it is not. When Jesus spoke about fasting, He didn’t say if you fast, but “when you fast” (Matthew 6:16). Our Lord assumes that Christians will fast. And from the rest of the books in the New Testament we know that they did.

Before we once again embark on this five (5) day journey of fasting, let’s make sure (for those of you who were here last year and those of you who were not) that we understand why and how we are to approach this means of sacrifice to our Lord and Savior.

Why are we fasting?

In Jeremiah 29: 13&14, God said, “When you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you...” When you are willing to set aside the legitimate appetites of the body to concentrate on the work of praying, the development of a closer relationship with God, and the hunger for spiritual guidance you are demonstrating to God that you mean business.

Fasting puts things in proper perspective. It is a physical way of saying, “food and the things of this life are not as important to me now as... ***(you fill in the blank)***.”

Denying yourself food to focus on God and His program shows humility. That’s why fasting is an equivalent term to the phrase “to humble oneself before the Lord” (Psalms 35:13) Keep in mind that when a person is really concerned about the things of God, he/she will humble him/herself. There will be times when we will abstain from the enjoyment of food to continue concentration and focus on that which is important to God.

In most cases, Christians should only fast when they are feeling the Spirit leading them to do so. Fasting is a totally voluntary decision. However, there may be times when those in authority over us will proclaim a fast, as was done by King Saul (1 Samuel 14:24) or Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20:3) or Pastor Graves (WOG 1:1). But normally and ultimately that decision is solely between you and the Lord.

There are many different occasions that will happen in the life of a believer that may cause him/her to fast. Such occasions include, but not limited to the following: Mourning someone's death, repentance and/or confession of one's sin, praying for someone who is sick, to receive a special revelation, and the one that I favor the most is fasting for direction. Fasting helps us find God's will. If we expect God to reveal His direction for our lives, we must put Him first. Often this means putting aside the fulfillment of our physical appetites, so that we can focus our attention on Him. In both the Old and the New Testament, fasting is a mark of spiritual maturity in the life of a believer. Fasting undoubtedly promotes a stronger relationship with God, as fasting causes us to deny ourselves and put God first.

Fasting is a way to seek God with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13). Jesus taught His disciples to "ask, seek, and knock" until they receive from God what they desire (Matthew 7:7). Fasting is a way to position ourselves to seek God with a greater intensity. As we deny our fleshly desires, our spiritual hunger becomes stronger and His desires become our desires (Philippians 2:13).

As we have looked at reasons why a believer should fast, now let's look briefly look at why a believer should not fast.

Fasting should not be done to "earn" God's blessings. There is a danger in thinking that if we can fast and pray enough, God will pay more attention to us and will be sure to answer. We can't do anything that will make us worthy of God's blessing.

We do not fast as a mere ritual or form. Just as baptism, communion, Bible study can become empty rituals for many Christians, doing it "just because," so to can praying and fasting. One should do all of these things out of a heart of love, devotion, and appreciation for God's faithfulness and blessing in our lives.

We do not fast to impress others. Jesus taught that when you fast that you are to do it secretly. Do not go around discussing, boasting or looking for pity when you fast. This is something that should be done between you and God. In Matthew 6:16-18, it says... "Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

We do not fast as a means to lose weight, even though this may be an added benefit, it should not be your primary concern. Fasting is done for spiritual enhancement not physical changes. Fasting for the wrong reasons, with the wrong attitude will profit you nothing!!

Getting started on our fast:

There are three different types of fast. The first is the "normal fast," wherein a person abstains from both food and liquid for a period of one day, sunrise to sunset. The second is a "radical fast." This type of fast is one which a person refrains from both food and water OR food and not water over an extended period of time usually three to seven days. And the third fast is known

as the “partial fast.” In this type of fast, the emphasis is placed on restriction of diet, rather than abstaining completely from eating. An example of this is seen in the book of Daniel 1:15, when Daniel, Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego was eating only vegetables and drinking only water. For the moment you’ve all been waiting for... We will be doing a partial fast.

Our fast will restrict the eating of all meats, sweets, bread, all beverages (with the exception of water and natural fruit juices) during the period of Monday, January 8th starting from 6am-6pm, Tuesday, January 9th from 6am-6pm, Wednesday, January 10th from 6am-6pm, Thursday, January 11th from 6am-6pm and Friday, January 12th from 6am-6pm. as well as one week out of each quarter throughout the year.

Please mark these dates on your calendar. The quarterly fast will begin on **Monday, January 8th at 6:00am and will end each evening at 6pm.** Please use the remainder of each evening to prepare yourself mentally, physically, and spiritually for the following day with this process being continued throughout the week until Friday, January 12th at 6pm, with the aforementioned restrictions.

So what can I eat Pastor Graves????????????

All fruits, vegetables, and nuts can be eaten along with any 100% natural fruit juices and water. Beginning nightly at 6:00 p.m. you may have a regular diet.

Some things to Remember while you fast....

Fasting MUST be accompanied by prayer and devotion (quality time spent with God alone). You can pray without fasting, but you can’t fast without praying. Place yourself on a schedule: begin your day with prayer and the reading of God’s word. Invite the Lord to use you throughout the day. Pray for His will to be done in your life as well as praying for your church. At noon, go back into prayer and the reading of God’s word (perhaps while you’re at lunch) continuing to ask for His will for you to be revealed. And then at the close of the day, end your day with more prayer and more word. This is the perfect opportunity for you to spend that “quality time” with your Father.

I understand that some of you may have medical conditions that require you to eat more solid foods when taking your medication; that’s alright, do what you have to do. Please use WISDOM, God knows your heart.

Make sure that while you are fasting you:

- Limit your activities
- Exercise only moderately
- Rest as much as your schedule will allow
- Prepare yourself for temporary mental discomforts, such as impatience, crankiness and anxiety.

- Expect some physical discomforts, especially on the second day. You may have massive hunger pains, dizziness or the “blahs.” Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches. Physical annoyances may also include weakness, tiredness, or sleeplessness.

As you continue to fast throughout the day, you will likely experience a sense of well-being both physically and spiritually. However, should you feel hunger pains, increase your liquid intake.

Remember, God is taking us to the next level both on an individual basis as well as our entire church body. While fasting, pray for every entity of our church, i.e., every ministry, the finances, all those in leadership positions, your pastor, and especially the transition from where we are to where HE desires us to go.

Paul wrote to the Roman church...***“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”***. Romans 8:18