

An Invitation to Fast



A Partial Fast prepared for First Baptist Church Alba

by

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To be practiced during *Passion Week*

For the purpose of

personal holiness

Dallas Willard, distinguishes between *Disciplines of Abstinence* and *Disciplines of Engagement*. Study, worship, Prayer, and Fellowship are Disciplines of Engagement. Solitude, Silence, Sacrifice and Fasting are Disciplines of Abstinence. *"Fasting teaches us a lot about ourselves quickly. It may also bring to mind how we are using food pleasure to assuage the discomforts caused in our bodies by unwise living and attitudes. If nothing else, it will certainly demonstrate how powerful and clever our body is in getting its own way against our strongest resolves."* Willard, p. 166 *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Harper One, 1988.

Let's begin together:

The last week of Jesus' earthly life was full of teaching, preaching, intense prayer, and confrontation with His enemies. We should read about it regularly so as to gain a better insight into His perseverance. Matthew, Mark and Luke gave one fourth of their total chapters to Passion Week. John gave one half of his Gospel to that week!

This is a partial fast meaning your diet will be limited; some foods and drinks will be allowed. PLEASE CONSULT YOUR MEDICAL DOCTOR TO DETERMINE IF YOU CAN PARTICIPATE.

You will be asked to fast every day for **six days**. Day by day, I will do my best to point out the steps of Christ from the Gospels. I believe prayer is a means by which we communicate with God. Therefore, every day I have included an intentional prayer for spiritual activity in your life. *These are not warmed over from last year. I have thought and prayed carefully over these texts and prayers for you (Rev: 3/12/18).*

I have made a list below of biblical examples of why some fasted. Please feel free to choose one of the suggested reasons for fasting. Others may want to participate by denying themselves of something that is a *normal activity* in their daily life. "Normal" activities may include: involvement with certain individuals, TV and Radio, Texting, Telephone or even Talking (a vow of silence for a period of time).

Some biblical examples of fasting were for these reasons:

- ✓ *Confession of sin*
- ✓ *Wisdom for a decision*
- ✓ *Interceding for others*
- ✓ *For deliverance of a sinful, harmful habit. This sacrifice leads to personal holiness.*
- ✓ *For personal relationships to be reconciled*
- ✓ *Expressions of love and devotion to God*

Jesus said, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."* ***If there is no real sacrifice, there will be no real spiritual growth.*** Let us now hunger for God and thirst for His righteousness as we seek to know Him better.

On Palm Sunday, we read from Mark 11:11 Jesus made His way into Jerusalem. The people quote Psalm 118:25-26. They were overjoyed that the throne of David had been finally filled. Sadly though, their zeal soon turned to sadness and their Hosannas turned to weeping at Calvary. They misunderstood His identity as Messiah. Jesus came to save sinners and build His kingdom in their souls.

Monday: Mark 11:12-19 The next day, Jesus came to the temple in Jerusalem. It was a day of *cleansing*. When He walked into the temple moneychangers were there busy taking advantage of the poor pilgrims who had traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover. In righteous anger He overturned their tables and ran them out. God's house is a house of prayer and worship. When evening came He went out of the city.

Foods for today: Omit breads from every meal. The only food restriction today is bread.

Prayer for today: Psalm 51:10 "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*" God does His best work on the inside. Give the Spirit freedom to go from room to room of your heart and expose hidden sins and misguided motivations. Then quickly repent.

Tuesday: Mark 11: 19-26 "Now in the morning" tells us another day has dawned. Passing by the fig tree Jesus cursed for no fruit, He taught a visual lesson on prayer. If only Jerusalem would have believed that He is the Messiah they would have shown forth fruits of faith. So then, let the people of God be a believing people and pray in faith as if they have already received. (Remember Caleb's perseverance and his words at the age of 85, "Give me this mountain!" Joshua 14:12). In addition, when we pray, we should consider if we have offended anyone and if so, go quickly and offer your apology.

Foods for today: Fruits and vegetables only today. No other foods all day, fruits and vegetables only. In addition, no use of harmful personal habits. Give them to God and *enjoy one day of freedom!* Perhaps this will be the beginning of a new covenant to God to stop tearing down your temple of God.

Prayer for today: In February we spent two Sundays, a significant amount of time, in Psalm 107. Look back over your notes from those two Sundays (2/18 & 2/25) and see if you fit in the 107:4-7 group. Are you a *Hungry Seeker*? Are you in the 107:23-32 group? Are you *Pridefully Wise*? Ask yourself these hard questions in prayer.

Wednesday: John's Gospel seems to indicate this was a day of rest and fellowship for Jesus. In John 17:20-26, Jesus interceded for those who would believe in Him (future tense verb indicating this could be you and me). His prayer for us is that we would be one with one another. Jesus wants the world to see the Father's love through us! Notice how many times the word love is used.

Foods for today: Omit *coffee* today and *one meal*. Instead of the meal, find a place to be alone with God and pray. Feast on the words of God. I recommend Psalm 119, all 176 vv. Fasting in Scripture is always accompanied by prayer. (*Tomorrow I am asking that we refrain from all screens for four hours. This means no cell phone usage, unless of course: you have an emergency, or if your job is screen related. This means you need to make your close friends and families aware that you are okay, just doing without the screens for four hours.*)

Prayer for today: *God, please show me one church member whom I can serve this week.*

Thursday The synoptic Gospels make it clear that this was the day Jesus ate the Passover meal with His disciples. Read John 13:1-20. *This should be a day of serving.* Whom can you serve today? Think of unique ways to serve your spouse and your family. Jesus washed His disciples' feet. No master would have ever considered this. The disciples were shocked; it rocked their theology! However you decide to serve someone today, it should cost you something.

Thursday PM: After the Passover meal, Jesus enters a grove of olive trees commonly known as the Garden of Gethsemane. He surrounds himself with two rings of supporters: eight disciples (excluding Judas) on the outside and Peter, James and John on the inside (Mark 14:32-42). He was arrested in Gethsemane and taken before the Jewish leaders, then before Pilate for the Roman phase of His trial.

Foods for today: Omit one meal and omit all screens (try to go without *Television, Radio, Twitter, Facebook,* and other *social media* just for four hours). Focus on the meaning of the week and do not let media distract you from your goal: personal godliness.

Prayer for today: **I usually watch The Passion on Thursday of Easter Week. I only watch this movie once a year to keep the sacredness of the event. It is very difficult for me to watch, so be aware if you have not seen it, some scenes are quite violent and graphic. It should be restricted from children. However, I believe it is the closest portrayal of the crucifixion that I have seen.** Let this be your time of prayer of worship as you watch The Passion, directed by Mel Gibson.

Friday (Good Friday): After His flogging Jesus' hands were tied to the horizontal beam of His cross. Read John 19:1-3, 14-18. Mark 15:25 signifies it was the third hour translating 9 am Friday, when Jesus was lifted up on His cross on a hill called Golgotha. "Dying at approximately 3:00 pm on Friday, He was placed in the tomb before sundown (day one). He remained in the tomb all day Saturday (day two) and from sundown Saturday until His resurrection Sunday morning (day three). Thus He was raised on the third day" Michael Wilkins, TNIVAC p. 936.

Foods for today: Omit *all caffeine* today; no sodas, no coffee. Drink only water and *omit one meal.* This has been the hardest day for me. Headaches and irritability are two side effects I have experienced on Day 5. Don't give up, the spiritual reward is incredible. Stay focused on God's sustenance and provision. Remember Jesus fasted 40 days and 40 nights! Also remember you have captured the enemy's attention. If he came to Jesus he will surely come to you. ***Spiritual growth always comes as a result of personal sacrifice.*** "You cannot stay the way you are, life as usual, and go with God" Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God.*

Prayer for today: *God, here I am, send me.* Please read Isaiah 6:1-8. *When was Isaiah ready to be sent?* After his fresh view of God upon His throne; after his woeful encounter with a holy God, and after his sin was covered. No one ever just strolls into the presence of God. Carefully pray about your posture before God, even in reading Scripture.

Saturday: This is the Jewish Sabbath. Devote this day to conversational prayer. Be intentional today about thanking God for Jesus. Worship Him as you go about your daily routine. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God” Philippians 4:6 NKJV. Just talk to God today about everything. Enjoy Him and love Him with all of your mind.

Foods for today: Eat only juice and crackers for *two meals* today symbolizing the body and blood of Christ. Your *third* meal is your choice, no restrictions.

Prayer for today: As you read back over Mt 28:18-20 (The Great Commission text) notice three declarations about Christ that should encourage you to share the Gospel: v18 His Person: He has all authority! v19 His Proclamation to us: Go and make disciples! This is not an option. v20 His Promise: He will be with you! *Father, it scares me to even think about striking up a conversation about You to strangers. But I trust You and Your Word. Use me up.*

EASTER Sunday: Congratulations! This is a day of celebration. Christ rose from the dead and offers hope to the entire world that there can be life beyond the grave if they will believe. We agree with Paul, “O Death where is your sting? O’ Hades, where is your victory?”

Thank you for participating with me in this partial fast. I hope you have grown closer to God this past week. He has heard your prayers; He has observed your sacrifice. Make fasting a part of your life because Jesus expects us to fast. Paul urges us to “present {our} bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.”

Bring a friend with you on Easter Sunday and pray for the lost of our community.

Daily Journal

Monday Your Prayer:
Symptoms Experienced:
Convictions:
Life Application: (IE: this is my plan of action)

Tuesday Your Prayer:
Symptoms Experienced:
Convictions:
Life Application:

Wednesday Your Prayer:
Symptoms Experienced:
Convictions:
Life Application:

Thursday Your Prayer:
Symptoms Experienced:
Convictions:
Life Application:

Friday Your Prayer:
Symptoms Experienced:
Convictions:
Life Application:

Saturday Your Prayer:
Symptoms Experienced:
Convictions:
Life Application:

What I gleaned from the fast:

How I experienced God:

How God spoke to me specifically:

Ways in which my pastor could have made this better: