

*Fasting and Prayer for
for Intimacy with God*



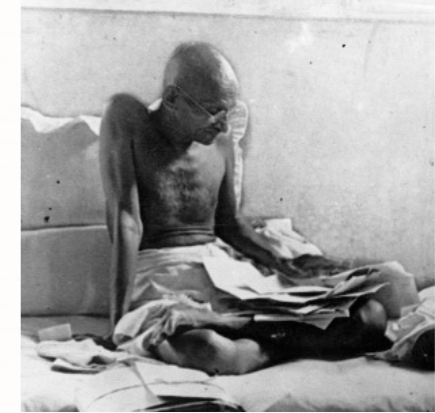
A call to twenty-one days of corporate focus

- **Small Group Sharing:**
 - **What is fasting?**
 - **Is fasting Biblical?**
 - **Have you ever fasted?**
 - **Why or why not?**
 - **If you did, what was your experience?**

- **Fasting: What is it?**
- **Fasting is primarily an act of willing abstinence or reduction from certain or all food, drink, or both, for a period of time. It may also mean abstaining from certain activities.**

Fasting: What is the purpose?

- **Political--Gandhi and hunger strikes**
- **Health--for reduction of health risks, e.g obesity, high cholesterol, diabetes**
- **Religious/Spiritual**
 - **Nearly every belief system includes some kind of fasting tradition--e.g. Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, tribal beliefs in Africa.**
 - **Strong Biblical support for fasting**



Fasting in the Bible

- The word 'fast' or 'fasting' is found extensively in both Old and New Testaments.
- Hebrew: **tsuwm** ("tsoom") = 26 times
- Greek: **nesteuo** ("nace-tyoo'-o")= 21 times
- The word in both languages means "to abstain from food and/or drink"

Biblical examples of fasting:

- Moses fasted for forty days and forty nights, twice back-to-back; the first, immediately before he received the tablets on the mountain with God. And the second, after coming down, seeing the Israelites practicing idolatry, and breaking the tablets in anger.
(Deuteronomy 9:7–21)

Biblical examples of fasting:

- King David fasted when the son of his adulterous union with Bathsheba was struck sick by God, in punishment for the adultery and for David's murder of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite. Nevertheless, the son died, upon which David broke his fast (2 Samuel 12:15–25).
- David used fasting as an act of humbling his soul (Psalm 35:13).

Biblical examples of fasting:

- King Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast throughout Judah for victory over the Moabites and Ammonites who were attacking them (2 Chronicles 20:3).
- Elijah the prophet journeyed forty days and forty nights, apparently without food. (1 Kings 19:8).
- The prophet Joel called for a corporate fast to avert the judgment of God. (Book of Joel 1:14, 2:12, 15)

Biblical examples of fasting:

- The prophet Isaiah chastised the Israelites in Isaiah 58 for the unrighteous methods and motives of their fasting. He clarified some of the best reasons for fasting and listed both physical and spiritual benefits that would result (Isaiah 58:3–13).

Biblical examples of fasting:

- The people of Nineveh, in response to Jonah's prophecy, fasted to avert the judgment of God (Jonah 3:7).
- The Jews of Persia, following Mordechai's example, fasted because of Haman's genocidal decree. Queen Esther declared a three-day fast for all the Jews prior to risking her life in visiting King Ahasuerus uninvited (Esther 4)

Biblical examples of fasting:

- The prophetess Anna, who proclaimed the baby Jesus to be the Messiah, prayed and fasted regularly in the Temple (Luke 2:37).
- Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights while in the desert, being tempted by Satan to turn stones into bread and eat them, among other temptations. (Matthew 4:2, Luke 4:2).

Biblical examples of fasting:

- Jesus taught on the correct outward appearance and demeanor of a fasting person (Matthew 6:16). It is also an assumed **regular** part of the believer's life (see: "And when you pray..." Matthew 6:5 – "When you fast..." Matthew 6:16)
- Saul did not eat or drink anything for three days after he converted on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9:9)

Biblical examples of fasting:

- The church in Antioch were worshipping the Lord and fasting when the Holy Spirit told them to send Barnabas and Paul for work (Acts 13:2).
- Paul and Barnabas appointed elders with prayer and fasting (Acts 14:23).

Biblical examples of fasting:

- The Pharisees and John's disciples in Jesus' time fasted regularly and asked Jesus why his disciples did not. Jesus answered them using a parable about the Bridegroom (Matthew 9:14–15, Mark 2:18–20, Luke 5:33–39)
- In Mark 9:29, Jesus ascribes his disciples' inability to cast out spirits to a lack of prayer and fasting.

Fasting: Why do Christians need to fast?

- **We fast because we're hungry for God's Word and God's Spirit in our lives. Fasting focuses our appetite on what really matters.**
- **We fast because we long for God's glory to resound in our church and God's praise to resound among the nations. Intimacy and empowerment!**
- **We fast because we yearn for intimacy with God and to be empowered to tell others about His great love!**

Fasting: Why do Christians need to fast?

Fasting forces us to depend solely on God.

"It is a dreadful truth that the state of having to depend solely on God is what we all dread most. And of course that just shows how very much, how almost exclusively, we have been depending on things like food and activities to satisfy us. But this habit is now so deeply ingrained, we will not turn to Him as long as He leaves us anything else to turn to. . . ."

(C.S. Lewis)

Fasting: Why do Christians need to fast?

When we fast, we turn from the "things" that daily grab our attention and focus deeply on God. During that time, we come to realize how much food and the things of this world are occupying our thoughts, time, activities and finances. Some may realize, too, that they have been famished for spiritual food.

Ultimately, we fast simply because we want God more than we want anything this world has to offer us.

Fasting: Why do Christians need to fast?

The birthplace of Christian fasting is homesickness for God.

Fasting is a test to see what desires control us. What are our bottom-line passions?

Fasting: Why do Christians need to fast?

“More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us. This is a wonderful benefit to the true disciple who longs to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We cover up what is inside of us with food and other things.”

(Richard Foster)

Fasting and Our Triune Nature

1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.

Humans *dwell* in a physical Body (*soma*), we *have* a Soul (*psyche*), and we *live eternally* as a Spirit (*pneuma*).

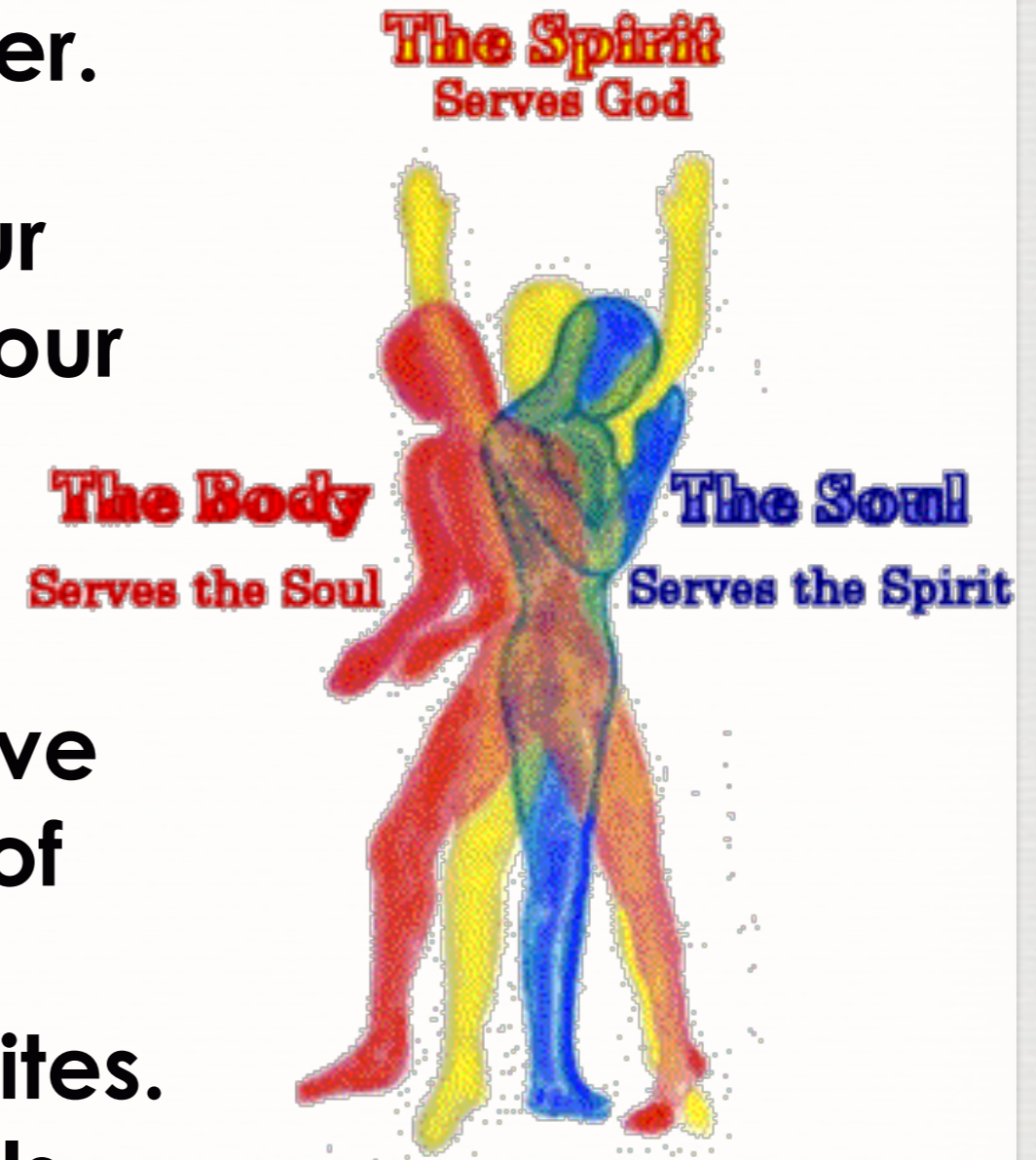


Fasting and Our Triune Nature

The Biblical order is the Spirit governs the Soul which governs the Body, but many of us operate in reverse order.

Fasting helps us put the parts of our triune nature in the right order, as our Spirit instructs our Soul (Mind, Will, Emotions) to govern our Body.

As Christians, our Spirit is made alive in Christ. In the spiritual discipline of fasting, we pursue God-ward appetites instead of earthly appetites. This satisfies our spirits and our souls.



"If we don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because we have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because we have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Our soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great."

(John Piper)

Mid-message Review:

- **Fasting is Biblical.**
- **Fasting humbles us and empowers prayer.**
- **Fasting is necessary for correct spiritual growth and balance.**
- **Fasting brings us into alignment with God and His heart for us and for the world around us.**
- **Fasting strengthens our spirits as we submit to the Holy Spirit.**

A call to a corporate 21-day “Daniel Fast”

- Starting from Sunday January 13, to Sunday February 3, we are calling the MVCC ‘Ohana to fast and pray for increased intimacy with God individually and corporately.
- The key is to humble ourselves, to repent, and to turn to God to cleanse us and renew our passion for Him alone.
- We will be doing a specific kind of Biblical fast practiced by the prophet Daniel.

Where is the “Daniel Fast” in the Bible?

Daniel 1 It was the third year of King Jehoiakim’s reign in Judah when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon declared war on Jerusalem and besieged the city. The Lord handed King Jehoiakim of Judah over to him, along with some of the furnishings from the Temple of God. Nebuchadnezzar took king and furnishings to the country of Babylon, the ancient Shinar. He put the furnishings in the sacred treasury.

The king told Ashpenaz, head of the palace staff, to get some Israelites from the royal family and nobility—young men who were healthy and handsome, intelligent and well-educated, good prospects for leadership positions in the government, perfect specimens!—and indoctrinate them in the Babylonian language and the lore of magic and fortunetelling.

The king then ordered that they be served from the same menu as the royal table—the best food, the finest wine. After three years of training they would be given positions in the king's court.

Four young men from Judah—Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—were among those selected. The head of the palace staff gave them Babylonian names: Daniel was named Belteshazzar, Hananiah was named Shadrach, Mishael was named Meshach, Azariah was named Abednego.

8-10 But Daniel determined that he would not defile himself by eating the king's food or drinking his wine, so he asked the head of the palace staff to exempt him from the royal diet.

The head of the palace staff, by God's grace, liked Daniel, but he warned him, "I'm afraid of what my master the king will do. He is the one who assigned this diet and if he sees that you are not as healthy as the rest, he'll have my head!"

But Daniel appealed to a steward who had been assigned by the head of the palace staff to be in charge of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: "Try us out for ten days on a simple diet of vegetables and water. Then compare us with the young men who eat from the royal menu. Make your decision on the basis of what you see."

The steward agreed to do it and fed them vegetables and water for ten days. At the end of the ten days they looked better and more robust than all the others who had been eating from the royal menu. So the steward continued to exempt them from the royal menu of food and drink and served them only vegetables.

God gave these four young men knowledge and skill in both books and life. In addition, Daniel was gifted in understanding all sorts of visions and dreams. At the end of the time set by the king for their training, the head of the royal staff brought them in to Nebuchadnezzar. When the king interviewed them, he found them far superior to all the other young men. None were a match for Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

And so they took their place in the king's service. Whenever the king consulted them on anything, on books or on life, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his kingdom put together.

Daniel 10: In the third year of the reign of King Cyrus of Persia, a message was made plain to Daniel, whose Babylonian name was Belteshazzar. The message was true. It dealt with a big war. He understood the message, the understanding coming by revelation:

“During those days, I, Daniel, went into mourning over Jerusalem for three weeks. I ate only plain and simple food, no seasoning or meat or wine. I neither bathed nor shaved until the three weeks were up.

“On the twenty-fourth day of the first month I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris. I looked up and to my surprise saw a man dressed in linen with a belt of pure gold around his waist. His body was hard and glistening, as if sculpted from a precious stone, his face radiant, his eyes bright and penetrating like torches, his arms and feet glistening like polished bronze, and his voice, deep and resonant, sounded like a huge choir of voices.

“I, Daniel, was the only one to see this. The men who were with me, although they didn't see it, were overcome with fear and ran off and hid, fearing the worst. Left alone after the appearance, abandoned by my friends, I went weak in the knees, the blood drained from my face.

“I heard his voice. At the sound of it I fainted, fell flat on the ground, face in the dirt. A hand touched me and pulled me to my hands and knees.

“‘Daniel,’ he said, ‘man of quality, listen carefully to my message. And get up on your feet. Stand at attention. I’ve been sent to bring you news.’

“When he had said this, I stood up, but I was still shaking.

“‘Relax, Daniel,’ he continued, ‘don’t be afraid. From the moment you decided to humble yourself to receive understanding, your prayer was heard, and I set out to come to you. But I was waylaid by the angel-prince of the kingdom of Persia and was delayed for a good three weeks. But then Michael, one of the chief angel-princes, intervened to help me. I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia.

And now I'm here to help you understand what will eventually happen to your people. The vision has to do with what's ahead.'

"While he was saying all this, I looked at the ground and said nothing. Then I was surprised by something like a human hand that touched my lips. I opened my mouth and started talking to the messenger: 'When I saw you, master, I was terror-stricken. My knees turned to water. I couldn't move. How can I, a lowly servant, speak to you, my master? I'm paralyzed. I can hardly breathe!'

"Then this humanlike figure touched me again and gave me strength. He said, 'Don't be afraid, friend. Peace. Everything is going to be all right. Take courage. Be strong.'

“Even as he spoke, courage surged up within me. I said, ‘Go ahead, let my master speak. You’ve given me courage.’

“He said, ‘Do you know why I’ve come here to you? I now have to go back to fight against the angel-prince of Persia, and when I get him out of the way, the angel-prince of Greece will arrive. But first let me tell you what’s written in The True Book. No one helps me in my fight against these beings except Michael, your angel-prince.’”

What is allowed in a “Daniel Fast”?

Daniel seemed to eat only things planted for harvest and drank only water. So... it is kind of like Vegan Plus:

- **YES: Whole Grains (including brown rice), Legumes (all beans), Fruits, Vegetables, Seeds (all nuts)**
- **NO: Meat and animal products, dairy products, sweeteners, leavened bread, refined and processed food products (artificial flavorings, food additives, chemicals, white rice, white flour, and foods that contain artificial preservatives), deep fried foods (potato chips, French fries, corn chips), all solid fats (shortening, margarine), all drinks except water and unsweetened fruit juices.**

Other kinds of fasting...

We are not being legalistic about what kind of fast you do...but DO fast and pray! You may fast from all food, or fast one meal a day and spend that extra time with Jesus. Alternatively, fast from something that you love to eat or drink, like meat, sweets, or coffee. When you crave those foods, say a prayer and ask for more of Jesus, and that you would welcome him in a deeper way. You could also consider fasting from a form of technology and use that time to spend in prayer or reading Scripture.

Other kinds of fasting...

Food

- Daniel Fast
- A Meal a Day
- Snacking
- Caffeine
- Meat
- Sugar/Sweets
- Fast Food
- Salt/Seasonings

Non-Food

- Negativity
- Talking stink/Criticizing
- Electronics
- TV/Movies
- Social Media
- Video Games
- Sports

Conclusion/Takeaway:

- The pastors of MVCC are excited to call our church ‘ohana to humbly seek God and pray as we fast together to pursue higher levels of personal and corporate revival as we start this year!
- It’s because of God’s grace that we are able to lay down earthly desires in exchange for a focused and intentional pursuit of intimate relationship with Him.
- In your bulletins is a commitment card that we would like you to fill out. Please take some time right now to pray about how to engage with this 21-day fast, January 13-February 3. Let’s be expectant for a powerful release of breakthrough in us personally and as an ‘ohana!

- **Reflection and prayer**
- **Communion**