



# MOVING MOUNTAINS

**He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting.”**

Mark 9:29



## WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is abstaining from food for a specific period of time. When we fast, we intentionally set aside something we regularly rely on for sustenance and look to God to fill us instead.

Fasting is one of the oldest and most prevalent spiritual practices in the Bible. Great leaders in the Bible fasted routinely, including Moses, David, Jeremiah, Isaiah, John the Baptist, Jesus and the disciples. Jesus expects that we will fast regularly. In Matthew 6:16, Jesus addresses fasting specifically when he tells the disciples, “When you fast...” Notice Jesus says “when” not “if.” Jesus assumes that we will fast. Though fasting is assumed, it is not required. We don’t have to fast. We get to fast. Like all intentional spiritual practices, fasting should not be legalistic – we are not earning approval from God through fasting.



## WHY FAST?

Fasting allows us to create space in our minds and souls for more of God’s presence. We can fast for a number of reasons: for spiritual renewal, for guidance, for growing our dependence on God, etc. As we fast, we give our need for food to God, asking him to fill that space instead.

Fasting goes hand-in-hand with prayer. As we become more aware of God’s presence through fasting, we can begin to discern his desires and align our prayers with his will.

## PREPARING TO FAST

Fasting can be practiced in a number of ways. Make several decisions ahead of your fast.

**TIME** - How often you will fast? One meal? One day? Making this commitment ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it. If fasting is new to you, start with a shorter fast.

**TYPE** - Fasting can either be total (abstaining from food and water) or partial (i.e. abstaining from solid foods but still drinking water and juices). Fasting requires reasonable precautions, especially longer fasts. If you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment, consult your physician first.

**PRACTICES** - Decide how much time you will devote to spiritual practices during the fast. Plan to set aside the time you would normally spend on meal preparation and eating for focused time with God. You may need to restrict certain physical or social activities during your fast.

## DURING THE FAST

During the fast, you can pray, read and meditate on Scripture, journal, listen to worship music, etc. Expect to receive insights or promptings from God during your fast, but be patient. Ask God to help you be still and quiet before him. Find purpose in just being focused on his presence.

During a fast you may feel weak, irritable, or have difficulty concentrating. You may also get a headache. This is normal. Let your physical challenges draw you to a deeper dependence on God.

## AFTER THE FAST

Share any insights or promptings you sensed from God during your fast with someone in your Small Group or a friend or a staff member. Let's encourage and challenge each other by sharing what we hear from God! Do not be discouraged if you struggle the first few times you fast. It takes time to build your spiritual fasting muscles. God will honor your desire to experience his presence through this practice.