

Blessed be  
 God Father and Father of our  
 Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed  
 us in Christ  
 with every spiritual blessing in the heaven  
 as in Christ  
 before the foundation of the world, when He in  
 His love, even as He chose us in  
 Himself, before the  
 foundation of the world, that we should  
 be holy and blameless  
 before Him in love, without blemish  
 as the elect of God, who have  
 been predestinated to  
 Himself by the grace of His  
 Son Jesus Christ, to the praise  
 of His glorious grace which He  
 bestowed on us in Himself  
 before the foundation of the world,

# EPHESIANS IN CHRIST

## Midyear Prayer and Fasting

The image shows a circular word cloud of Hindi text. The words are arranged in concentric circles, with some words being larger and more prominent than others. The text is in Devanagari script. The colors of the text are primarily blue, green, and yellow, with some white and black text interspersed. The overall shape is roughly circular, with the words filling the space from the center outwards. The text appears to be a collection of words or phrases, possibly from a poem or song, arranged in a visually appealing circular pattern.



# EPHESIANS **IN CHRIST**

Midyear Prayer and Fasting

JULY 9-11, 2018

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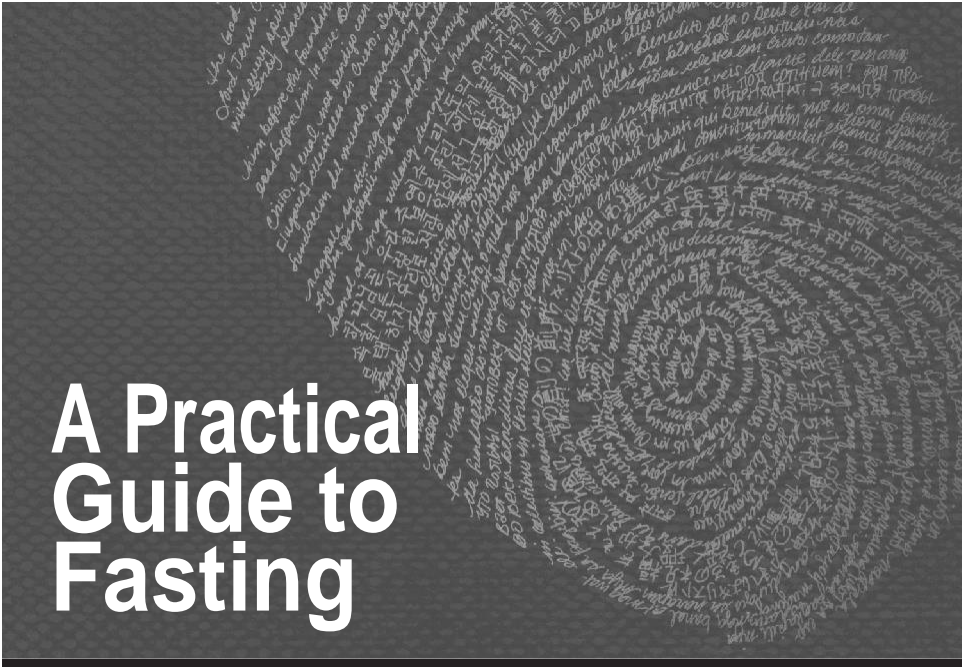
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# A Practical Guide to Fasting

## Why fast?

Fasting is a spiritual tool God uses to advance His kingdom, change the destiny of nations, spark revival, and bring victory in people's lives.

### Jesus fasted.

*<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.*

MATTHEW 4:1,2

*And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.*

LUKE 4:14

Jesus knew He was going to need spiritual strength to fulfill His purposes. Fasting makes us spiritually strong and prepares us to do God's work.

## **Fasting is an act of humility and consecration.**

*Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods.*

EZRA 8:21

As we humble ourselves through prayer and fasting, we receive God's grace and have access to His heart.

## **Fasting helps us become sensitive to the Holy Spirit.**

*While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

ACTS 13:2

When we deny ourselves of natural cravings and worldly distractions, we become more sensitive to God's voice. Then, we are better able to focus on God and submit to His will.

## **Fasting brings revival.**

*"... if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."*

2 CHRONICLES 7:14

Throughout history, God has brought revival and delivered nations from destruction in response to prayer and fasting. Fasting helps us prevail in prayer and intercession.

## **Fasting is healthy.**

Fasting cleanses your digestive system from toxins. Doctors consider fasting a cure for certain allergies and diseases. As we learn to exercise discipline, fasting breaks unhealthy addictions in our lives.



# Planning Your Fast

*Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you."*

JOSHUA 3:5

**Pray**—Spend time reading the Bible before the fast. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance in your prayers. On pages 7-9, write down your faith goals and specific prayer requests for your family, friends, church, and nation.

**Commit**—Pray about the kind of fast you will undertake and commit to it ahead of time. Record your plan on page 5. Ask God for grace to help you follow through with your decision.

**Act**—Start eating smaller portions a few days before the fast. Avoid food high in sugar and fat. Plan to limit physical and social activities for the week of the fast. Ask someone to be your prayer partner throughout the fast and have that person sign page 7.

**NOTE:** Consult a physician, especially if you are pregnant, nursing, or taking medication. If your situation does not allow you to do a full fast, determine what will work best for you.

## While Fasting

*But [Jesus] answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

MATTHEW 4:4

**Focus**—Set aside time to work through the devotional. Be ready to respond to God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

**Pray**—Join at least one prayer meeting in your local church. Intercede for your family, church, pastors, nation, the campuses, and the nations throughout the week.

**Replenish**—During meal times, read the Bible and pray instead. Drink plenty of water and rest as much as you can. Be ready for temporary bouts of physical weakness and mental annoyances like impatience and irritability.

# Breaking the Fast

*<sup>14</sup>And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. <sup>15</sup>And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*

1 JOHN 5:14,15

**Eat**—Reintroduces solid food gradually. Your body will need time to adjust to a normal diet. Start with fruits, juices, and salad, then add more vegetables. Eat small portions throughout the day.

**Pray**—Don't stop praying! Trust God's faithfulness and timing. Carry your newfound passion for God throughout the year. Be in faith for God to answer your prayers.

# Fasting Commitments

## Day 1

### Fasting Options:

- ☐ Water only
- ☐ Liquid only
- ☐ One meal only
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer Meeting(s) to Attend:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Day 2

### Fasting Options:

- ☐ Water only
- ☐ Liquid only
- ☐ One meal only
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer Meeting(s) to Attend:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Day 3

### Fasting Options:

- ☐ Water only
- ☐ Liquid only
- ☐ One meal only
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer Meeting(s) to Attend:

\_\_\_\_\_

# I am thankful to God for...

## Answered Prayers

*List highlights, answered prayers, and lessons learned so far in 2018.*

# For the rest of 2018, I am continuing to believe God for...

## Personal Faith Goals

*Spiritual Revival • Physical Healing • Prosperity and Abundance • Rich Generosity*

## My Family

*Restoration of Relationships • Household Salvation*

## My Education/Career

*Excellence • Promotion*

## My Ministry

*Small Group Growth • Salvation of Colleagues and Classmates*

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Prayer Partner

*"... if two of you agree on earth  
about anything they ask, it will  
be done for them by my Father  
in heaven."*

MATTHEW 18:19

# I am committing to pray for...

**Name**

**Request(s)**

# I am Committing to Pray for...

## My Church

*Church Leadership • Provision • Discipleship Ministry*

## My Community

*Campuses and Educational Institutions • Local Government • Outreach Opportunities*

## My Nation

*Government Officials • Spiritual Revival • Economic Prosperity • Peace and Order*

BEFORE YOU FAST

# SEATED IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES

READ

EPHESIANS 1:3, 13, 14, 19-21

*<sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places . . . <sup>19</sup>and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might <sup>20</sup>that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places . . .*

EPHESIANS 1:3, 19, 20

The Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the church in Ephesus, which, at that time, was a hot spot for spiritual activity (such as magic arts, idolatry, and occult practices). Such activity in the spiritual realm brought much deception and oppression upon the inhabitants of the city and region. Paul countered their reality with a higher reality—we are recipients of *every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places* or spiritual realm by virtue of our identity in Christ. This positions us to appropriate Christ's victory over every spiritual opposition we will face as we live for God and do His work.

Some followers of Christ may not be aware of the spiritual realm and the existing opposition to our faith and calling. Despite this, we are able to gain the victory because of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.



Paul declared that because we are in Christ, we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. This is in reference to our relationship and union with God. Our salvation is a mighty work initiated by the Father, accomplished by Christ, and applied in our lives by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is both the evidence and guarantee of our redemption and future inheritance. And Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of our heavenly Father, far above the “powers” that try to dominate our lives with fear and intimidation.

Therefore, our salvation and the reality of the kingdom is not just something we believe by faith. There is evidence of it: the Holy Spirit! His manifestations, gifts, power, and fruit are all evidence of His presence. The Holy Spirit empowers us to stand firm against the enemy, advance God’s kingdom, and persevere in our faith.

# Apply

What challenges are you currently facing? How does your identity in Christ and His victory change the way you will overcome these challenges?

Knowing that the Holy Spirit is your guarantee, what promise is God leading you to claim in your life? How does this promise help you in the battles you are facing?

Commit the next three days of prayer and fasting to God. Pray for the Holy Spirit to empower you to persevere in faith and claim Christ's victory over every spiritual opposition.

# Pray

Heavenly Father, thank You that in Christ, I have received every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. I know that even though there are trials and spiritual battles that I have to face, I ultimately have the victory in Christ. As I live for You every day, may the Holy Spirit sustain me and empower me to live out my salvation, bravely fight the battles ahead of me, preach the gospel, and persevere in faith. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## Prayer Focus

- ☐ **Personal Prayer** (page 7)
- ☐ **Prayer Requests** (page 8)
- ☐ **My Church** (page 9)
- ☐ **My Community** (page 9)
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# DAY 1

# POSITION

*<sup>4</sup>But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup>and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

EPHESIANS 2:4-7

Have you ever gazed through the window of a plane 50,000 feet above the earth? From this vantage point, you see the world from a different perspective. Seeing the clouds, the seas, even the earth from the skies allows you to experience a whole new world.

Likewise, when Paul emphasized that every believer is seated with Christ in the heavenly realms, we are given a whole new vantage point of the way we interact with the world and the kind of life we are supposed to live in Christ. What does it mean to be seated with Christ in the heavenly places?

**To be seated with Christ is a position of rest.** When Jesus completed His work on earth, He sat down. Because of the finished work of Christ, we don't need to strive or labor in the flesh. We can rest, relying on the *immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness*.

**To be seated with Christ is a position of rulership.** Jesus sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (1 Peter 3:22). This means we are no longer bound or ruled by the world or its passions. We are already in a position of victory and dominion over sin and Satan.

**To be seated with Christ is a position of fellowship.** Because we are seated with Christ, we have access to God's throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). We can enter boldly and draw near to Him. When we realize this truth, we can remain steadfast in the faith.

Knowing that we are seated with Christ, we can rest in His finished work, walk in complete freedom, and enter His presence with surest confidence. Seated with Christ, we share in His great power and victory.

# Apply

Do you think that you are still striving or depending on your strength to overcome the battles you are currently facing? Ask God to remind you through His Word to find rest and peace in Him. Write this passage down, memorize it, and record your insights.

Are there areas in your life where you feel powerless? Declare His Word over your situation to experience His freedom.

Take some time to be still in God's presence as you confidently draw near to His throne of grace. Utter prayers of thanksgiving for His power, grace, and mercy in your life. According to Ephesians 2, what was our condition without Christ? What has God done for us? What motivated God to do this for us?

# Pray

Heavenly Father, thank You for the great love with which You have loved us. I understand that I have now been made alive in Christ and have been seated with Him in the heavenly places. Thank You that because of this, I am able to rest in the finished work of Christ and confidently draw near to Him. Help me to remember the power and victory that Christ has shared with me, so that I can be free. May You be glorified in every area of my life as I dwell in Your grace and kindness. All this I pray in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.

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## DAY 2

# wisdom

*<sup>8</sup>To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup>and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, <sup>10</sup>so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*

EPHESIANS 3:8-10

Wisdom is an elusive quality highly sought by the world. God is the source of wisdom, and the Church is the supreme revelation of this wisdom. God's wisdom can be likened to light and the Church to a prism. When light strikes a prism, we see the full spectrum of colors. Paul exhorted that through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God will be made known to the world.

God's wisdom is the attribute by which He arranges His plans and purposes and is the means to bring forth His desires perfectly. We see the different colors of God's wisdom through the Church in three ways:

**Redemption.** The redemption of man is one of the greatest demonstrations of divine wisdom. It is the story of how God justifies us, His enemies, by faith alone in Christ. Man's redemption was brought about only by the great wisdom of God, which turned our life of sin into a salvation story. Although sometimes things do not go as planned, we can trust God and His wisdom that He will fulfil His plan and purpose in our lives, in His way and in His time.

**Reconciliation.** Through the ages, the enemy has sowed division and created wars between families, peoples, and nations. But Christ has broken down the walls of hostility between gender, race, social status, intelligence, and creed. The wisdom of God is demonstrated by reconciling Jews and Gentiles into one body—the Church. We are not just recipients of this divine reconciliation; we are also conduits of this reconciliation to the world that desperately needs it, so that together, we can continue to display the manifold wisdom of God.

**Reflection.** Living a life free from sin seems impossible in a world used to compromise. But because we have been redeemed by Christ and freed from the bondage of sin, we are able to walk in freedom and live as Christ desires. When we live according to the gospel, reflecting God's light, His wisdom will be on full display, bringing hope to a bleak world.

His wisdom was displayed differently in every salvation story. Paul was blinded on his way to Damascus. The Philippian jailer was shaken by an earthquake. The Ethiopian official was piqued by a Bible passage. All these different situations resulted in salvation for these people. Think of the circumstances and the timing of how God saved you. God used a different circumstance in your salvation story as part of His overall plan.

Whenever our reality becomes dark, we can trust God's wisdom and timing in using our current situation to paint a glorious picture of tomorrow. This also means that He wants to use us to project the colors of His love and wisdom to a dark, fallen world.



# Apply

Recall the circumstances and timing of how God saved you and when you responded to the gospel. How was God's wisdom reflected in your life through your salvation story?

Among the three ways of how the Church makes God's light known (redemption, reconciliation, reflection), which do you still need to experience in your life? What will you do today to embrace the wisdom, power, and victory we have in Christ in this area?

Are you living out the power and victory you have in Christ, reflecting His wisdom and freedom to this fallen world? Ask God to reveal to you a person in your life who needs to experience redemption, freedom, or reconciliation. Pray for and encourage him or her this week.

# Pray

Heavenly Father, thank You for redeeming and reconciling me to Yourself through Your divine wisdom. Thank You for the grace by which I preach the gospel and make You known to the world. As I live out my life according to Your calling for me, may Your manifold wisdom be made known to all. In Christ's name, I pray. Amen.

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## DAY 3

# STRENGTH & AUTHORITY

*<sup>10</sup>Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. . . . <sup>18</sup>praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, <sup>19</sup>and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel . . .*

EPHESIANS 6:10-12, 18, 19

In his book *Fuzzy Memories*, Jack Handey writes, “There used to be this bully who would demand my lunch money every day. Since I was smaller, I would give it to him. Then I decided to fight back. I started taking karate lessons, but the instructor wanted \$5 a lesson. That was a lot of money. I found that it was cheaper to pay the bully, so I gave up karate.”

There are a lot of people, even Christians, who are “bullied” in the spirit because they don’t know there is an ongoing battle. They don’t understand the nature of the spiritual conflict and they don’t know how to battle the cosmic powers of darkness that are at work. Because of this, they may feel it’s not worth the price to fight back. The good thing is, Christ paid the price so we may fight back. When we became Christians, God’s enemies—Satan and his cohorts—automatically became ours. Whether you know it or not, or like it or not, we are in a spiritual battle with a real enemy. Paul revealed that our battle is *not against flesh and blood*, which means the people that are opposing you are just enticed and used by the enemy to further keep you from fulfilling God’s will. Our real enemy is Satan, who is also designated as *diabolos*—the adversary or the one opposing us.

In His divine wisdom, God allows us to learn to engage in spiritual conflict and has given us a spiritual arsenal to defeat the enemy. How can we do this?

First, **put on the armor of God!** We have been given a divine protective shell to take our stand against the schemes of the devil. Paul may have been influenced with this imagery because he was chained to a Roman guard who was in full battle gear at the time he wrote this. Each part of the armor has a powerful truth that gives us protection against the enemy. But the armor of God is just a picture of what Paul revealed in Romans 13:14 (NIV)—*Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.*

Jesus is our armor! No matter how strong our enemy is, the stronger One who is in us will overpower the enemy. As we respond in Christlikeness to the challenges we face, the flaming arrows of the enemy are neutralized.

Second, **pray in the Spirit** at all times with all kinds of prayers. We are to pray at every opportunity and not just during emergencies. This speaks of an attitude of constant communication with God, with Spirit-directed and Spirit-empowered prayers about whatever comes our way. Our fallen tendency is to try to fix our situations, but through prayer we give way for God to move in our situations. When we work, we work; but when we pray, God works!

Third, **proclaim the gospel boldly.** Whenever we preach the gospel, we are given the opportunity to dispel the darkness and destroy the works of the devil in people's lives. Just as we need to pray at all times, we need to have the same mindset with regard to the proclamation of the gospel. We need to preach it at all occasions for it is indeed the power of God for salvation.

Because we have the authority and power in Christ, we do not have to fear Satan and his schemes against us. We fight our battles from the position of victory Christ won for us at the cross. And this power and victory is not just limited to our situations. We can also speak victory into the lives of those around us as we pray for them in the Spirit and boldly preach the gospel to them.

# Apply

Which among the three strategies to defeat the enemy do you need to do more of and apply in your life? What is one thing you will start doing to make it part of your daily spiritual disciplines?

Pray in tongues for at least two minutes. Ask the Spirit to point out an area in your life where He needs to move for you to experience His power. Record your insights.

What is God calling you to do now that you are living in faith and victory instead of fear and intimidation? Commit to always respond in faith, putting on the armor of God, relying on the Spirit, and proclaiming the gospel as you persevere in your calling.

# Pray

Heavenly Father, I know that I can only stand against the schemes of the devil by the strength of Your might. May I fight only by Your strength and authority by putting on the whole armor of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, and preaching the gospel boldly every single day. May I always declare Your victory in my life and over my circumstances. In Christ's name I pray, Amen.

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