

WE BELIEVE PEOPLE SHOULD BE LIKE JESUS, SO WE WANT TO HELP YOU

# GROW CHARACTER



A L I C E D R I V E

baptist church

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



## REVIEW FROM STARTING POINT

**Mission Statement:** Alice Drive Baptist Church exists to \_\_\_\_\_ as many \_\_\_\_\_  
as possible take their \_\_\_\_\_ toward \_\_\_\_\_.

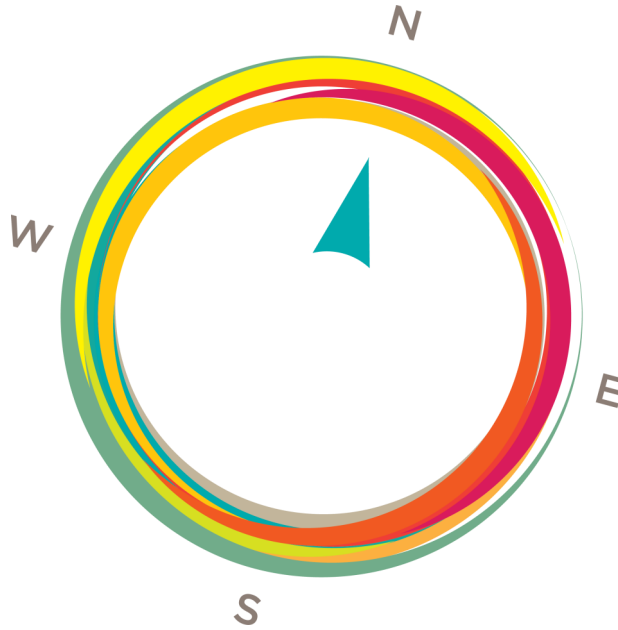
**Vision and Values:**

### 4. GO Share

Why? Everyone has a  
Purpose.

### 3. GROW Character

Why? We should be like  
Jesus



### 1. KNOW Jesus

Why? People Matter  
to God.

### 2. KNOW Community

Why? Church is a  
Place of Grace

## GROW CHARACTER

**Value/Vision:** Because we believe people should be like \_\_\_\_\_, our vision is to help them  
\_\_\_\_\_.

### 1 Thessalonians 4:3

*For this is the will of God, your sanctification...* (NASB)

-or-

*For this is the will of God, that you should be consecrated [separated and set apart for pure and holy living]...* (Amplified)

God saved you for a reason, for His intended \_\_\_\_\_! To fulfill that purpose, you must Grow Character!

A. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_ as a Habit

a. **Hebrews 4:12**

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

b. How do I read it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

c. Want to learn more? Turn to page 7.

d. Tools:

- A good translation, in large print
- Halley's Bible Handbook
- Life Application Study Bible (NIV)
- Online Resources:
  - o [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org)
  - o [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com); [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org)

e. Daily Bible Reading! *Same* \_\_\_\_\_, *Same* \_\_\_\_\_

- Various reading plans
- One Year Bible (NLT) or [oneyearbibleonline.com](http://oneyearbibleonline.com); [You Version App](#)

f. *Resolve!*

## 2. \_\_\_\_\_ as a Habit

### a. Matthew 6:5-8

<sup>5</sup>And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

<sup>6</sup>But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

<sup>7</sup>And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. <sup>8</sup>Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

### b. Turn to page 11.

### c. Try it! The seven day prayer challenge. Same \_\_\_\_\_, Same \_\_\_\_\_

If choose to develop one or more of these habits, email me with your discoveries at [tfleming@adbc.org](mailto:tfleming@adbc.org).

For further study on spiritual habits, read:

⇒ Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster or

⇒ The Life You've Always Wanted by John Ortberg

## B. \_\_\_\_\_ Transformation

### Romans 12:1-2

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

<sup>2</sup>Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

### Evidence?

### 1. \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ behavior

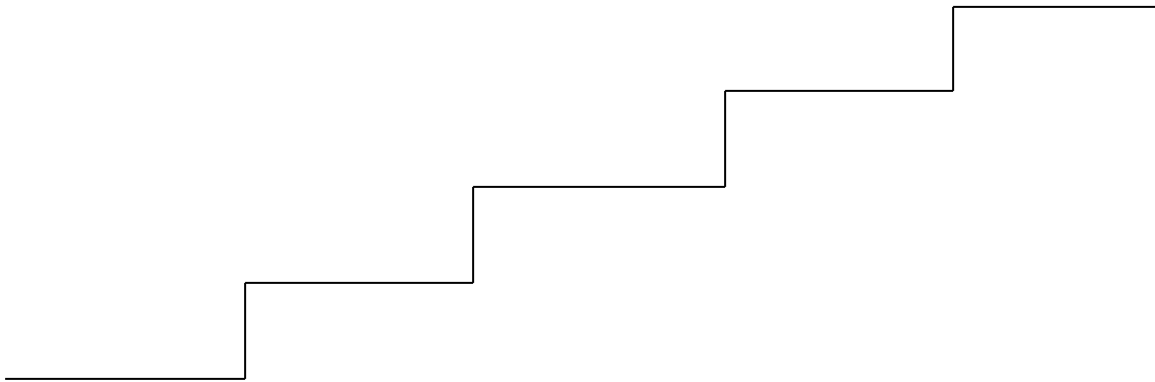
**Galatians 5:22-23**

*<sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,  
<sup>23</sup>gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

**List the Fruits of the Spirit:**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Question:** Will you commit to developing spiritual habits and asking God for heart transformation, so that you can be more like Jesus?



This is my next step:

_____
_____
_____

# HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

The Bible often intimidates people. We are fearful that a “super Christian” will show up our ignorance. We can be overwhelmed by its unique presentation – it’s leather bound and the pages are thin, not like other books we read. We can falsely assume that preachers are paid to understand everything that’s in the Bible, so we don’t have to understand it ourselves. As a result, we miss out on God’s promises, God’s encouragement, and God’s challenges to us.

This is a simple seven-step method that will encourage you as you study the Bible. At Alice Drive, we believe that part of everyone’s next step toward Jesus is learning and applying what the Bible says.

## STEP 1: MAKE A DECISION

Understanding the Bible begins with making a decision to understand it. This decision should be backed up by a commitment to a specific place and time to study the Bible.

Many people find it helpful to study the Bible soon after they first wake up, generally after their first cup of coffee. Others prefer to study the Bible at mid-day as part of their lunch hour. Some people find it more convenient to study the Bible in the evening, right before they go to bed. There is no right time to study the Bible, only a time that is right for you. Make a commitment to set aside fifteen minutes a day to study the Bible.

It’s helpful if you make a personal commitment to do that study in the same place: A comfortable chair, at the kitchen table, a place where you will be uninterrupted and able to think.

## STEP 2: GET A BIBLE THAT HELPS YOU

People often wonder what is the best Bible to read. Eugene Nida, former chief translator with the American Bible Society, once remarked, “The best Bible translation is the one that you will read.” Many of us were raised hearing the King James Version read aloud in church. If The King James Version helps you grow spiritually and that’s the version you will read, by all means, it is the best version for you. Others find it more helpful to read a more modern translation. All translations have strengths and weaknesses. Alice Drive typically refers to the New International Version. This version is written in Basic English and is specifically designed for clarity and ease of reading. It is important, however, that the best translation is the one that you will read.

A study Bible is a tremendous help. A good study Bible offers an introduction to each book of the Bible and includes notes at the bottom of the page that will explain terms, places, names and historical events referred to in scripture. There are a number of excellent study Bibles on the market. A very helpful one is [The NIV Study Bible](#). This Study Bible is available in most bookstores and large retail outlets.

## STEP 3: PRAYER

You should read your Bible at a specific place and time, and begin with a simple prayer asking God to speak to you while you study His Word. This prepares your heart. It also reminds you that the words you will be reading are not like other words. They are words that are inspired by God. The same Holy Spirit that inspired the writers of scripture many years ago, now also resides in your heart. A good prayer to pray as you begin studying the scripture goes something like this: “Father, please let Your Spirit help me understand the words that you gave so long ago and apply them to my life.”

## STEP 4: SELECT A READING PATTERN

There are many different ways to read the Bible. There is no method that is superior to any other. What is important is to find a method that works for you at a specific time in your life. There are four common patterns, and **the first method is to read a specific book of the Bible**. If this is your first time studying the Bible, you may want to pick a book that is shorter: The Gospel of Mark, Ephesians, Philippians or James. It will be helpful if you can devote a day or two to read the book through completely. This will help you understand the general flow of the book and its main themes. Then, go back to the beginning and read the book paragraph by paragraph. Many translations will offer sub-headings that group paragraphs together. You may want to read each of these paragraphs. Use the study questions that are provided below. Once you have completed a book, go on to another book. Over time, tackle some of the longer books that are pivotal to understanding God and our relationship to Him: Genesis, Psalms, Matthew, John and Romans.

**A second common pattern for reading the scripture is reading the Bible through in a year.** The church will provide, at the beginning of each year, a Bible reading guide. This guide offers four passages to read each day. Two are located in the Old Testament and two are located in the New Testament. The plan provides for reading twenty-five days out of each month, thus allowing five days to skip, if necessary. Reading the Bible through in the year is especially advantageous if you have been a Christ follower for more than five years. It will help you be introduced to the breadth of scripture. You will also want to use the sermon questions that are provided below.

**The third method to read the scripture is to select either a devotional guide or a book in the Bible and simply read one passage at a time.** There are many devotion guides such as *Our Daily Bread*, *Open Windows* and *The Upper Room*. Each of these devotional guides offers a scripture to read. There are also numerous calendars that have passages that would offer a passage a day to read through in a year. This method is especially helpful for those who have only fragments of time – such as young mothers, military personnel on assignment, and those who are in high stress positions.

**The fourth option is to study the Bible in depth.** This means that you select a pattern of passages, either in a book or a devotional guide, but you don't leave the passage until you feel like you've completely understood and incorporated it into your life. For example, a person might spend an entire week focusing on the story of the lost son in Luke Chapter 15. One day they might focus on the younger son. The next day on the father. The next day on the older son. Then they may list our life lessons that they derive from all three of the main characters in the story. This method is often aided by a good Bible Dictionary or a good Bible Commentary.

## STEP 5: ASK QUESTIONS WHILE YOU ARE READING ABOUT THE MEANING OF THE PASSAGES

These questions will help bring clarity to almost any passage in the Bible:

1. **Who is speaking?** Is the person who is speaking or narrating a trustworthy person? Not all voices in the Bible belong to God. Sometimes, the voice belongs to someone who is not to be trusted. The great example of this is in the Book of Job, and the speech is given by Job's three friends. By reading the Book all the way through we learn that the three friends are not to be trusted. They did not speak about God correctly. It is important to know who is speaking.
2. **Who is hearing?** Who is the audience? What's their situation? When Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, even though He was surrounded by a large crowd, we are specifically told in Matthew 5:2 that He called His



disciples to Him. The Sermon on the Mount is not for unbelievers but for followers of Jesus Christ. The Book of Galatians is written to people who having been freed in Christ wanted to once again submit to the rules of religion. Introductory materials on each book of the Bible and footnotes in a study Bible greatly help clarify who is the audience.

3. **What's the big idea in the passage?** What is God really trying to convey through this story, through this teaching? See if you can write down the big idea in the passage in a single sentence or a single phrase.
4. **When does this episode take place?** What's the historical context? Sometimes it is self-evident. The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles all narrate a history.
5. **Where does this take place?** Geography does make a difference. Most Bibles come equipped with maps. Take a moment and locate on the map in the back of the Bible where a specific event is taking place.
6. **Why is this passage important?** What is it teaching us? Why did God include this passage in scripture?

## STEP 6: ASK QUESTIONS THAT HELP YOU APPLY THE TEACHINGS OF THE PASSAGE

After we understand what the passage is saying, then we need to apply it to our lives. It is not enough to intellectually understand scripture; we must also understand what scripture has to say to us.

These eight questions help:

1. **What does God command us to do in this passage?** Are we commanded to love? Are we commanded to be courageous? Are we commanded to give, to serve?
2. **What promises do we claim in this passage?** Has God promised to be with us? Has God promised to save us if we call on His name? Does God promise to hear our prayers?
3. **What are the cause and effect dynamics?** These passages are generally marked by the phrases "if" and "then." If we love Jesus, then we will keep His commandments. Cause and effect passages always invite us to examine our lives in light of the "if."
4. **What are recurring words and ideas?** In the third chapter of John, over and over Jesus refers to being born again. This recurring theme tells us that we must be fundamentally changed and that change can only happen through Jesus Christ.
5. **Why did God want to communicate this to me?** Trust that God may supernaturally have arranged for you to read a specific passage on a specific day. What's going on in your life that this passage specifically helps you understand?
6. **What does this passage teach you about you?** Does the passage teach you that you are a sinner who has failed and you need help? Does the passage teach you that you have a greed issue that you have to face? Does the passage teach you that you are a divisive person in the church and need to stop?
7. **What does this teach you about God?** Does it teach you about God's power? Does it teach you about God's grace? Does it teach you about God's patience? Does it teach you about God's wisdom?

8. **What is the next step you need to take after reading the passage?** Is it a step that requires action? Is it a step that requires waiting? Is it a step that requires you to overcome a fear? Scripture needs to be applied to our real lives because it was written for real-life situations.

## STEP 7: RELAX

When you read a passage and it's clear, trust that it is God speaking to you that very day. The truth is, some days you will read passages and you won't get very much out of them. Trust that God can use your reading of scripture even on the days when nothing stirs in your heart. It may be something you need to remember for the future; it may be something you need to claim to help you deal with the past, but it won't make a connection in your mind until later. If you are having trouble understanding a passage of scripture, ask people for help. Ask someone you know who does study the Bible. Ask a pastor. But, also accept that because the Bible is God's Word, there are some passages that are hard to understand and some passages we may never understand until we finally reach heaven.

### **Bottom Line:**

The bottom line is, **read the Bible**. It will make an incredible difference in your life. When you study God's Word, you grow your character.

# HOW DO I PRAY?

**What is prayer?** Too many times we learn from watching others that prayer is asking God for what we want, for a sick person to get well, or for bad things not to happen to us. Prayer is so much more! A wise man once said that it is a two-way conversation between God and His beloved child. Is that how you think about prayer?

If not, try this simple outline as you pray: *Praise, Admit, Request, Thanks, Listen*. This outline will help you to do more than just ask, but will help you praise Him for who He is, thank Him for what He has done, admit your sins against Him, listen for what He may say, and yes, to request that He provide for your daily needs.

But how will I remember this outline? A helpful reminder is attached to the end of your hand! Just look at your fingers and count off: **PART-L**. (See below) Here are some verses to help you get started:

## P = PRAISE

*"I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High."* Psalm 9:1-2

## A = ADMIT

*"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."* Psalm 139:23-24

## R = REQUEST

*"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."* Matthew 7:7-8

## T = THANKS

*"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

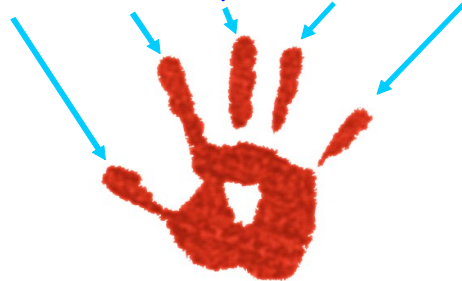
## L = LISTEN

*"Be still, and know that I am God."* Psalm 46:10a

*"The Lord confides in those who fear him; He makes his covenant known to them."* Psalm 25:14

## PRAYER OUTLINE: "PART-L"

Praise Admit Request Thanks Listen



# STEWARDSHIP

## WHY GIVING MATTERS

Ever think that giving is a form of Worship? Many of us think of Worship as a time and place focused on music, prayer and listening to another great sermon. But Worship is much broader and encompassing than that. Paul says in Romans 12:1: *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship"*. Worship is about looking back at what God has done for us and then based on his GRACE, giving ourselves in a sacrificial way to please God. We are called to Worship and we are called to give – we are called to give of ourselves and that means our time, our talents, and yes, our money.

Here's the question. Do you consider your act of Worship through giving a duty or a blessing? Is it a chance to acknowledge how God has blessed your life or an obligation to struggle through? Consider what Paul says:

*"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."* (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

We gain through giving. We should not give because we have to, but because we want to – *"spiritual act of worship."* So what can we expect to gain?

1. Giving draws our hearts toward Christ – *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

(Matthew 6:21)

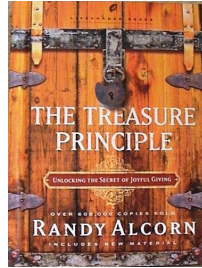
2. Giving develops character.
3. Giving allows us to invest for eternity – *"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven..."* (Matthew 6:20)
4. Giving helps us follow the Master. Consider the rich young man in Luke 18:18-23:

*A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.' "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth.*

5. Giving allows us at ADBC to participate in God's plan to help people **take their next step!**
6. Giving is an important part of our walk with Christ. Part of our vision at Alice Drive is to help people because we need to learn to follow Jesus. For most of us it isn't easy but, as the rich young man in Luke discovered, truly following Jesus never is.

### Some additional resources to help you with giving and finances:

- Crown Financial Ministries: [www.crown.org](http://www.crown.org)
- Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University: [www.daveramsey.com](http://www.daveramsey.com)
- Generous Giving: [www.generousgiving.org](http://www.generousgiving.org)
- *The Treasure Principle* by Randy Alcorn



## GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

### Ministry Budget

The ministry budget supports the day-to-day ministries of the church. These include mission organizations and programs supported regularly by the church; ministry programs for preschoolers, children, students, and adults; the operation of the church campus including utilities, insurance, and maintenance; and personnel costs.

### Open Door Offering

The Open Door Offering is our annual fund to support mission efforts locally, nationally, and internationally. We regularly support the Southern Baptist mission offerings (Lottie Moon, Annie Armstrong, and Janie Chapman) through this focus. In addition, this offering supports such efforts as Operation Inasmuch, United Ministries of Sumter County, the Sumter Pregnancy Center, and World Orphans. There is a special emphasis placed on mission giving during the spring of each year; however, you can give to the Open Door Offering all year.

### Benevolence

The benevolence offering goes to support those in need in Sumter County and is taken on Sunday's when we serve The Lord's Supper. This benevolence fund allows us to provide direct assistance to those in need who come to us for help. This support is in addition to the funds we regularly give to support United Ministries of Sumter County.

# FASTING

## A GUIDE FOR FASTING

**Material adapted from a sermon by Steve May**

The comedian Gallagher used to ask, “Why do they call it a fast when it goes by sooooo slow?” Many can relate to that. Fasting does seem to bring the movement of time to a standstill. Of all the disciplines it is, in some ways, the most difficult because it requires a level of self-denial that’s beyond many of us. There are no hard-set rules for biblical fasting, but there are some guidelines we can follow. Let’s take a look at them.

## AVOID IMPROPER MOTIVES

What are motives for fasting? It’s possible to fast for the wrong reasons, as God said in Zechariah: *“When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted?”* (Zechariah 7:5)

Don’t fast to impress someone. This is what the Pharisees did. Jesus said about them, *“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting.”* (Matthew 6:16)

Don’t let health benefits be your primary motivation. Sometimes people say, “I’ll fast, and I’ll get closer to God, and maybe I’ll lose some weight in the process.” Maybe so, but in my experience, fasting is a lousy weight-loss strategy.

Don’t be afraid to fast because of health risks. If necessary, consult your health professional. What should be our primary motive for fasting? Simply put, to connect with God on a deeper level. As John Piper said, “Christian fasting at its root is the hunger of homesickness for God.” You fast to get closer to God. To be more specific, let’s look at five good scriptural motives for fasting.

## FIVE SCRIPTURAL MOTIVES FOR FASTING

### 1. TO HEAR FROM GOD

*“While they were worshipping 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)

During a time of fasting, the leaders of the church heard from God. This is why church leaders should commit to fasting together. It’s also why you personally should commit to fasting. When you fast, God speaks to you.

## 2. TO INTERCEDE FOR OTHERS

*“When they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting.” (Psalm 35:13)*

Do you want to add a new element of power to your prayers for others? Go without food. It proves to God, and to yourself, that you mean business. A friend of mine went on an extended fast because his son was going through a divorce, and he didn't want it to happen. I asked him, “Do you really think you can change your son's attitude by not eating?” He said, “No, a fast won't circumvent my son's free will. But I am praying that God will intervene in their family situation in such a way that my son will come to his senses. And I'm praying that his family will have the strength to deal with his decision. And I'm praying that I will deal with my son with wisdom and grace – not frustration and judgment that I feel right now.” You can't fast to change others, but you can fast to ask God to intervene in someone's life.

## 3. AS AN ACT OF REPENTANCE

*“Nothing's going on in the place of worship, no offerings, no prayers....nothing. Declare a holy fast, call a special meeting, get the leaders together, round up everyone in the country. Get them into God's sanctuary for serious prayer to God.” (Joel 1:13-14)*

Maybe this has happened in your life – you've forgotten that you need God. One way to express heartfelt repentance is through the act of fasting. I want to make it clear: fasting doesn't earn you forgiveness, or get you forgiven faster or more thoroughly than you would experience otherwise. Fasting does however, help you come to grips with your sin. It helps you to see sin for what it really is. It helps you to see sin as God sees it. Fasting intensifies the act of repentance, so to speak, so that you understand more about the ugliness of sin and the beauty of God's mercy.

## 4. FOR STRENGTH AND DIRECTION

*“Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.” (Acts 14:23)*

When Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the church, they fasted for wisdom and guidance in choosing the right men. They also fasted, presumably along with the elders, for strength for these men to perform their duties effectively. If you don't know the right decision to make, fasting will help you discover God's wisdom. If you know the right thing to do, and need strength to do it, fasting will help you experience more of God's power in your life.

## 5. AN ACT OF WORSHIP

*The gospel of Luke says this about a woman named Anna: “She never left the temple, but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying.” (Luke: 2:37)*

Fasting is an act of worship. A friend told me that he often fasts on the weekend – all day Saturday and Sunday morning – in preparation for the worship service. He said fasting helps him keep his focus on God. These are five scriptural reasons for fasting. Now, let's look for a moment at the methods of fasting.

## METHODS OF FASTING

Fasting is like walking – it doesn't require a great deal of training or explaining. You just don't eat. However, there are some guidelines that are good to follow.

## 1. START WITH A 24-HOUR FAST (6-HOUR FAST)

Richard Foster, author of *Celebration of Discipline*, recommends beginning with a noon to noon fast. This way, you skip two meals. You eat lunch on Monday, for example, and then you begin your fast. You skip dinner and breakfast and you end your fast with lunch on Tuesday. If you've never fasted before, this is a good place to start. I recommend doing it once a week. From there you can move to a three day fast, and then to a seven day fast.

## 2. DRINK LIQUID

The Bible does reference a total fast (i.e. no food, no water), but those are rare expectations. When you fast, you need to drink liquid. I drink water and green tea, but not coffee or coke. Some people drink juice during a fast. It's a matter of preference, but you do need to drink a lot of liquid.

## 3. TAKE A WALK

When I get hungry, drinking some water and taking a ten minute walk helps alleviate the hunger pains.

## 4. RESUME YOUR EATING HABITS CAREFULLY

If you fast only one day, you won't notice much of a difference. But when you fast three or seven days, you want to be careful with your first couple of meals. I wouldn't recommend breaking a fast with a bag of Doritos or a bowl of chili. Your first meal after a fast should be soup or something mild.

## 5. EVERY MONTH, FAST FROM SOMETHING

In addition to fasting one day a week, I recommend fasting each month from something special. Daniel describes a fast in which, *"I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips..."* (Daniel 10:3)

I recommend that each month you choose to fast from something – one month pizza, the next month ice cream, the next month Mexican food, and so on. This is not a huge sacrifice in that it forces you to go hungry, but it is one more small sacrifice that helps you keep your focus on God. I do this now, and I find it to be helpful. I encourage you to try it.

## FINAL SUGGESTIONS

Jesus used the phrase, "When you fast," not, "if you fast." God wants fasting to be a part of our spiritual discipline. I hope that today you will decide to implement this practice in your Christian walk. I will close now with three tips for more effective fasting.

## 1. FOCUS ON JESUS WHEN YOU FAST

I will confess that the first time I fasted I didn't think about Jesus; all I thought about was food and how hungry I was. Needless to say, it wasn't a very effective fast. The next time, during my 24-hour fast, I made it a point to think about Jesus. I thought about the Christmas story, his temptation in the wilderness, his teachings, his miracles, his passion, his death, and his resurrection. I made it a point to focus on Jesus during my fast, and not surprisingly, I drew closer to Him.



## 2. DON'T BE LEGALISTIC

Don't be legalistic about the "fine print" of your fast, and don't look for loopholes. It's not an international treaty; it's an act of spiritual devotion. If you go on a three-day fast and you fail half-way through, don't give up. Don't beat yourself up—just pick up where you left off and keep going. Remember, the purpose of the fast is not just to go without food. The purpose is to help you connect with God on a deeper level.

## 3. EXPECT RESULTS, BUT NOT IMMEDIATELY

Usually, I don't reap the benefits of the fast until later. Fasting has brought me into a closer relationship with God; fasting has enabled me to experience more of God's power, and fasting has improved my prayer life – but these aren't changes that took place at the snap of a finger. There have been times when I have ended a fast thinking, "It didn't work this time. I didn't accomplish what I wanted to accomplish." But a week or two later, I realized, "God has done work in me that I didn't recognize at first." God will move in your life as the result of a fast, but you need to be patient. You may not see it immediately. Jesus said this about fasting. *"Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."* (Matthew 6:18)

## CONCLUSION

We talk a lot about grace. Salvation is a gift of God, not the result of our good works. Our purpose for fasting is not to persuade God to love us more. Our purpose is to not manipulate him into doing our will. Our purpose in fasting is to connect with him on a deeper level.

