



**DAILY DEVOTIONALS
TO HELP YOU GROW YOUR FAMILY
GOD'S WAY**



RIVER'S EDGE
FELLOWSHIP

FASTING BASICS

THE BIBLICAL BASIS AND EXAMPLES

- Moses fasted when he received God's commandments- Ex. 34:28
- David fasted seeking God's forgiveness and guidance- 2 Sam. 1:12, 3:3-5, 12:16-22
- The nation Israel fasted when asking God's forgiveness- Judg. 20:26; 1 Sam. 7:6; Ezra 8:21-23
- Ezra fasted to ask God's forgiveness- Ezra 10:6
- Nehemiah fasted seeking God's favor- Neh. 1:4
- Daniel fasted, seeking God's favor- Dan. 9:3, 10:2-3
- Anna fasted seeking God's favor and guidance- Luke 2:37
- Cornelius fasted seeking God's favor- Acts 10:30
- Paul fasted seeking God's guidance- Acts 9:9
- God's leaders fasted for guidance- Acts 13:2
- Elders were appointed with fasting- Acts 14:23
- Jesus fasted in the wilderness seeking God's guidance- Matt. 4:2
- The manner of fasting is to be sincere, dedicated to God, without a public show- Matt 6:16-18
- Husbands and wives are to fast to make decisions together- 1 Cor. 7:5

THIS Discipline is for You TODAY

- Fasting may be the most neglected of all the spiritual disciplines today. It is easy to dismiss as an old and outdated practice, but it is an **important and meaningful** tool for spiritual growth.
- One of the central points of fasting is training for **self-control** (2 Peter 1:6; Gal. 5:23; 1 Peter 1:13). If we are to break the hold of habits and sin in our lives, fasting is essential. Fasting is an effective approach to developing self-control because it deals with a very fundamental concern of human existence: **sacrifice**. For example, we need food to live; however, we can become enslaved by food and other things we need or simply want. If we are able to control things that are essential for life, we will be able to keep the things that are not essential for life in check, as well.
- The practice of fasting fosters **humility, reliance on God, compassion, and gratitude**.
- Fasting from food is the most obvious way to do it. Begin by fasting from food for a short period, such as skipping a meal. Build your fasting time up from there. As much as possible, use the time it takes to get, prepare, and eat food and substitute it with prayer, Scripture reading, memorization, and meditation. If you rely too much on caffeine for energy, it may be a good idea to fast from those beverages. This is true for any substance that we have become physically addicted to.
- Anything that you feel is "impossible" to give up is a good candidate to fast from.

Practical Ways to Fast for 40 Days

For the person new to this idea, it may be overwhelming. I want to share some practical ways you can engage a fast for 40 days. One of the most important things to remember about fasting is that it is not a legalistic engagement. In other words, the church isn't making you do it. We will not view you differently if you decide not to fast. We will not negatively view your decision of how you fast. This is an activity that is between you and God.

Ways to fast

- ☐ 40 days straight. This is the fast for the seasoned saint. Fasting straight through a 40-day period is a challenge, but not impossible. 40 days, with no days off.
- ☐ Sunday celebration. Many people take Sunday off from the fast. Use this day off from your fast to reflect on how God has grown you during the previous week. This is suggested, of course. If you can fast the entire 40 days without a break you will certainly be strengthened and encouraged.
- ☐ Partial day. For those who are new to fasting a partial day fast may be helpful to gain momentum. This is also good for those who have health issues that shouldn't go without food for extended periods of time. You can fast from breakfast to dinner or fast after dinner. You can decide a time frame, like fasting in the evening after 5:00pm.
- ☐ Monday through Friday.

The point to make here again is that there is no set way to do a fast. Surely you can follow Biblical examples for fasting, but those are just that, examples. There is no commandment to us from God to fast a certain way. The only Biblical mandate to fasting that applies is why we do it, not how we do it, or even what we fast from.

Types of fasts

- ☐ Food. This is the type of fast that is represented in the Bible. A food fast can take on different forms; full days, partial days, skipping meals, types of food (meat, sweets, fried, fast foods, etc.), or drinks (soda, alcohol, caffeinated drinks, etc.). Be creative, the choice is yours. If you have medical conditions that prohibit you from fasting foods, please make the wise choice to fast in a way that doesn't compromise your health.
- ☐ Media fast. Taking a break from media of some type is a very valuable exercise. You can take a break from a major distraction for many people, not just because of the time it robs you, but because of the negative content it may feed into your soul.
- ☐ Activities. Maybe you are too busy and need to fast from certain activities. Things like excessive sleeping, shopping, and working out can be fasted from.

One of the greatest emphasis of fasting is about making sacrifices that counts. 2 Samuel 24:18-25 tells us about how a simple decision led to saving the lives of many. In that passage David makes a grand statement,

*2 Samuel 24:24 The king answered Araunah, "No, I insist on buying it from you for a price, **for I will not offer to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.**" David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for twenty ounces of silver.*

David's heart toward offering a sacrifice to God should shape our attitude toward fasting. Make sure your fasting costs you something. Don't make it so easy that you just skate through it. When you make great sacrifices, you will feel accomplished and position yourself to hear clearly from God during the fast.

WEEK 1 “THE VALUE OF YOUR FAMILY”

Day 1- Your family is God’s design (Genesis 1:27-30 & 12:3)

God designed your family according to His master plan. His plan is to show the whole world His love through your family. Even though your family may not be perfect, that won’t stop God from showing Himself to others through you. When you base the value of your family on the things that need fixing, you will miss God’s love and grace. Seek to know God’s plan for your family to bless and grow you as a witness to others.

Day 2- Jesus’ example for your family (John 19:26, 27)

Jesus shows His heart for His family by assuring the care of His mother Mary. Our families are often made up of different people that may not resemble the “typical” family. The makeup of your family isn’t as important as your calling to follow Jesus’ example. Make sure everybody in your family is cared for spiritually, physically, emotionally, and psychologically. Seek the Lord to make your family healthy in every way.

Day 3- God’s family and your family (Matt 12:47-49)

The Bible uses the term family to describe the Kingdom of God. When your whole family is a part of God’s family a perfect combination of God’s divine plan is realized. Be intentional in making sure everyone in your family is saved through faith in Jesus Christ. Never take for granted that your loved ones are saved; ask them the hard questions about their personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Day 4- Assurance for your family (1 Cor. 3:9-15)

Don’t be deceived by the devil regarding the spiritual condition of your family. When we look at each other’s mistakes we are tempted to question the salvation of our family members. We must be persistent to remind each other of the life of Christ in us, but shouldn’t let failures displace a sincere profession of faith. Mistakes must be viewed through the big picture of a lifelong journey, not the momentary failures of the flesh.

Day 5- Praying for and with your family (Num. 14:19)

How have you prayed for your family? Have your prayers been based on what you want for your family members or on what they need from God? Ask God to show you how to pray for your family. Don’t allow your desire for a comfortable environment at home to shape your prayers.

Day 6- Time in the Scriptures with your family (Deut 6:7-9)

The spiritual health of your family is dependent on the time you spend together in the Word of God. When your family members aren’t plugged into the Word of God, they won’t be equipped to handle the struggles of family life. When the storms of life come, only those that are anchored in the Word of God will be able to stand. Check with your loved ones regularly to see how you can help them to read, study, memorize, and meditate on the Word of God.

Day 7- Meditating on God with your family (1 Kings 19:11-12)

We hear more clearly from God in quiet times, not during the hustle and bustle of the day. When we come together with our family to meditate on God, we focus on the same things and seek the heart of God in unity. He may speak to each of us differently in order to provide the complete answer for your questions. Make sure to set time aside throughout your devotions to sit quietly before God.

WEEK 2 “WALKING WITH GOD AND YOUR FAMILY”

Day 8- Memorize Scripture with your family (Psalm 119:11)

“Hiding God’s Word in your heart,” gives us a specific idea about memorizing Scripture. It lets us know that when we memorize verses in the Bible, the Word of God is waiting for an opportunity to reveal itself. When your family memorizes Scripture together you will experience the power of the Holy Spirit revealing Himself when you need Him most.

Day 9- Christian fellowship and your family (Heb. 10:24-25)

With all the demands on your family, it can be convenient to set aside worship and church activities for other things that may seem more important. Fellowship with church members is vital for every Christian to grow in the grace and love of Christ. Parents, please be careful of the message you may be sending your children regarding fellowship with believers. Does scheduling other activities during times of fellowship show them a diminished view of God’s family?

Day 10- Serving others with your family (1 Cor. 11:1)

Discipleship happens in the home when we model what it means to be a Christian. That doesn’t only happen from observation, but more from serving others together. It is good to tell your family about the value of serving people, it is more important to take them and show them how to serve. When we serve together as a family it reinforces our claims that service to God and others is the highest calling.

Day 11- Dealing with sin in your family (Matt. 18:21-22)

Sin has many tentacles (like an octopus) and can bring destruction to your family. We often think that our personal sin doesn’t hurt or affect others, but the reality is totally different. Although our sin is ultimately against God the consequences of it affects our family near and far. As you bow before God to repent of your sins, don’t forget to ask your family (every one of them) to forgive you as well.

Day 12- Help that doesn’t hurt your family (Rom. 12:9)

Have you ever tried to help someone only to find that you hurt him or her more by your actions or words? Maybe you did something for someone that enabled them to sin. Maybe you were harsh or hard in how you told them the truth. In order to provide help that doesn’t hurt our family we must have a Biblically focused perspective on how to give them what God wants them to have, not what we think they should have.

Day 13- Listening for the benefit of your family (James 1:19-20)

Sometimes when a heated disagreement with loved ones we will spend more time thinking about what we are going to say instead of listening to them. When we do this the source of our response is typically selfish and defensive instead of sacrificial. When you listen carefully and prayerfully you are in the best position to respond the way God wants you to and to provide them with what they need from you.

Day 14- Proper communication with your family (Col. 4:6)

Communication involves two people having a mutual interaction with each other. It demands that we focus on communicating in the way that best fits our loved ones. We often are satisfied with making a point according to how we want to express it, not being concerned if we were clear, accurate, or loving. Pray that God would show you how to communicate in the way that is best for your family.

WEEK 3 “SEEING MY FAMILY FROM GOD’S VIEW”

Day 15- Appreciating different roles in the family (Col. 3:18-21)

The old adage says, “The grass is greener on the other side.” We may think this is true when thinking about the roles in our family. God has designed each family member with a different and important role. It creates confusion when we try to fill the role that belongs to somebody else. The Bible clearly defines the roles of everyone in your family- study the Scriptures and identify those roles. Stand on who God made you to be; don’t try to be someone else.

Day 16- The high value of forgiveness in your family (Psalm 32:1-2)

“It is easier to ask for forgiveness than permission” is a popular saying. Although this may be true, it is not God’s way for families. Forgiveness must not be taken for granted in your family. It is a valuable commodity that, if abused, may be hard to find when it is needed the most. Hold short accounts with your family; don’t abuse their trust by taking their forgiveness for granted. Seek genuine forgiveness and extend genuine forgiveness.

Day 17- Valuing each other in your family (Phil. 2:3)

The first step in placing proper value on others is to see yourself properly. If I think too highly of myself then it becomes hard to see the value of others. What is at the heart of high self-value? Pride. Everyone in your family is equally important and an asset to your family. Make sure you affirm your family by showing them through words and deeds how much you value them.

Day 18- We are all growing up as a family (James 5:11)

The Christian journey is a life-long journey. Maturing as a Christian is different for each of us. Sometimes we have expectations for our loved ones that aren’t consistent with their individual journey of faith. Be patient with your family members. Build them up where they are weak instead of tearing them down. Hold them up in prayer and encourage them in the Word of God. Help them to grow and don’t criticize them when they don’t grow as fast as we want them to.

Day 19- Freedom in Jesus Christ with your family (Gal. 5:13)

Parents have high expectations for their children. We expect our kids to be the next famous athlete, doctor, or politician. When the path they take doesn’t line up with our expectations for them, frustration and hurt can cause us to become unsupportive of their choices. Isn’t the most important thing for our family members that they have a heart for God? When we’re satisfied that they are following God, respect their freedom to follow God’s path for their life and support them with love.

Day 20- Giving personal space in your family (Matt. 14:23)

In large families finding a place alone can be a challenge. As a youth, I had two areas that I could call my own. The first one was the bottom bunk I slept in. I would hang a sheet from the top bunk to make it like a little room. As I got older it was my car. In both of these places I felt freedom to be me. Personal space gives your family a place to let their guard down before God. Protect your loved ones personal space and encourage them to meet God there.

Day 21- Trust and parenting in your family (Psalm 78:4-7)

What is the single most important parenting tip? I don’t know if there is one, but what I have found to be very high on the list is trust. When you ask children what is the biggest complaint about their parents, the answer is usually related to trust. We shouldn’t let our kids run wild and do what ever they want, but when we have raised them according to the Word of God, at some point we have to trust God to keep them. The question really isn’t whether I trust the kids, but if I trust God to work in them, guide them, and protect them.

WEEK 4 “HOW MY WALK WITH GOD AFFECTS MY FAMILY”

Day 22- Be prepared for tough times in your family (Heb. 11:6)

I must be prepared to respond in the hardest of times. I can't wait until I get to the storm to decide what I am going to do. When someone in my family has a big failure, am I going to be prepared to forgive and lift them up, or am I going to use it against them? Your level of spiritual maturity isn't discovered in the good times, but in the storms. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ prepares you for the storm. Don't wait until the storm to try to become a disciple, begin the process while the waters are clear.

Day 23- No one is perfect in your family (Rom. 3:23)

There is a common critical spirit among Christians. We call it accountability and challenge, but I believe it has more to do with comparing others to ourselves than with Scripture. We must have accountability in our families, but when accountability becomes ammunition *against* someone rather than an avenue to join *with* them we have lost sight of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We all stand before a perfect God with imperfections. Be careful to assist your family in addressing weaknesses and sins instead of using them as weapons for a personal agenda.

Day 24- Patience when things don't go as I expect in my family (Rom. 15:5)

Do your expectations cause you to lose patience with your family members? An important step in dealing with this frustration is to determine where the expectations come from. Are they fair relative to the person's ability and maturity? Make expectations clear and according to the standards of Scripture. Even when expectations are clear and Biblical, we must still be patient. Your patience may be the key to help your family members become the people of faith God wants them to be.

Day 25- Loving when you don't understand your family (Rom. 5:8)

Have you ever had a situation regarding a family member that became very stressful for you? Not being able to control our environment is tough enough but when someone else's actions are the source of the trouble we find ourselves in an emotional whirlwind. What we all need during these times is the same thing: unconditional love. Situational love breeds situational love. Remember, the love you show others during their storm may be the same love you get during yours.

Day 26- Your high calling in your family (Eph 1:18)

Each member of your family has a high calling from God. In order for your family to function as God has designed, we all have to operate in our specific calling. Remind and affirm with each family member the need for every person to be spiritually healthy. Remind each other how you depend on them to be who God has created them to be. You may not understand the calling of your loved ones, but they provide exactly what God wants for your family.

Day 27- Your personal holiness affects your family (Eph 1:4)

What does it mean to be holy? It means to be separated *from* sin and *to* God's purposes. When someone in your family lessens the standards of holiness in your home, everyone suffers. Your family is like a boat and everyone has to row. When someone is rowing opposite of the others, the boat will go off course. This is the effect of individual sin on the family. Always remember that what you do affects your family's ability to stay on course with God's plan.

Day 28- Your discipline strengthens your family (Heb. 10:22)

When you grow, everybody grows. Your patience helps others to be patient. Your humility helps others to be humble. Spiritual health is contagious. When you walk in the Spirit, your loved ones catch what you have. As each person is drawn closer to Jesus, the entire family benefits. Encourage every person, regardless of age, to live according to the Word of God.

WEEK 5 “HOW WE ALL CAN BUILD OUR FAMILY”

Day 29- Obedience to God affects your family (Psalm 51:4)

There is a higher authority to consider at all times. When children aren't obedient at home parents take it personal and often respond in anger. The Scriptures tell us clearly that anger works against the things of God. Remind your children that God sees all things and that obedience happens before God. Remind yourself that your children will ultimately answer to God for disobedience. Pray that your entire family views obedience from a Biblical basis.

Day 30- God's calling to serve as a family (Prov. 22:6)

Some of the most rewarding times I have enjoyed as a father were watching my children take part in ministry. I believe it was in those times that they learned how to be Christians. I'm sure the Bible study and prayer was effective. I have confidence that fellowship and teaching from other believers played a vital role in their development. But I know for a fact that their approach to ministry is healthy today because of what they learned in serving God and others yesterday.

Day 31- Honesty is essential for your family (1 Sam. 12:24)

When my children were small, there was one main criterion I used for spanking: honesty. I believed it was essential for them to understand this foundational Biblical truth. When honesty leaves a relationship, everything else crumbles. It is difficult to rebuild trust after a lie. When the strain of dishonesty enters a family, it causes separation and pain that can take years to repair. Set high standards of honesty with your family. Abide by them and enforce them. It will make your home richer.

Day 32- Family is founded on sacrifice (Eph. 5:2)

The Golden Rule says, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you". This Biblical truth carries a lot of weight because it challenges each of us to put others needs before ours. One question to ask is, "How do you care for yourself?" Do you care for your family members the same way? To sacrifice for your family displays the way God showed His love toward you. God's love is shown in the death of Jesus Christ; the giving of life for life. Are you willing to make that kind of sacrifice for your family?

Day 33- I am last (Rom. 12:9)

There is a Christian ad campaign that uses the slogan "I am Second". I think there is a good point at the heart of this, but I also think it misses an essential point about being a Christian. Jesus doesn't tell us to put ourselves second, He tells us to put ourselves last. Our perspective about all others must rest in preferential treatment for family, friends, and even people we don't know. Tending to strangers needs in spite of myself isn't easy, but it sure is what Jesus did at Calvary.

Day 34- Your family is your stewardship (Psalm 24:1)

You are a manager of what belongs to someone else. Your money, home, car, and family, belong to God. When we consider who has total control over all things the reality of stewardship comes into view. I can't control if my job will be there tomorrow. I can't control when my loved ones will take their last breath. All things belong to God. "Lord teach me to live like my family belongs to you and show me how to treat them as gently as borrowed property."

Day 35- Becoming a real servant to your family (Phil. 2:5-8)

In the Bible, to be a servant is synonymous with being a slave. A slave didn't have rights. Slaves were the people who did the dirty work around the house. They were expected to do the tasks no one else wanted to do, that were their role. In the family everybody is called equally to be a servant. What a picture of the family! If everyone serves then who gets served? "Everyone!"

WEEK 6 “MAINTAINING UNITY IN YOUR FAMILY”

Day 36- Your family needs you (1 Pet. 2:4-5)

How do you view your responsibility to your family? Do you view your role with gladness or as a list of chores? Not just doing the dishes or mowing the lawn, but the calling to love and forgive. When I begin to get overwhelmed with my role to serve my family, it begins to feel like a chore to do what God has created me to do. I must pray and seek the Lord through the counsel of His Word. I must seek out the fellowship of godly saints. My family is too important for me to take a break from love and forgiveness. It is my role to help them grow in these areas.

Day 37- Serving others serves your family (Luke 18:18-23)

Serving your family involves serving the surrounding world. Looking outside of my family and into the lives of others brings a clearer perspective for me. When I only focus on what is happening at home I get jaded and sometimes ungrateful. When I serve the less fortunate, I see my situation more clearly. It is important to keep a Christ-centered view of the challenges you face at home. Going into the surrounding communities and reaching into the lives of struggling people will give you a greater appreciation for God's blessing in your life.

Day 38- How to show respect to your family (Matt. 5:37)

How do you gain the respect of your loved ones? Is it by showing respect? I would say that is true, but only a part of the equation. The reality is that when we show respect to others we may not receive respect in return. So what is the answer? Consistency. Be consistent in how you deal with your family. Stand on the Word of God without wavering. Keep a Biblical worldview before your family. They may not always like it, but they will respect you and appreciate you because they will always know what to expect.

Day 39- Integrity and character in your family (Matt. 5:13-16)

Integrity and character go hand and hand. Often the two terms are used interchangeably because integrity is shown through character. Character is what defines you as a person. Integrity is what defines your character. When a person's character is shaky, their integrity is called into question as well. Families need people of godly character founded on Biblical integrity. The power of God will rest on our families when we have godly character and biblical integrity.

Day 40- Maintain unity in your family at all costs (1 Cor. 12:26-27)

How can a family be a family without unity? Sounds strange, but that is the state of many families. We have focused on a lot of topics and Scriptures during these last 40 days. There have been a lot of challenges for you to live for God and to serve your family. You have been challenged to spend time with your family in prayer, study, and recreation. All of these things are designed to bring you closer to your family and to develop unity in your home. My prayer for your family is that you don't stop building on the foundations that were developed during this season of fasting and prayer. Keep it up; your family is at stake!