

Engaging our hearts to approach the Lord

Let us now lift up our hearts, with our eyes and hands, to God in heaven.

Let us stir ourselves to take hold of God, to seek his face, and to ascribe to him the glory due his name.

Unto you, O Lord, do we lift up our souls.

Let us now with confidence enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh

Let us now attend to the Lord with undivided devotion, and let not our hearts be far from him when we draw near to him with our mouths and honor him with our lips.

Let us now worship God, who is spirit, in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

Prayers for each other

Closing Prayer *(Said together)*

Almighty God, who has promised to hear the petitions of those who ask in your Son's Name: We ask you mercifully to incline your ear to us who have now made our prayers and supplications unto you; and grant that those things which we have faithfully asked according to your will, may effectually be obtained, to the relief of our necessity, and to the setting forth of your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. .

The Crazy Idea of Fasting in '09

January 1, 2009 | By: [John Piper](#)

Jesus did not say, "If you fast..." but "When you fast..." ([Matthew 6:16](#)). This will be new (even over the top) for some of you. So do a crazy thing in 2009. It might change your relationship with God. And your life.

Here's a tiny bit of help. A bit on how. And a bit on why.

How to Fast

Pick a day of the week or a day of the month and plan to fast in 2009. Plan which meal or meals to skip. Skip them entirely, or do it with only juice or only water. There are no rules. There is only spiritual hunger being spoken and stoked with physical hunger.

Take some of the time you would have spent eating and read some scripture and take time to tell God why you are doing this and what you long for.

Why Fast?

Here are six biblical aims for fasting.

1. For Jesus to come back

[Matthew 9:14-15](#) Then the disciples of John came to Him, asking, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" 15 And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast

2. For help in a new venture in ministry

[Matthew 4:1-2](#) Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.

[Acts 13:3](#) Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

3. To avert some danger or threat

[Ezra 8:21](#) Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions.

[2 Samuel 12:16](#) David therefore inquired of God for the child; and David fasted and went and lay all night on the ground.

4. To express sorrow and loss

[2 Samuel 1:12](#) They mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan and for the people of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword

[1 Chronicles 10:12](#) All the valiant men arose and took away the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons and brought them to Jabesh, and they buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

5. To express repentance and grief for sin

[Joel 2:12-13](#) “Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning; 13 And rend your heart and not your garments.” Now return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil.

6. Not for the praise of men

[Matthew 6:16-18](#) Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face 18 so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

(For more instruction and inspiration in fasting see [A Hunger for God, Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer](#).)

Why Pray Now?

Because the inward renewing of the church and its outward extension in mission involves spiritual warfare - the displacement of flesh, the world and the devil - there is a kind of 'prayer cycle' involved in building the Messianic kingdom. The cycle begins with *prayer* in the face of extreme difficulty or Satanic counterattack (Acts 1:13; compare 4:24). As God answers by pouring out his Spirit, the church receives *power* for life and witness (Acts 2:1-4; 4:31). The church then *prosper*s in its spiritual growth and outward extension (Acts 2:14-47; 4:32-35). This expansion of the kingdom arouses Satanic counterattack in the form of *persecution*, resistance expressed through the world and the flesh. At this point, the cycle must begin again with prayer; for if we halt in discouragement, the growth and outreach of the body of Christ will be stifled.

For these reasons, prayer is one of the most crucial ingredients both in individual spiritual growth and in the renewal and extension of the church.

If we are to be delivered from attempting only what is predictably achievable, we must return to a proper regard for prayer.

Richard Lovelace's [Renewal as a Way of Life](#) (page 171):

How Eating and Fasting Magnify Christ

John Piper

<http://www.desiringgod.org/Blog/456-how-eating-and-fasting-magnify-christ/>

Bread magnifies Christ in two ways: by being eaten with gratitude for his goodness, and by being forfeited out of hunger for God himself. When we eat, we taste the emblem of our heavenly food - the Bread of Life. And when we fast we say, "I love the Reality above the emblem." In the heart of the saint both eating and fasting are worship. Both magnify Christ. Both send the heart - grateful and yearning - to the Giver. Each has its appointed place and each has its danger. The danger of eating is that we fall in love with the gift; the danger of fasting is that we belittle the gift and glory in our will-power. ([A Hunger for God](#), p. 21)