

Statement on Fasting – INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF PRAYER IN KANSAS CITY

There has been a resurgence of fasting in recent decades, as God calls His people to regular fasting as part of a normal Christian lifestyle. The following is a general overview of biblical precedent and guidelines for wise fasting.

The practice of regular fasting as normal Christian behavior was taught by Jesus (Matthew 6:16–17 and 9:15), exercised by the early church (Acts 13:2), and has been the regular discipline of believers throughout church history. The practice of fasting in Scripture usually includes, but is not limited to, abstinence from food (Daniel 10:3) and may be engaged in for varying durations, typically for no more than a few days at a time. Abstaining from all food for extended periods of time is biblical, but was rare and unusual in Scripture (Exodus 34:28; 1 Kings 19:5–8; Luke 4:2), and thus should never be undertaken without counsel and appropriate supervision. The same standard applies to an absolute fast (Esther fast—no food or water) of any duration (Esther 4:16). The maximum length of an adult fast that can be supported biblically is forty days without food for a male adult in good health, and three days without water. The Bible does not speak of children engaging in fasting food.

Fasting is always voluntary. Though spiritual leaders may invite others to join in corporate fasting with a specific goal in mind and for a specific time, fasting can never be forced or made compulsory. In light of this, fasting is not a mandatory requirement for joining the IHOP–KC staff or community, but we do promote and encourage it as a biblically and historically proven means of obtaining God’s grace in the context of commitment to prayer and to the Word (Joel 2:15). The level at which a person engages in fasting (particularly food) should be determined according to age and with regard to any physical limitations. Those with a known or suspected physical disability or illness, or those with any history of an eating disorder, should *never* fast except in consultation with, and under the supervision of, a qualified doctor. Minors are discouraged from fasting food and should *never* engage in fasting without express parental consent and oversight. Minors who desire to fast are encouraged to consider non-food abstentions, such as TV, movies, Internet surfing, video games and other entertainment. Pregnant women and nursing mothers should *not* fast food or drink as it could negatively affect the health and development of their baby and their own personal health.

Participation in regular fasting as a lifestyle necessitates a healthy lifestyle on days when food is not being fasted, and should include exercise and a proper diet. A “fasted lifestyle” is a disciplined lifestyle, in which we steward our bodies and time with wisdom and diligence. Fasting is not only abstention; it is an exchange where we abstain from certain things in order to “feast” on God’s Word and prayer, whereby the abundance of His grace is made more readily available to us. When undertaken with this type of commitment, a fasted lifestyle is sustainable on a long-term basis, just as it was for Daniel and his friends (Daniel 1).

While the physical impact of fasting is real, the spiritual benefits of fasting are undeniable. Any fast undertaken must be done with spiritual wholeheartedness and wisdom when dealing with our physical body; we must count the cost honestly and honor the temple of the Holy Spirit. Whether we are partaking or abstaining, everything should be for the glory of God.

*This statement is for informational purposes only. The information in this statement reflects only the limited opinions, experience and suggestions of the IHOP–KC Missions Base and is not meant to substitute the advice provided by your doctor or other healthcare professional.