

“Moreover when ye fast...”

Matt 6:16

“And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the Lord my God”

Dan. 9:3,4

“But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.”

Mark 2:20

Below I have adapted for us, Boston’s lengthy outline on how to approach fasting and prayer.

From Thomas Boston’s *A Memorial Concerning Personal and Family Fasting*

This is a general outline. Do not feel you need to follow it exactly, only generally. We want the heart engaged; for there is no blessing in forms alone!

READING TOGETHER

1. Short Prayer for Blessing

Example:

MOST gracious God we come into Thy presence looking to Thy mercy in Christ Jesus, yet trembling that our sins should cause Thee to turn Thy face from us. Tonight as a family we flee unto Thee as a sure and certain refuge in times of trouble, that we may place all our confidence and trust in Thee. Incline our hearts unto Thy law, show us Thy will, and teach us Thy commandments. Open thy precious gospel to our ears afresh. Pour upon us Thy Holy Spirit now while it is called day, that we may earnestly repent for our sins and plead for thy grace in every need. All this we ask for Jesus sake, amen.

2. Serious Meditation

- Read some portion or portions of God’s Word (Rom. 1:29-32, 2 Cor. 6:9,10, Gal 5. 19-21, 2 Tim. 3:1-5, Rev. 21:8.)
- Read the three 9’s: Ezra 9, Daniel 9, Nehemiah 9
- Perhaps read a meditation from a godly minister on one of these passages.

3. Deep Humiliation

- Recognize how we have broken the Law of God
- How we have become selfish and spiritually cold
- Remind ourselves of what we deserve because of sin
- Remember the free and open access to God through Christ's finished work

4. Sing a Psalm of Lament and Confession

Example: Psalter 83, 102, 103, 140, 168, 170, 390.

PRAYING TOGETHER

This is best practiced when the father leads as head of the home. It does not limit prayer to him alone. If there are other family members who can also pray, children included, this is encouraged!

5. Free and Open Confession

- Confess personal, family, congregational, and national sins. Personal sins need not be disclosed unless towards others.

6. Repentance in Turning From Sin

- Repent of sins known and unknown
- Self-condemning, self-emptying, and a look of faith.

7. Solemn Covenanting With God

- Focus on the promises of God. Perhaps read a portion of Psalm 103.
- Renew by vow and promises to turn from sin and to walk according to God's Word

8. Extraordinary Prayer

Here we may focus on special needs of the family, church, and nation. Some examples...

- Pray for family needs/protection
- Pray for Congregational needs/protection
- Pray for the elderly in our family and congregation
- Pray for doctors, nurses, EMT's police, fire, scientists who are all on the front lines
- Pray for those who have been exposed to Covid-19
- Pray for the President and his cabinet who are dealing with a frightened nation
- Pray for this virus to work unity and peace in our nation
- Pray for those in the world who do not have the medical infrastructure that we enjoy here in the USA
- Pray for a vaccine or cure
- Pray that the hearts of our friends and neighbors would turn to Christ in repentance and faith
- Free and extemporaneous prayers as they come to mind. Obviously, there are many more we will think of.

9. Thanksgiving

I find the concluding portion of our **Form For the Lord's Supper** (provided here) very applicable. Or read or pray something that you think appropriate.

"Let us therefore jointly praise his holy name with thanksgiving, and everyone say in his heart, thus:

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.

He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy towards them that fear him.

As far as the East is from the West, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. (Ps. 103:1–5, 8–13)

“Who hath not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, and given us all things with him.

Therefore God commendeth therewith his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; much more then, being now justified in his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him: for, if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. Therefore shall my mouth and heart show forth the praise of the Lord from this time forth forever more. Amen.”

10. Sing a Psalm of Thanksgiving.

Example: 311-313, 317-320, 394-399.