

**What is fasting?** “Christian fasting means privately and occasionally choosing to go without food for some special period of time in view of some specific spiritual purpose.”[1]

### **Why do we fast?**

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” - Matthew 5:6 (We want to want more of God in our lives.)

“And when you fast...” - Matthew 6:16 (Jesus said “when,” not “if.”)

“The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

- Matthew 9:15 (Fasting demonstrates and increases our longing for Jesus, our Bridegroom.)

### **Why would we have a communal fast, if it is private and personal?**

It is true that Jesus said that we should not flaunt our fasting (Matthew 6:16-18), but in so doing he was not denying the power of the community being unified in this practice. In fact, the communal fast has deep Biblical roots. In Nehemiah 9, Joel 2, Jonah 3, and Jeremiah 36 we see 4 different examples of groups of people joining together in their hunger to strengthen and intensify their repentance. The second cause for communal fasting in the Bible is the seeking of specific direction for future endeavors. We see these sorts of fasts happening in 2 Chronicles 20, Ezra 8, Esther 4, and Acts 13.

We want to offer two practical directives as you embark upon this journey of fasting and prayer:

1. Make a fast plan. There are different ways to fast, and one is not better than another. Let me suggest 3 potential approaches. You could do a “water only” fast. This is just what it sounds like and would take place all day so that you have cultivated a significant physical hunger as you approach dinner in the evening. You could do a “12 hour” fast. This would involve skipping lunch so that you go from an early breakfast until a late dinner generating hunger. You could do a “limited diet” fast, also known as a Daniel fast. This involves eating small simple portions at meal times, like a piece of dry toast or a handful of nuts. Oftentimes juice, coffee, and the like are also included in a Daniel fast. Choose one that matches up best with the demands of your day, your health (i.e., low blood sugar or the like), and your comfort level with fasting. Regardless of your choice, resist the temptation to believe that one kind of fasting is more holy than another – remember this is not about religious activity, this is about the heart being actively directed to the foot of God’s throne.
2. Make a feast plan. As my friend Bob Hunt says, “fasting without prayer is dieting.” Our aim is not merely to create hunger but to feast on our relationship with the Father. So, make a plan on how you will use your meal times. I would suggest that you set aside 30-60 minutes at both breakfast and lunch times to read a passage of Scripture and pray in response to the text. Enter conversation with the Father. Also, it would be wise to choose a “breath prayer” to repeat throughout the day. Simply put, this is a prayer that can be uttered in a single breath that you can pray all day, repeating each time you are reminded that you are hungry. It can be as simple as, “Lord, I want more of You.” As you feast on God’s presence during the breakfast and lunch hour and link the time in between with breath prayers, you will be transforming physical hunger into spiritual hunger. God loves to answer our prayers for more of Him in our lives!

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[1] Mathis, David. “Sharpen Your Affections With Fasting.” DesiringGod.org. June 4, 2014.  
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/sharpen-your-affections-with-fasting>.