

What is Fasting?

What it means to fast:

- *Not eating* – the New Testament word literally means, “without food” or “empty”
- *It is by choice* – a *voluntary* period where you don’t eat (not the same as missing a meal!)
- *It is limited* – for a set amount of time (length of Biblical fasts vary)
- *It is purposeful* – to focus on God
- *Fasting is part of our wider worship experiences* – always coupled with repentance and prayer

The central idea of Christian fasting is to train our whole selves to understand what Jesus affirmed from the Old Testament: “man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord” (Deut 8:3; Mt 4:4). We remind our appetites that our true fulfilment is not a full stomach, but to be obedient to our Heavenly Father. Consider what Jesus said: “My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work.” Jn 4:34 (NLT)

“Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in him a source of sustenance beyond food.” – Dallas Willard

What fasting is not:

- *Fasting is not commanded in the NT* – it is not a necessity, but is used as one means to grow in holiness
- *It isn’t a guarantee of getting an answer* – it’s about changing us, not changing our circumstances
- *It is not meant to be public (Matthew 6:1)* – focus on God, not our practices
- *It isn’t intended give us spiritual superiority* – we don’t compare how much we fast
- *Fasting is not an end in itself* – not to be used as a diet tool

Fasting as Creative Worship:

- Fasting from food is not necessarily for everyone
 - consider your health when making choices about whether to fast and how long (1 or 2 meals, or a full day?)
 - always drink plenty of water or juice whenever you are fasting
- Consider fasting from television, computer, social media, or some other regular enjoyment
- What occupies your time that you could set down for this week in order to read your Bible, pray for others, serve the needy?