



FASTING

1. WHAT IS FASTING?

By definition, fasting is intentionally abstaining from food (not fluids) for spiritual purposes. But fasting is much more than skipping meals for God. We must think of fasting not as abstaining from food but as feasting solely on God. All of our heroes in the faith practiced fasting—Moses, David, Elijah, Esther, Daniel, Anna, Paul, and even Jesus fasted. When Jesus taught on fasting, He would say: “When you fast” (Matthew 6:16) not “If you fast.” He assumed that we would fast. We were created to fast. Think about it. If you sleep 8 hours a day, then you are sleeping 1/3 of your life. If you live, say, 75 years, that’s 25 years asleep. When you sleep, you are fasting, that’s why our morning meal is called breakfast; it’s when you break your fast.

2. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF FASTING?

A. *To Humble our Souls* (Psalm 35:13; Isaiah 58:3,5; Matthew 23:12).

Fasting brings you into a deeper, more intimate and powerful relationship with the Lord. When we fast, we get our hunger back for the presence of God.

B. *To Empower us for Breakthrough in Difficult Situations.*

Esther fasted when faced with danger (Esther 4:16). Ezra fasted for protection (Ezra 8:21-28). Jehoshaphat fasted in the time of the invasion of the confederated armies of Canaanites and Syrians (2 Chronicles 20:3).

C. *To Pray for Others.*

In Ezekiel 22:30 God says, “I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn’t have to destroy the land, but I found no one.” We must fast and pray on behalf of others.

D. *To Prepare for Ministry.*

Jesus spent forty days and nights in the wilderness fasting and praying before He began God’s work on this earth. He needed time alone to prepare for what His Father had called Him to do (Matthew 4:1-17; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-14).



E. To Empowers Us to Fulfill God's Calling on Our Life.

Most of the people in the OT fasted in a crisis; Jesus fasted for His calling. We should not fast only during problems, but also for our purpose. Anna was fasting for the coming of the redemption of Israel (Luke 2:37).

F. To Seek God's Wisdom.

Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted for the elders of the churches before committing them to the Lord for His service (Acts 14:23).

G. To Show Grief.

Nehemiah mourned, fasted, and prayed when he learned Jerusalem's walls had been broken down, leaving the Israelites vulnerable and disgraced (Nehemiah 1:1-4).

H. To Repent.

After Jonah pronounced judgment against the city of Nineveh, the king covered himself with sackcloth and sat in the dust. He then ordered the people to fast and pray. Jonah 3:10 says, "When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He relented and did not bring on them the destruction He had threatened."

I. To Gain Victory.

After losing forty thousand men in battle in two days, the Israelites cried out to God for help. Judges 20:26 says all the people went up to Bethel and "sat weeping before the Lord." They also "fasted that day until evening." The next day the Lord gave them victory over the Benjamites.

J. To Worship God.

Luke 2 tells the story of an eighty-four-year-old prophetess named Anna. Verse 37 says, "She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying." Anna was devoted to God, and fasting was one expression of her love for Him.

K. To Gain Power in Our Prayer.

Once, the disciples of Jesus could not cast out a demon. Jesus said, "This kind does not leave, but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21). Fasting



helps to break the bonds of wickedness, undo heavy burdens, and empower us to break every yoke (Isaiah 58:6).

3. HOW DO YOU FAST?

A. Discreetly.

Matthew 6:17-18 NLT - “But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”

B. In Faith.

Hebrews 11:6 - “And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.”

4. WHY DON'T PEOPLE FAST?

Many times, we don't fast because we've lost our spiritual appetite. John Piper says, “The absence of fasting is the measure of our contentment with the absence of Christ.” Piper adds, “If we don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because we have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because we have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Our soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.” Although there are many biblical examples throughout Scripture, many Christians are slow to fast. There are three main factors that cause believers to be hesitant—fear, ignorance, or rebellion.

A. Fear.

We're afraid. Afraid of the unknown. Afraid of feeling hunger pangs. Afraid of starting and not finishing. Afraid of fasting alone. The Enemy has us convinced that we could never do it. Instead of looking to the Lord's strength for help, we become consumed with our own weaknesses and paralyzed by fear.

B. Ignorance.



Many Christians simply have not been taught about the power and importance of seeking God in this way. Even many Bible based churches often do not encourage fasting, and in many cases never teach on it.

C. Rebellion.

A large segment of the Christian population is aware of the benefits of fasting, yet they're unwilling to do it. Their hearts are hardened when it comes to the idea of fasting. When God invites them to draw near, they dig their heels into the ground and refuse to obey.

* But this is not true for us here at ONE Church! We want all that God has for us and we want to be used to bring Him maximum glory, honor, and praise.

5. WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF FASTS?

Your personal fast should present a level of challenge, but it is very important to know your body, your options, and most importantly, to seek God in prayer and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

A. COMPLETE FAST

In this type of fast, you drink only liquids (typically water) with light juices as an option.

B. SELECTIVE FAST

This type of fast involves removing certain foods from your diet. One example of a selective fast is the Daniel Fast, during which you remove meat, sweets, and bread from your diet and you only drink water and juice and only eat fruits and vegetables.

C. PARTIAL FAST

This fast involves abstaining from eating for a certain period of time. An example would be deciding not to eat from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., or from sunup to sundown.

D. SOUL FAST



This fast is a great option if you do not have much experience fasting food, or you have health issues that prevent you from fasting food. For example, you might choose to stop using social media or watching television for the duration of the fast and then carefully bring that element back into your life in healthy doses at the conclusion of the fast.

6. WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT WHEN YOU FAST?

When you fast, your body detoxifies and eliminates toxins from your system. This can cause mild discomfort such as headaches and irritability during withdrawal from caffeine and sugars. And naturally, you will have hunger pains. Limit your activity and exercise moderately. Take time to rest. Fasting brings about miraculous results. You are following Jesus' example when you fast. Spend time listening to praise and worship. Pray as often as you can throughout the day. Get away from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mindset on seeking God's face.

7. HOW SHOULD YOU BEGIN A FAST?

1. Start with a Clear Goal.

Be specific. *Why are you fasting?* Do you need direction, healing, restoration of your marriage or family issues? Are you facing financial difficulties? Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance.

2. Prepare Spiritually.

Ask God to keep and sustain you. When we fast, we want to rely on God's strength not our own. Start by confessing your sins. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of weakness. Forgive everyone who has offended you and ask forgiveness from those you may have offended. Totally surrender.

3. Decide What to Fast.

The type of fasting you choose is up to you. You could go on a full fast in which you only drink liquids. Or you may desire to fast like Daniel, who abstained from sweets and meats, and the only liquid he drank was water. Remember to replace the time you would normally eat with prayer, praise, and time in the Word.



4. Decide How Long to Fast.

You may fast as long as you like. Most can easily fast from one to three days, but you may feel the grace to go longer, even as much as 21 to 40 days. Use wisdom and pray for guidance. Beginners are advised to start slow.

Anyone who has done a fast—whether absolute, liquid, or partial—would agree that fasting is difficult. We’ve already shared that you may suffer from unpleasant side effects such as headaches, fatigue, and intestinal discomfort. Spiritually, attacks from the Enemy increase in frequency and intensity, resulting in many frustrations that can seem overwhelming. However, the same people who would be honest about the challenges of fasting would also agree that the sacrifices are well worth the rewards. So don’t resist the suffering that accompanies fasting. Rejoice in it! Fasting is a spiritual exercise which God honors. He promises to heap blessings on people who are hungry for Him (Matthew 5:6).

Note: As always, consult your doctor before considering any change in your diet.

8. HOW SHOULD YOU END A FAST?

Don’t overeat when the time comes to end your fast! Begin eating solid foods gradually; eat small portions or snacks. It is very dangerous to break a fast by overeating.

9. WOULD GOD BE MAD IF YOU BROKE YOUR FAST?

Keep in mind that the purpose of a fast is to draw closer to the Lord. You are setting aside a specific time to fill up with more of God. It’s not a competition; don’t overthink it. Jesus lived as one of us for over thirty years and fasted often. He understands what you’re going through. Matthew tells about one of Jesus’ fasts in Matthew 4:2, “After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.” This happened just before Jesus was tempted in the desert and then started His full-time ministry. Don’t underestimate the power of taking a step closer to God.



Often when we slip up on a fast, we can let ourselves feel condemned and defeated. Breaking your fast is NOT a sin. If anything, you've proven your humanity, and 2 Corinthians 12:9 states that, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." God's strength often shows up in our weakest moments. Don't let a momentary lapse define your fast. We're simply pushing to be closer to God.

If you find yourself eating, and start to beat yourself up, stop. We as humans fail at many things, but God's love is proven time and time again. Eating on the fast does not make you a failure. To be considered a good hitter in baseball, you only need to hit thirty percent of the time at bat. If you eat something you meant to be fasting, just get back into the fast and finish strong.

Don't forget that God loves you so much that He sent His only Son to die for you. His love is stronger than anything you've ever done. When you decide to commit to fast, you're going to want food. This isn't abnormal, it happens to everyone. Sometimes our stomach gets the best of us on a fast and we grab a bite of something we're supposed to be fasting. This isn't the end of everything. It doesn't even have to be the end of your fast. Pick back up where you left off; we're in a marathon not a sprint.

Now, we've been over what to do if you break your fast, but what if it's an accident. You always grab a soda when you eat dinner and without thinking you take a sip before you realize it. God knows your every thought; He knows you didn't mean to. Just put the soda down and jump back on board. Let's begin!