

What Is Fasting?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline involving abstinence from food for a specific time and purpose. A broader view of fasting is to deny yourself of a particular normal function for the sake of intense spiritual activity. An example of this type of fast could be media, telephone, talking, or sleep.

What Does the Bible Say About Fasting?

There are many examples of fasting in the Bible, as well as, instruction on how to fast. For example, Moses fasted before he received the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:8). The Israelites fasted before a miraculous victorious battle in 2 Chronicles 20. Daniel fasted to receive guidance from the Lord. Jesus fasted while He was tempted in the dessert (Luke 4:2). In Acts 13 we read that the first Christians fasted when making important decisions.

The Bible does not “suggest” God’s people fast, but rather expects them to do so. Matthew 6:17-18 says, “But *when* (not if) you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” Just like any other spiritual discipline, fasting requires the believer to set aside worldly distractions, and focus on the spiritual realm.

Why Should I Fast?

Besides the fact that, according to His Word, God expects us to fast, consider the following reason for the importance of fasting. We live in two worlds—the physical world and the spiritual world—and those two worlds are constantly battling each other. Our fleshly nature wants to be in control, but the Spirit of God in us should be in control. All too often our flesh wins this battle. We can see, touch, smell, hear, and taste the things in the physical realm, so naturally it is easier to succumb to the things of the world, allowing them to dominate over our Spirit.

Fasting for the purpose of prayer and communing with God helps to reverse this. The Spirit gets on top of the flesh, causing it to submit to the things of God rather than the things of man. You will find that as you fast, your mind becomes sharper and clearer. You may become moody, but this is only natural as your fleshly nature is being made to surrender to the Spirit. You might also notice a keen awareness to God’s presence. Lean into this time of surrender and submission by leaning into prayer, God’s Word, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Pray fervently during this time, asking the Spirit to reveal Truth to you.

Fasting Facts

- Fasting is not so much about food as it is about focus.
- Fasting is not so much about saying no to the body as it is about saying yes to the Spirit.
- Fasting is not about doing without, it is about looking within.
- Fasting is an outward response to an inward attitude and cry of the soul.
- Fasting is not a means of seeking God’s blessings, as much as it is a means of seeking God.
- Fasting is not a test for super saints, it is not a means of twisting God’s arm, and it is not a magical formula for getting through to God.
- Fasting is feasting on the Lord. Looking to Him for comfort, power, strength, guidance, forgiveness, and hope.

Steps to Fasting:

- Ask the Lord to show you what you should fast from and for how long. Be sensitive to the Spirit as you discern this.
- Set aside time for prayer and quiet reflection during your fast. Fasting isn't simply about giving something up, but most importantly taking in more of God.
- Journal as God impresses things on your heart during your fast.
- Spend time in God's Word as you fast. His Word is one of the primary ways God speaks to us.
- Prepare a list of Bible verses to pray through to guard yourself from the Enemy's attacks during your time of fasting.
- Set aside specific times throughout the day to read, study, and meditate on God's Word.
- Sing and worship God throughout your day.
- End the fast when the Lord has given you peace for it to end.
- Remember to watch for the movement of God in your life as a result of your fast—look for answers, action, or a new perspective.

Precautions:

- Fasting is not "earning" an answer to prayer. Fasting prepares us for God's answer.
- Fast only if your health allows it at this time. If you are able to do only a partial fast, do it in faith and God will honor your intentions.

Types of Fast:

- Liquid only Fast (Water or water and juice, etc.)
- Partial Fast (Fasting from a particular food or food group—meat, sugar, dairy, etc.)
- The Daniel Fast (Eat no meat, no sweets, and no bread. Drink water and Juice. Eat fruits and vegetables.)
- For those who have medical conditions that may prevent them from engaging in a dietary fast (i.e. pregnant women, diabetics, etc.) perhaps fast from TV, social media, cell phone, movies, or some other non-food pleasure.

Tips on preparing to Fast:

- Keep in mind that for some, fasting from all food is not an option for health reasons. If you have concerns, check with your physician before embarking on a total fast from food.
- You may choose to fast from one meal rather than doing a total fast.
- It is best to prepare your body for fasting from food or caffeine by gradually reducing the amount of these items you intake a few days prior. Set a game plan for how you will fast and be well hydrated before you begin.
- Remember to consider what your day will be like during the time you fast. Is there a social event on the calendar where food is involved? How will you handle that situation?
- Prepare yourself spiritually for your fast as well and ask someone you trust to pray for you as you fast. Doing this will help you guard yourself from the Enemy's attacks before, during, and after your fast.

4 Suggested Patterns for Your Prayer Time as You Fast

Pattern #1

Praying Scripture is a powerful way to connect with the heart of God in prayer. Use the verses below to help you as you pray and fast.

- First, pray Psalm 51 aloud. Personalize it by putting your name in place of all of the pronouns.
- Next use these points of confession, prayer, and Scripture throughout the day:
 - Confess your sins to the Lord. Name them one by one. Really dig deep and ask God to pry open your heart and show you any unconfessed sins that are ruling over your spirit. (Psalm 66:18)
 - Share with the Lord your desire to flee from anything that is not pleasing to Him. (1 Corinthians 10:13 & 2 Timothy 2:22)
 - Thank God for the gift of His Son, Jesus, and the blood that He shed on the cross for our forgiveness. (1 Corinthians 15:57)
 - Thank God for His desire to transform you into the likeness of Christ. (Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 5:17)
 - Ask for His help to fight the war of sin that rages within each of us. (Ephesians 6:10-18)
 - Ask God to protect His people from fleshly desires. (Galatians 5:16)
 - Ask for protection over our homes and families that they might represent Him with integrity and authenticity. (1 Thessalonians 3:3)
- End by praising God for who He is. Use Psalm 145 as your guide.

Pattern #2

As you fast, remember that we are seeking God's face, not His hand. Fasting is not a means by which we attempt to change God's mind. Rather, we are admitting to God our complete dependence on Him and our total surrender to His ways and His perfect will.

God will expose the sins of your heart and lead you to humble repentance and brokenness when you fast. This is a good thing! God is in the business of transforming us into the likeness of His Son, making us vessels that He can use for His glory.

Whatever you have chosen to give up as a part of this discipline of self-denial, rest assured that you will crave this thing. If it is food, allow your hunger to remind you to pray and seek the face of God for satisfaction rather than satisfying the desires of your flesh. If it is some form of entertainment (TV, social media, etc.) know that your desire to

turn to it for fulfillment is nothing compared to the abundant life we have in Christ. Each time your mind wanders to that which you are fasting from, pray, turn to the Scriptures, and find joy in Jesus' presence.

Use the verses below to help you as you pray and fast today.

- Praise God for who He is. Use Psalm 8 as your guide.
- Repent of your sins. Read Psalm 32:1-5 aloud as a prayer to God. Confess your sins, one by one, to the Lord. Ask Him to uncover anything you are attempting to hide from Him so He can cover them with the forgiveness that only comes from the blood of His Son, Jesus.
- Ask God for healing. Use these points of prayer throughout the day:
 - Ask God to heal us of sin. (2 Chronicles 7:14)
 - Ask God to heal the hearts of the leaders of our nation and cause them to turn to Him. (Proverbs 21:1)
 - Ask the Lord to heal our church from complacency regarding the lost and instill in us an intense desire to build relationships with unbelievers and love them into the Kingdom. (Romans 1:16)
 - Ask God to heal our church of prejudice. (John 13:34-35)
 - Ask God to heal us from familiarity. (Psalm 119:18)
 - Ask God to heal us from the sin of idolatry. (2 Chronicles 20:33)
 - Ask God to heal us from fear and anxious thoughts. (2 Timothy 1:7)
 - Ask God to heal us from sexual immorality. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)
 - Ask God to heal us from being satisfied by the things of this world rather than finding our satisfaction in Him. (Psalm 42:1 & Philippians 4:10-13)

Pattern #3

For the majority of your prayer time today, focus intently on listening to God. The more you fast, the more natural this will become. Fasting initiates a keen awareness to God's presence and sharpens your mind because you are intentionally disciplining yourself by denying your flesh. Listening, rather than talking is another way to discipline the body. Talking centers our prayers around ourselves, but listening in prayer centers us around God.

Dick Eastman says, "Only as we learn to hear the voice of the Father can we learn to dispel the voices of the world." The sounds of our world drown out the voice of God. Radio broadcasts, social media, television, technology, billboards, magazines, news broadcasts, cell phones, we listen to and enjoy these modern conveniences but often end up filling our minds with so much noise that we crowd out the voice of our Creator. There is nothing wrong with these things, but even things that are meant to bless us and make our lives easier often become our idols. That which was once a blessing becomes a curse because we make it the object of our desire. What we need is to still our minds with words from Jesus. What we need is to find joy in the presence of our Savior. What we need is not more clamor and stimuli, but more stillness and solitude with Him.

Sit quietly today during your focused time of prayer. Read the passages below and simply quiet your mind and listen for the voice of Jesus. Keep a notebook near by to write down what the Lord impresses on your heart then proceed in responding to God in prayer.

Use the verses below and others that God brings to mind, to help you as you listen, pray, and fast today. After you have spent time listening to God, use these same verses to pray back to Him.

- *Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore, let your words be few. – Ecclesiastes 5:2*
- *Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord. – Proverbs 16:20*
- *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. – 2 Peter 3:9*
- *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. – Matthew 28:19*
- *Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? – Psalm 85:6*
- *I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. – John 17:14-17*

Pattern #4

During your fast be particularly sensitive to the Spirit's leading. Since we have been praying fervently, you may experience intense spiritual warfare. The enemy does not appreciate our prayers. He seeks to steal, kill, and destroy. We are in a spiritual battle and it is imperative that we prepare ourselves well and come fully equipped and armed.

Begin by praying Ephesians 6: 10-17 personalized for you below.

Father, today I pray that I will be strong in You and in the strength of Your might. I am putting on the whole armor of God, so that I am able to stand against the schemes of the devil. I know that I cannot do this in my own strength, so I am looking to You, Lord. I do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil

in the heavenly places. Therefore, right now I am taking up all of Your armor, God, so that I may be able to withstand the evil that will surround me today, and having done all of this, I will stand firm as I am fastening the belt of truth around my waist. I am putting on the breastplate of righteousness, and the shoes of the Gospel of peace for my feet. In all of my circumstances today, I will take up the shield of faith, which will extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and I am taking the helmet of salvation and putting it on my head, and will hold on tightly to the sword of the Spirit, which is Your word, oh God. I commit this day to You, Lord, and I pray this in the powerful name of Jesus, amen.

Now move into praying these verses throughout the day.

- Begin by praising and thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has done. Use John 1:1-18, to guide your prayer.
- Use Psalm 130 to guide you in a prayer of repentance.
- Make a list of those you know who need salvation. Pray individually through the following verses for each one on your list.
 - God, will you show _____ that the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)
 - Help _____ to know that it is against you only that he/she has sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that he/she may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. (Psalm 51:3-4)
 - God, You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty. (Psalm 18:27) Would you humble _____ so he/she can see their need of Jesus?
 - Lord, will you rescue _____ from the dominion of darkness and bring him/her into the kingdom of Your Son, Jesus Christ? (Colossians 1:13)
 - God, help _____ to know that You loved him/her so much, that You sent Your only Son, Jesus, to die on a cross so that if he/she believes in Him he/she will not perish but will have everlasting life.
- Pray these same verses for those who lead our state and country who do not know Jesus.