

If you are not used to fasting, it is good to begin with a shorter fast. For instance, begin by skipping one meal a day. Most people can do some type of fast. Talk to your doctor before fasting if you are taking medicine, have a medical condition, are pregnant, or are a nursing mother. Cut out caffeine and eat smaller meals before you begin the fast.

Be aware that you will deal with food cravings, but that is part of the discipline of fasting. Also, when you go without food your body begins to detoxify, so you might get a headache during withdrawal from caffeine and sugar. Increase your water intake as your body flushes out these impurities. I encourage you to push through these symptoms of fasting. Limit some of your activity, and take time to rest. The reward is worth it.

During your fast, it is important to draw aside, read the Bible, and pray. The purpose of fasting is not just to go without food, but to take time to be in God's presence.

Don't overeat when you end your fast. Begin eating solid foods gradually, with smaller portions.

The type of fast you choose and the length of your fast is between you and God. You may want to use a combination of fasts.

I encourage you to set some goals for your fast. What are you asking God to do in your life? Write it down and keep it before God during the fast.

FASTING

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Fasting Guide

Scriptures that give us guidance for fasting include:

- Luke 5:35, 2:37
- Matthew 4:1-2, 6:6-17, 7:21
- Acts 13:3, 14:23
- Jonah 3
- Ezra 8:21-23
- Daniel 9:3, 10
- Nehemiah 1:4
- Joel 2:12

In the Bible, we see that fasting is a normal part of a believer's walk with God. Jesus said that when he is no longer here with us, we should make fasting a part of our spiritual walk.

- Fasting helps us draw close to God. It is a posture of seeking God and listening.
- Fasting is an expression of repentance, humility, and surrender before God.
- Fasting brings breakthrough in the physical and spiritual realms.
- Fasting helps remove old thinking patterns.
- Fasting also has health benefits.

The purpose of fasting is not to earn some type of merit from God nor to twist God's arm so he answers our prayer. Fasting is more about our heart than our stomach. Fasting is an expression from our hearts that we are desperate for more of God. It is a way of denying ourselves and resisting the cravings of our flesh to increase our sensitivity to God. It is amazing how strong our fleshly appetites are. Fasting helps us to keep them in check.

There are some things we encounter in life that will not respond to normal prayer. They require a greater pressing in and spiritual power. Fasting releases a greater power into the realm of the Spirit. It is one of the secrets of the spirit realm. Sometimes the breakthrough we are seeking comes during the fast, and sometimes it comes after the fast. Don't be discouraged if nothing seems to happen right away. Sometimes it seems that things get worse during the fast because we are stirring up things in the spirit realm, but hold on—breakthrough is coming.

We don't fast in a legalistic way. After all, God is after our heart, not a rule book on fasting. Fasting can be a fun thing to do together as a church family as we share our experiences and our veggie and fruit recipes. We encourage each other.

Jesus said we are not to make a big show of our fasting to try and impress people of our spirituality, but to fast with right motives.

There are three types of fasts in the scriptures. However, fasting is not limited to these. Fasting is more about our hearts than a particular type of fast.

Absolute Fast

No food or water

This must only be done for a very short period, such as one or two days. You should have a clear word from God before doing this. Too much time without water can harm your body.

Normal Fast

No food but lots of water

This can be a short or extended fast. This can also include clear broth and some juices to maintain your strength.

Partial Fast

Giving up certain types of food and drink or certain meals.

Daniel gave up choice foods such as meat and only ate vegetables (and probably fruit) for 21 days. He probably drank lots of water and juice. Some call this the Daniel Fast.

Some people do a combination of things such as no coffee, sodas, and desserts. Some will also fast from certain activities such as TV or Facebook or something that would represent a sacrifice from normal activities to give more time to God during the fast.

A partial fast can be a continuous fast for a period of time or fasting from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. or from sun up to sun down.

Young children can be asked to participate in some of the easier, beginner-level fasting. Give them a basic understanding of why we fast. Fasting needs to be something that is meaningful to them. Maybe you can give them some options and then let them choose. For instance, they can fast from desserts for a period of time—from sweets, sodas, TV, or even meats with the rest of the family. Then take some time to pray for the church and needs in your life around the dinner table.