

What is Fasting

To fast simply means to voluntarily abstain from eating for a prayerfully chosen period of time. Biblical fasting is a discipline of voluntarily denying one's self eating in order to be more available for prayer and communion with the Lord. God uses fasting to teach how to practice righteousness and self-control.

You can fast for one day, one week, or just one meal. You can fast from one type of food or from all foods. You can fast or abstain from solid foods or all foods and liquids. It is during this time of abstinence from food that you are to spend time seeking the Lord in Bible study, prayer and meditation. The discipline of fasting is designed to separate you from your perceived "life support" so you can focus exclusively on the Lord Jesus, the real source of life.

Fasting in the Bible

In Matthew 6:16, Jesus speaks with his disciples. He begins his sentence with the phrase, "When you fast..." Jesus expected that those who followed Him would experience the joys of fasting. Throughout Scripture and church history, many people have fasted as a way to encounter God.

Listed below are some of the reasons why people in the Bible fasted:

<i>In times of war:</i>	<i>Judges 20:26</i>
<i>When facing danger:</i>	<i>Ezra 8:21, 23</i>
<i>In times of grief:</i>	<i>1 Samuel 31:13</i>
<i>Denial of the flesh:</i>	<i>Matthew 4:2</i>
<i>Wisdom:</i>	<i>Acts 14:23</i>
<i>Answered prayer:</i>	<i>Acts 10:30-31</i>
<i>Special revelation:</i>	<i>Exodus 34:27-28</i>
<i>Repentance:</i>	<i>Jonah 3:5 and Daniel 6:18</i>
<i>Courage and wisdom:</i>	<i>Esther 4:3, 16 and 9:31</i>
<i>In times of distress:</i>	<i>2 Samuel 1:12</i>
<i>Spiritual power:</i>	<i>Mark 9:29</i>
<i>Set aside self for holiness:</i>	<i>1 Corinthians 7:5</i>
<i>Mourning:</i>	<i>Daniel 10:1-3</i>
<i>Spiritual recuperation:</i>	<i>1 Kings 19:1-9</i>

As you can see, there are many reasons why people fast, and all of them were good ones. Some wanted wisdom and power, while others were repenting of their sins. But there was one aspect of the fasting experience that each had in common: a personal encounter with the living God.

As you begin to consider reasons for your fast, you will come up with several, but there is one that will override all the other reasons: to have a powerful, life-changing encounter with the living God. Never confuse your fasting goals with the most foundational reason to fast – to meet with God. All other reasons could cause you to miss the biggest blessing of your fasting experience.

The Health Benefits of Fasting

Fasting is also an excellent way to maximize the body's self-healing capacity. When properly utilized, fasting can help in overcoming addictions, relieve back and neck problems, and even reduce the size and effect of tumors.

The major health benefits of fasting include:

- Breaking cyclical addictions to substances like caffeine, sugar, and treats
- Detoxification from artificial additives, metals, and chemicals in our food and drink
- Helping you realize what you truly do eat – resulting in long-term diet improvement
- Cleansing your digestive and gastrointestinal system

What is the number one thing you trust in for your survival? What is the one thing that will give you an “attitude” if you don't receive it, when and how you want it? What do you spend hours preparing for and is the center of your social and recreational life?

The answer to all these questions is food! Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.” Fasting is simply seeking God ahead of food. Obviously, there is nothing morally wrong with food or eating. The Bible describes how Jesus ate and drank with his friends. However, when we set aside our needs and rights in order to put God first for a special period of time, God honors our sacrifice.

Fasting Tips and Practical Help

Take time to confess your sins, before and during your fast, knowing that He is faithful and just to forgive you and cleanse you of all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Remember, fasting is a time for cleansing, spiritually and physically.

Planning your fast

- When will you begin/end your fast?
- What will you fast from?
- Will you drink water only (a 'water fast'), water and juice (a 'juice fast') or abstain from something else specifically?
- How will you schedule your time in order to increase your devotion in worship and prayer?

How to Prepare

- Resist the urge to have a final “food gorge” before you begin.
- Weaning yourself off of caffeine and sugar ahead of time makes the fast easier on your body.
- Guard your schedule and don't make tons of extra plans during the fast.
- These people should not fast: women who are pregnant or nursing, people dealing with an eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia, individuals with blood sugar problems such as hyperglycemia and diabetes, people taking heavy medications that require food. If you have a specific health concern, consult a physician before fasting.

Practical Tips for your Fast

- Replace your eating times with reading the bible, worship, and prayer.
- Get plenty of rest
- Drink plenty of water
- If you are doing a juice and water fast, make sure and only drink 100% juice. The more acidic juices like orange juice can be hard on your stomach. Apple juice is a good option.
- It is normal to experience headaches, hunger pains, irritability, etc. in the first stages of your fast. Your body is detoxing. This is normal. Keep going!!

How to Break your Fast

- Don't overeat. Eat a small portion.
- Avoid fast food and heavy greasy food.
- Fruits and vegetables are the best foods to eat after a fast. Light soups are also good.
- The longer the fast, the more careful you need to be when breaking the fast. A good rule of thumb is one day of a specialized diet for every 5 days of fasting.

Sources:

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