

More About Fasting

Practically speaking, it is difficult to fast without letting your spouse (or close family) know. Much of what we do socially is centered around food. Here are some practical suggestions to start your fast well.

- Let your spouse know up front—that helps them with expectations and scheduling
- Be clear about what you are praying for during the fast. Start a list of prayer questions/concerns and what you will pray as the fast begins.
- Start with a light meal the evening before the fast (i.e. 6pm) - Don't over-eat! That will only make the fast more difficult in the first 24 hours.
- If you are fasting for a 24 hour period, consider fasting from 6pm (after dinner), until 6pm the next day (with dinner).
- Use the hunger pangs, and the time for eating, as triggers to pray. Find a place and make it your prayer spot during the fasting period.
- Use water or juice to support your fasting. If you use juice make sure it is watered down to avoid acidic buildup in your stomach (acid will feel like a burning sensation). Should you experience problems with acid in your stomach, a good remedy is to drink boiled potato water to neutralize it.
- For longer periods of fasting, the body should shut down your stomach within 3-4 days. If you experience hunger after that time, break the fast or see a physician. (Note: Hunger is an indicator that the body is now breaking down muscle instead of fat for energy — it is time to break the fast!)
- Fasts for long durations will have affects on your body heat, energy level, and muscle tone. Be cautious about exercise and activities that might drain you of energy. (Again, use that time to pray.)
- Journal your journey through the fasting process. Often, God gives us insights into His heart and opens the doorway for us to learn of His will. Don't miss those learnings through the distraction of the fast.
- People will notice a change in your routine and physical appearance. It is appropriate to be honest, but not necessary to spend time talking about it. One common practice during a fast is to also remain silent (fasting from words) so that the attention remains on God. Reassure them you are healthy and change the subject.
- Should a health issue occur (cold, flu, etc.), go ahead and break the fast appropriately. Do not risk your health — that's not the point of fasting.



Some common side affects:

- Bad breath—the body is actually cleansing itself during a fast ... so expect to use deodorant and breath mints to fight the odors.
- Dizziness / Tiredness—at periods of time you may feel lightheaded or very tired. Take the extra time to rest when needed.
- Alertness—you will experience times of alertness, and may require less sleep, awaken earlier, etc. **Use this as an indicator that God is speaking to you!** Turn those times into moments of prayer.
- Coldness—your body will feel colder and may require more clothing, including wearing long underwear, sweaters, etc.
- Weight loss—Often, the weight loss is dramatic, so wear loose fitting clothing or tuck in your sweater (don't worry—you'll gain much of it back afterwards)
- Emotional Side effects—often, you will experience emotional mood swings during a fast. Use those feelings as a prompting for prayer instead of reacting to people. Expect God to teach you through those moments.



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The Facts about FASTING



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Fasting

Biblical fasting is the spiritual discipline of denial, usually from food, in order to seek the heart of God more clearly. Although our present-day culture does not practice this regularly, Jesus saw it as an important part of our spiritual walk. The Bible shows many examples through both the Old & New Testament of how God answers prayer through fasting.

Common reasons for fasting in the Bible included:

- Important Decisions and events, such as selection of leaders, guidance in decisions, and other key life challenges
- Seeking God's intercession in the lives of others, such as a wayward family member, hurting or seriously ill person, or difficult life position
- Repentance as a person, group or nation for disobedience to God
- Seeking help from God at the beginning of a great personal task or calling

Fasting is always associated with prayer, not as a dietary method. It is not an obligation, but choice to fervently seek the Lord in seriousness and reverence. Jesus warns us to make it a private matter, and not be a public religious act. It is holy and private—between us and God. But Jesus also expected us to fast periodically for spiritual reasons and insight to His Will.



What is fasting?

Fasting is the act of abstaining from food. There are various types of ways to fast, but the most popular is a water or juice fast—abstaining from food and only drinking water or juice during the period of time.

The average, healthy person is able to go without food for 24 hours without any ill effects. Exceptions are the following:

- children under the age of 12
- the elderly
- pregnant or nursing women
- people with other specific medical conditions (i.e. diabetes, reactive hypoglycemia, other medical conditions that are associated with or could precipitate hypoglycemia; eating disorders, etc.)

If you have any health-related questions about the fast or are regularly under a doctor's care for any of the above medical conditions, you are strongly advised to consult your family doctor before taking part.

Why is fasting practiced?

Fasting is a way of separating yourself from worldly needs to focus attention on God's will. The time spent eating can be spent in prayer, allowing the hunger or mealtime to trigger you to pray.

There are many scriptural references to fasting, in both the Old and New Testament. The following is not a complete list but is a good place to start.

- Matthew 6:16-18
- Matthew 9:16-17
- Matthew 17:20-21
- Daniel 9:3, 20
- Ezra 8:21-23
- Isaiah 58

- Judges 20:26-28
- Psalms 35:13
- Mark 9:29

What are some alternatives to fasting?

Most people can go without food for 24 hours with no ill effects, but it should be a personal choice. If, for any reason (medical or otherwise), someone cannot participate in a 24 hour fast, modifying the Fast is acceptable. Remember that the purpose is to draw nearer to God, not honor our 'righteousness'. Some suggested ways to modify a fast include:

- skipping a meal (or two)
- abstaining from something (i.e. chocolate, soda pop, etc.) for a period of time
- fasting from talking for a period time
- fasting from media (no TV, movies, videos, radio, music, etc.) for a period of time

How should we break the fast?

Breaking your fast can be a meaningful time for the group, but it also should be done gradually and sensibly. A big pizza feed might sound like a great idea, but something a little easier to digest, like pasta or rice (lots of carbohydrates) might go down a little easier. (That's why we call the first meal of the day 'breakfast', as the foods tend to help our stomach start up again safely.)

This document was prepared as a tool, and is not designed to replace a physician's guidance but is provided to answer common questions regarding fasting.

