



**Identify a Purpose.** The first step for any fast is discerning your reason/purpose for fasting. **Commit to a time period:** If you are just beginning, fasting for one meal is a good place to start. **Consider liquids, avoid television, exercise, pray during hunger or weakness, fill time with other activities.**

### Ten Biblical Reasons for Fasting

1. To strengthen prayer (Ezra 8:23). Fasting does not change whether God hears our prayers, but it can change praying. Fasting is calculated to bring a note of urgency and importunity into our praying, and to give force to our pleading in the court of him.
2. To seek God's guidance (Judges 20:26). As with prayer, fasting to seek God's guidance isn't done to change God but to be receptive to his guidance.
3. To express grief (1 Samuel 31:13). Expressing grief is one of the primary reasons for fasting.
4. To seek deliverance or protection (2Chronicales 20:3-4). Another common reason for fasting in the Old Testament was to seek deliverance.
5. To express repentance and a return to God (1 Samuel 7:6). This type of fasting helps us to express grief over our sins and shows our seriousness returning to the path of Godly obedience.

6. *To humble oneself before God (1 Kings 32:27-29). Remember that fasting itself is not humility before God. It should be an expression of humility.*
7. *To express concern for the work of God (Nehemiah 1:3-4). As with Nehemiah, fasting can be a tangible sign of our concern over a particular doing.*
8. *To minister to the needs of others (Isaiah 58:3-7). We can use time we'd normally spend eating to fast and minister to others.*
9. *To overcome temptation and dedicate yourself to God (Matt. 4:1-11). Fasting can help us focus when we are struggling with particular temptations.*
10. *To express love and worship for God (Luke 2:37). Fasting can show that "what we hunger for most, we worship."*

### **What does Fasting do for our Spiritual Life?**

1. *Fasting and prayer can help us hear from God.*
2. *Fasting and prayer can reveal our hidden sin.*
3. *Fasting and prayer can strengthen intimacy with God.*
4. *Fasting and prayer can teach us to pray with right motives.*
5. *Fasting and prayer can build our faith.*

*Not only does fasting and prayer help us focus on God, but through that time, it brings us closer to Him and changes our hearts.*

*"When we fast and pray, we are taking time away from a meal or an activity to devote our entire being to focus on God. We find we are more sensitive to the voice of God, more attuned to hearing what He has to reveal to us. Gently, God whispers in our mind what we were really thinking at the time of our sin, what our true intent was and we are shocked. . . momentarily. Then like a light turned on in a pitch black room, we see it. We did mean harm. We were manipulative. Even though our recognition makes us want to hide our face, our loving Savior lifts our chin to look into his forgiving eyes. As we repent, we no longer want to hide, but to praise and worship the very one who confronted our wrong." (Niles and Little)*

*There is a **regular fast** which consists of abstaining from all food and drink except for water (Matthew 4:2-3; Luke 4:2). Apart from*

*supernatural enablement, the body can function only three days without water.*

*A **partial fast** is when one abstains from some particular kind of food as in the case of Daniel while in Babylon (Daniel 10:3; 1:8, 12).*

*A **liquid fast** means that you abstain only from solid foods. Most who choose this path are sustained by fruit juices and the like.*

*A **complete or absolute fast** that entails no food or liquid of any kind (Ezra 10:6; Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9) should only be for a very short period of time. For anything longer than three to five days, seek medical advice.*

*There is also what can only be called a supernatural fast, as in the case of Moses (Deuteronomy 9:9), who abstained from both food and water for forty days (enabled to do so only by a miraculous enabling from God).*

*You may also wish to fast from all food for only a particular meal each day. In other words, you may choose to skip lunch for a day or two or a week, or dinner, or even breakfast. All such forms of partial fasting are entirely appropriate.*

### **What you need to Know about Fasting from Food and Drink**

*"A progression should be observed in your fasting, especially if this discipline is new to you and you are unfamiliar with its physical effects. Don't start out with a weeklong water fast! Begin by skipping one meal each day for two to three days and setting aside the money it would have cost to give to the poor. Spend the time praying that you would have used for eating."*

*"If you've never fasted before, be aware that in the early stages you may get dizzy and have headaches. This is part of the body's cleansing process and will pass with time. Be sure that you break the fast gradually with fresh fruit and vegetables. Do not overeat after the fast. Chili and pizza may sound good after several days of not eating, but please, exercise a little restraint and say no!"*

*When starting your fast, consider possible dietary restrictions. "Be mindful of any health issues that could make a fast unwise. For*

*example, if you are a diabetic or have any other physical condition that requires a strict diet, be especially mindful not to put yourself in a compromised position as a result of a fast."*

*Those who are struggling with eating disorders that are making intake of food a challenge and concern in their daily lives, I discourage the idea of fasting. The point of the fast is to combine it with a more intense, focused time of prayer that brings a greater communion with God, a greater empowerment of the Spirit, and a greater earnestness in your soul.*

### **Other Types of Fasting**

- *TV/ Movie Fast*
- *Social Media Fast*
- *Secular Music Fast*
- *Fast from Going Out*

**How Long Should I Fast? How long you fast is entirely up to you and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.**

- *One day or part of a day (Judges 20:26; 1 Sam. 7:6; 2 Sam. 1:12-13; 3:35; Neh. 9:1; Jer. 36:6)*
- *A one-night fast (Dan. 6:18-24)*
- *Three-day fasts (Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9)*
- *Seven-day fasts (1 Sam. 31:13; 2 Sam. 12:16-23)*
- *A fourteen-day fast (Daniel 10:3-13)*
- *Forty-day fasts (Deuteronomy 9:9; 1 Kings 19:8; Matt. 4:2)*
- *Fasts of unspecified lengths (Matt. 9:14; Luke 2:37; Acts 13:2; 14:23)*
- *Occasional Short Fasts-whether denying yourself food or some other pleasure, an occasional fast that lasts six, twelve, or twenty-four hours is the most manageable. You are not necessarily making a commitment to do this type of fast again, as it is a one-time fast for a specific purpose.*
- *Intermittent Fasts- this is normally a regular act of abstinence, for example one day a week you may abstain from food, or make some other sacrifice. This type of fast is a way of integrating the spiritual discipline of fasting into your life on an ongoing basis.*

- *Longer Fasts-* can take the form of abstinence from food or some other sacrifice. Some good options for a non-food fast would be abstaining from watching TV from Monday to Friday, reading a biography of a great man or woman of God each week, or dedicating every evening for a week to praying with friends. A longer water-only fast might last from one to three days. If you are fasting from something other than food, your longer fast might last a week. Some use Lent as a time for a longer fast.
- *Extended Fasts-* this is the hard path of fasting—choosing to give up something that you need or value for an extended period of time. One non-food extended fast would be to get up an hour earlier each day for a month in order to pray, worship, or read Scripture or a Christian book.
- *Open-ended Fasts-* some extended fasts are open-ended, for example, where you make a commitment not to break your fast until your goals have been achieved. Defining your goals is particularly important here. Again, this type of fast should not be considered until you have gained some experience.
- *Occasional Group Fasts-* such fasts can be called by a church or a group of churches or, on a larger scale, even to a nation during a time of crisis. Alternately, such fasts can be called by a small group or even by a Christian business. With the right leadership, calling groups to prayer and fasting can be a very powerful tool.
- *Longer Group Fasts-* the range of options for a group fast is extensive. Are you all going to fast at the same time, or are you setting up a rotation? If you are going to do a water-only fast, are there some who need to do a partial fast for health reasons? Is this an open-ended fast until a goal is achieved, or are you fasting for a specifically defined period?

### **What Christians Need to Know about Fasting by Sam Storms**

#### **Ten Tips for Successful Fasting** by Lori Hatcher

1. Fast from dinner to dinner.
2. Consider an alternate fast.
3. Drink water constantly.
4. Drink herbal tea with a little sweetener.



5. Set a timer.
6. Use a prayer guide for focus and direction,
7. Choose a day when you're likely to have more "mental space."
8. Be open to prayer "tangents."
9. Use your hunger or cravings as prompts to pray.
10. Expect spiritual and physical opposition.

*"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:17-18*

#### *Bible Verses about Fasting*

<i>Acts 14:23</i>	<i>Daniel 10:3</i>	<i>Esther 4:16</i>	<i>Exodus 34:28</i>
<i>Joel 2:12</i>	<i>Luke 2:37</i>	<i>Luke 4:2-4</i>	

*Fasting refers to abstaining from eating for a limited period. Throughout the Scripture, we can see that God's people fasted for a variety of reasons:*

1. *To express grief over the death of a loved one or a lead (1 Sam. 31:13)*
2. *To petition God for a matter of great urgency (2 Sam. 12"15-23)*
3. *To humble oneself before God (1 Kings 21:27-29)*
4. *To seek God's help (2 Cron. 20:1-4)*
5. *To confess sins (Neh. 9:1-2)*
6. *To prepare oneself spiritually (Matt. 4:1-2)*

*Fasting was difficult, requiring self-discipline and sacrifice. It gave God's people the opportunity to devote more time to spiritual pursuits. It said to God, in effect, that the matter they were bringing before Him was more important than anything else, even eating.*

#### *Genuine Fasting*

1. *Free those who had been wrongly imprisoned, rather than keep them in their deplorable state of confinement. Rather than oppress those who worked for them.*
2. *The wealthy were to treat the poor (as well as all people) with fairness and pay them what they had earned.*

3. *Have genuine compassion for the oppressed, the poor and the helpless. (Deut. 15:1-11)*
4. *True worship meant obeying God's laws, including the care of the poor.*

*"God did not desire meaningless religious acts instead, He wanted His people's thoughts, words, and actions to be characterized by equity and compassion."*

1. *Micah 6:8*
2. *Ps. 15:2; Ps. 24:4-5*
3. *Isa. 33:15-16*

*God decreed that his people make the following three principles a priority in their lives:*

1. *To promote justice (honesty and fairness)*
2. *To let persistent acts of kindness, undergird their dealings with one another.*
3. *To ensure that reverence, prudence, and obedience were the foundation of their relationship with the Lord (Isa. 29:19; Jer. 22:16; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:24; Jas. 1:27)*

### **Result of Genuine Fasting**

- *Your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.*
- *Then you will call and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.*
- *If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.*

**In Isaiah 58:9-10, the Lord urged His people to eliminate the "yoke of oppression" and "satisfy the needs of the oppressed."**

**Loving God and people were the foremost commandments (Matt. 22:37-40).** *We discover that the Mosaic legal code is illumined and deepened by the presence of Christ-like love (Matt. 5:17; 7:12; Rom. 8:4; 13:8-10). The idea is that a supreme love for God will always find expression in*

*unselfish love for others (including the oppressed and afflicted). Furthermore, just as the Savior loved us and gave His life for our eternal benefit, we also should reach out to others in a caring manner (1 John 4:7-11).*

*Promises of Divine Blessings if the people practiced true fasting—that is accompanied by helping the needy—then “light” (spiritual blessing) would break forth and “healing” (spiritual restoration) would quickly appear. Righteousness would go before the people and the glory of the Lord would follow them as their “rear guard.”*