Heritage Christian Fellowship

A Personal Guide to Fasting

Fasting is perhaps the most powerful of the spiritual disciplines. Throughout history, when God’s people humble themselves and fast with a proper Biblical motive of seeking God, God hears from heaven and heals our lives, churches, communities and the world. This awesome power can be released through you as you pray and fast by the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

Many Christians believe God would have us fast as part of a normal Christian lifestyle. We must prepare ourselves adequately so that a fast can honor God and fulfill its purpose. The following is a general overview of wise fasting to help equip you for effective fasting and prayer.

**Fasting is Biblical**

*“But the days will come when the Bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.”* (Jesus, Matt. 9:15)

The practice of regular fasting as a normal Christian behavior was taught by Jesus (Matt. 6:16-17), exercised by the early church (Acts 13:2), and has been a regular discipline of believers throughout church history. The practice of fasting in Scripture usually includes, but is not limited to, abstinence from food (Dan. 10:3), and may be engaged in for varying durations.

Abstaining from all food for extended periods of time is biblical, but rare in Scripture (Ex. 34:28; 1 Kings 19:5-8; Luke 4:2), and should not be undertaken without counsel and appropriate supervision. The same standard applies to an absolute fast (no food or water) of any duration (Est. 4:16).

**Cautions for Fasting**

Though spiritual leaders may invite others to join in corporate fasting with a specific goal in mind and for a specific time, fasting should never be compulsory. The level at which a person engages in fasting should be determined by several factors including age, health, and God’s leading.

* Those with a physical disability or illness, or those with any history of an eating disorder, should never fast except in consultation with, and under the supervision of, a qualified doctor.
* Pregnant or nursing mothers should not fast food or liquids as it could negatively affect the health and development of the baby and their own personal health.
* Minors are discouraged from fasting food and should never engage in fasting without express parental consent and oversight. Minors who desire to fast are encouraged to start with a media fast (see below).
* If older teenagers fast food under their parents’ supervision, we encourage them to use juice and protein drinks to sustain their health and metabolism.

**The Benefits of Fasting**

The spiritual benefits of fasting are undeniable. Any fast undertaken must be done with spiritual wholeheartedness and wisdom when dealing with our physical body; we must count the cost honestly and honor the temple of the Holy Spirit. Whether we are partaking or abstaining, everything should be done for the glory of God.

*“Fasting begets prophets and strengthens strong men. Fasting makes lawgivers wise; it is the soul's safeguard, the body’s trusted comrade, the armor of the champion, the training of the athlete.”*

—Basil, Bishop of Caesarea (AD 330–379)

*“Fasting . . . opens the way for the outpouring of the Spirit and the restoration of God’s house. Fasting in this age of the absent Bridegroom is in expectation of His return. Soon there will be the midnight cry, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ It will be too late then to fast and to pray. The time is now.”*

—*God's Chosen Fast*, Arthur Wallis

**Physically Preparing for a Fast That Lasts More Than Two Days**

* Eat smaller meals a few days prior to the fast.
* Prepare your body for the fast and prevent constipation during and after the fast by eating certain preventative foods at least two days beforehand (even longer before an extended fast), such as: fresh fruit and raw vegetables, fruit or vegetable juices, oatmeal, etc.
* Avoid high-fat and sugary foods before the fast.

**Types of Fasts**

Pray and ask God what He will give you faith and wisdom to determine the duration and type of the fast, then make a commitment.

* A water-only fast is common for short fasts. We do not encourage an extended water fast without medical supervision.
* A fruit or vegetable juice fast allows you to enter into extended fasting but still gives enough energy to function. Many people have done a 40-day juice fast. If you have sugar sensitivities or problems (e.g. diabetes), consult your doctor before attempting this (or any other) fast.
* A Daniel fast - abstaining from meat, sweets and alcohol - is good for those carrying a heavy workload.
* A total fast is without food or water is not wise beyond three days. Discuss your plans with your doctor, church leaders, and spouse or parents. We do not encourage this type of fast without specific confirmation from the Lord through your church leadership or parents.
* A partial fast, sometimes called a Jewish Fast, calls for abstaining from food for a specific time. This might be from sunup to sundown daily, or 6 am to 3 pm, fasting weekends, fasting lunches, or something suitable for you.
* A Media Fast calls for abstaining from social media and all forms of electronic entertainment (movies, TV, video games, etc.). This is a wonderful fast for everyone! This is also a good fast to combine with one of the food fasts. It’s helpful to refocus areas of life that might be out of balance. When breaking the fast, carefully bring that element back into your life in an orderly fashion.
* A Dummy Fast is a humorous name for fasting from something to which you turn to for comfort. In Commonwealth countries, a dummy is another word for a child’s pacifier. To what do you turn when you have stress—shopping, or perhaps a glass of wine? What habits have become perhaps too important to you? 1 Cor. 6:12 says, “Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything. A Dummy Fast will help you break unhealthy habits and dependencies.

**Helpful Physical Hints for Your Fast**

* Plan to readjust your schedule during your fast. You will likely have less energy, and you should plan to spend more time in prayer.
* Drink plenty of non-tap water. (Drinking at least half of your body weight in ounces of water per day is a good rule of thumb whether you are fasting or not.) Distilled water is most beneficial, but filtered and purified water also work well.
* It is wise to abstain from strong stimulants such as caffeinated and sugary drinks during a fast, including the artificial sweeteners found in diet drinks. Also, avoid soy protein drinks, which have been known to cause health problems during a fast.
* If you are on a juice fast, drink raw fruit juices such as apple, grape and pineapple, which are excellent sources of necessary natural sugar to stabilize blood sugar and keep energy levels up.
* Orange and grapefruit juice are also good, but these are not recommended for arthritis or allergy sufferers. Monitor juice acidity carefully as it can cause canker sores (mouth ulcers). Raw vegetable juices such as carrot, celery, beet, or green vegetable combinations are excellent as well. Fresh fruit and vegetable juices can be made in a juice extractor or purchased ready-made (be sure to buy juices without any added sugars). Some of the benefits of drinking raw juice versus bottled are that it does not stimulate digestion (hunger) and it maintains all of its enzymes and nutritional value.
* Expect some physical discomforts because of the detoxification process, especially on the second or third day. You may have fleeting hunger pains or dizziness. Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches, but it is a part of the detoxification process. Physical annoyances may also include weariness, tiredness, nausea, and sleepiness.

During a food fast, four areas of the body are going through a detoxification process. Take care to attend to each of these:

* The bowels/colon/large intestines — During a fast of three days or more, taking a herbal laxative (inquire at your local health store) or an enema before bedtime may help eliminate solid waste products; these can cause headaches and sluggishness if left in the body during a fast. This can be done early in the fast and then intermittently during the rest of the fast.
* The kidneys — Drinking fruit juices, vegetable juices, broth, or just plenty of water will remove many toxins via the kidneys.
* The lungs — If strength permits, walk half an hour during the day to help cleanse the lungs. Also, do some deep breathing throughout the day by inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth.
* The skin — Some of the body’s waste products are eliminated during a fast via the skin, so adequate bathing is essential. Use a natural bristle body brush or loofah sponge on your skin prior to bathing, to help cleanse the skin.

**Helpful Spiritual Hints for Your Fast**

* Fasting is not only abstention; it is an exchange where we abstain from certain things in order to “feast” on God’s Word and prayer, whereby the abundance of His grace is made more readily available to us.
* Take time to pray and read the Word. This may seem obvious, but busyness and distractions can keep you from time with God. Fasting without prayer is called a diet. We’re not about dieting, but about God.
* Spend time with God in confession and repentance of sin.
* Reading books with testimonies of victories gained through fasting will encourage you, too. Shaping History through Prayer and Fasting by Derek Prince, Fast Forward by Lou Engle, and God’s Chosen Fast by Arthur Wallis are just some of the books about fasting that are available.
* Fast and pray in order to humble yourself and purify your worship of God. In fasting we are not trying to get something from God, but seeking to realign our hearts’ affections with His. In fasting we can more readily say, “We love you, Lord, more than anything in the world.” Fasting enables us to cleanse the sanctuary of our hearts from every other rival.
* Don’t boast about your fast. Only let others know about your fast when necessary (Matt. 6:16–18). Don’t be discouraged if others criticize you for fasting.
* Do the fast with someone else. Two are better than one! We encourage parents and kids to consider fasting together. Several generations fasting together has a powerful impact.
* Have a clear target as your prayer focus. Write down your focus so you can run with it (Hab. 2:2).
* Expect to hear God’s voice in the Word, dreams, visions, and revelations. Daniel prepared himself to receive revelation through fasting (Dan. 10:1–2). There is a fasting reward (Matt. 6:18).
* Prepare for opposition. On the day of your fast you can bet that donuts will be at the office. Your spouse or mom will be inspired to cook your favorite meals. Press through. Many times you may feel more tension build at home. Satan tempted Jesus during His fast, and we must expect the same.
* Discouragement may come, but recognize the source of it and take your stand on the victory of Christ.
* If you fail, don’t give in to condemnation. The “to fast or not to fast” dilemma can be a major tool of the enemy. Even though you may fail several times, God always extends grace. Just hit the “delete” button and continue on your fast.
* Feel free to rest a lot and avoid strenuous exercise.
* Breakthroughs often come *after* a fast, not during it. Do not listen to the lie that nothing is happening. Every fast done in faith will be rewarded.

**How to Successfully Break Your Fast**

* Break your fast gradually by exercising extreme self-control.
* Take extra care in breaking a water fast. Begin with drinking fruit or vegetable juices and gradually ease into eating fruit and steamed vegetables.
* Break your fast on a meal that is light and easy to digest (i.e., some grapes, a shredded apple, watermelon, or steamed vegetables).
* A fast of three days or more should never be broken by eating a normal meal (including animal proteins, bread, sugar, dairy, and processed foods) because these heavy foods put a severe strain on the digestive organs which have been resting throughout the fast. Eating too heavily after a fast can produce serious discomfort (stomach cramps, nausea, and weakness) and sickness.
* After breaking an extended fast, continue drinking fruit or vegetable juices because the stomach is continuing to detoxify.
* During any fast exceeding two days, your stomach will shrink. Do not over-expand it again by overeating. If you have been prone to eat too heavily, guard against going back to this habit. If you train yourself to eat more lightly, your stomach will adjust itself accordingly. It is important after a fast to begin to discern between real hunger and just cravings; do not feed your cravings.
* While continuing to drink fruit or vegetable juices, add the following during day 1-3 after the fast (increase amount of days for extended fast). Eat fruit and raw/steamed vegetables only. Example meals for the first few days are a pound of fruit, a baked or boiled potato without butter, steamed vegetables, or a vegetable-only salad without oil-based dressing.
* When breaking a fast of ten days or more, the break-in period should be extended one day for every four days of fasting.
* Avoid bananas for the first few days; they have no juice in them and can cause constipation.
* Please don’t ignore these important instructions!!!

**Scripture References**

* [Matthew 6:16-18](http://21days.churchofthehighlands.com/fasting/)
* [Matthew 9:14-15](http://21days.churchofthehighlands.com/fasting/)
* [Luke 2:37](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke2:37;&version=9;" \t "_blank)
* [Acts 13:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts13:2;&version=9;" \t "_blank)
* [1Samuel 1:6-8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Samuel1:6-8;&version=9;" \t "_blank), [17-18](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Samuel1:17-18;&version=9;" \t "_blank),
* [Nehemiah 1:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah1:4;&version=9;" \t "_blank)
* Daniel 9:3
* [Joel 2:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joel2:12;&version=9;" \t "_blank)

**Corporate Fasting:**

* [1 Samuel 7:5-6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Samuel7:5-6;&version=9;" \t "_blank)
* [Ezra 8:21-23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra8:21-23;&version=9;" \t "_blank)
* [Nehemiah 9:1-3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah9:1-3;&version=9;" \t "_blank)
* [Joel 2:15-16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joel2:15-16;&version=9;" \t "_blank)
* [Jonah 3:5-10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jonah3:5-10;&version=9;" \t "_blank)

**Please Note: this document is for informational purposes only.**

This information reflects only the limited opinions and experience of Heritage leaders. It is not intended to be a substitute for advice provided by your doctor or other healthcare professionals. You should not use this information for diagnosing or treating a health problem. These tips are no guarantee that you will fast without experiencing difficulties. You need to do your own research, talk with health experts and experienced fasters, and continually ask the Lord for increased discernment and wisdom concerning fasting and healthy living.

**Additional Resources on Fasting and Healthy Living**

* *Fast Forward*, Lou Engle
* *Shaping History through Prayer and Fasting*, Derek Prince
* *God’s Chosen Fast*, Arthur Wallis
* *Hunger for God*, John Piper
* <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting.html>
* [www.freedomyou.com](http://www.freedomyou.com)

Special thanks to the International House of Prayer for sharing their information with Heritage.

Rev. 12.10.19