

Fasting 101

What is fasting?

Fasting is voluntarily giving up foods, beverages and activities, in order to dedicate the time normally spent doing those things, strictly to prayer, reading the Bible and spending time with God. Fasting a form of humbling ourselves and coming in the place of dependance and hunger for God

Fasting combined with prayer and reading God's word allows us to seek after Him in a deeper way. Fasting is not starving yourself; therefore, while fasting you must be seeking Him through prayer and the reading of His word. As you begin to fast, you become open to His voice; you 'clear the airwaves' and are more attentive to what He has to say to you as He imparts His heart on to you.

Why fast?

The birth place of fasting is a homesickness for God. In other words, the primary purpose for fasting, is a hunger for God. Because we desire His presence, we are willing to go without food, drinks, activities in order to stretch and grow in our capacity for Him.

We also see in the Bible with examples through Daniel, that fasting helps to discern the will of God for our lives. Fasting helps us to hear Gods direction more clearly and to see His Kingdom come in and through us.

Finally, in Matthew 6 we see how Jesus gave us a specific direction on how to live our lives as a child of God. Three duties that He gave us were: **Giving, Praying and Fasting**. Jesus said when you give, when you pray and when you fast. When implies that it will happen. Jesus was not just talking to the disciples, 'the holy spiritual people' but he was talking to the multitudes. He was saying that fasting is a spiritual discipline that ALL should endeavour to do. Fasting is not just for the pastors or leaders; it's for every Christian. Jesus was making it clear that fasting was a normal part of Christina life just as giving and praying is.

When all three disciplines are at work together, you create an atmosphere for the complete power of God to be released in your life. It's like the lesson Jesus taught in Mark 4. When you pray you release thirty-fold return, praying and giving releases sixty-fold return blessing. But when you pray, give and fast, you will see a hundred-fold return.

When should I fast?

There is no specific set time of when you should fast; therefore, it is up to you when you fast.

Corporately, it's a good time to fast when your church calls a fast. There is power in unity and coming together for a common goal in seeking God.

Personally, you can fast at any time. Some people fast once a week, some fast once a month, some fast at the beginning of the year.

It is good to remember that fasting is a way to regain your edge when maybe you have felt spiritually dull. Maybe you feel dull well then start a fast now! Fasting allows us to go deeper with Him. It gives us the opportunity to break away from routine and seek after and regain our spiritual edge.

You may choose to do a fast when you feel you need a spiritual breakthrough. In Matthew 17 we see Jesus cast out an evil spirit and told the disciples that this kind (referring to the evil spirit) only comes out by prayer and fasting. Maybe you feel chained to an addiction, you feel you are being strung along and there is nothing you can do. Well start a fast. Cry out to God that He will purge you clean as you seek Him.

Maybe there is a decision in the New Year you are going to be faced with or a difficult situation with your family, well you can declare a fast. As said, fasting with prayer allows us to hear God's voice. He will be able to guide you and speak to you to give you the wisdom and discernment to make the right decisions in life.

How long should I fast?

The length and timing of your fast is a personal decision.

Moses, Elijah and Jesus all fasted for 40 days—which I don't recommend unless you are led by God. Daniel fasted for 21 days. Esther and Paul fasted for 3 days. I don't think there is a right or wrong answer, just be mentally and physically prepared to sacrifice something in order to get what you need from God.

If you're church is fasting for a set time, why not consider joining them for that allotted time, but again, the point is to replace pleasures with time with God. If you mess up one day, don't beat yourself up. Start fresh the very next day. And if you start off on a multi-day fast and need to take a break to celebrate a birthday or some other special occasion, take a day off and start fresh the next day. No pressure.

How do I fast?

In most references, you see the phrase "fasting AND prayer," because merely giving up food is called anorexia or dieting. So while you are giving up those things you would normally be enjoying, you should be spending more time in prayer. Your willingness to give up those things indicates to God that you are totally and completely dependent on Him and you're willing to sacrifice those things that you would normally use to sustain yourself, in exchange for what you need from Him.

While you fast and pray for God's purpose and plan for your life, pray about every major and minor decisions you may face; and as God imparts and shows you His will for your life ask for His guidance. In other words, use fasting as a way to conquer the physical and open the door to the supernatural in your life. When you discipline your body, you feed your spirit and grow closer to the Lord.

Before beginning a fast, it is good to write down a plan and make a verbal commitment to the Lord. In Habakkuk 2 God speaks to Habakkuk and tells him to write the vision down on tablets... even though it may tarry it will surely come to pass. Determine and make up your mind no matter what, you will stay committed to what you set yourself to do. When you approach it with determination, you'll be less likely to waiver in weak moments.

As said before, fasting on its own is just starving yourself. However, fasting combined with prayer and reading His word allows us to go deeper with Him. You may want to take time out of your day to day routine and take a break from distractions such facebook, twitter.

It is helpful to have a fasting journal and write down ideas and thoughts the Lord is speaking to you about. As you fast and seek His face you draw nearer to Him; you become very attentive to what He has to say. While you are attentive to Him, write down ideas and visions you feel God is speaking to you about so when you are done your fast you can meditate on what God has spoken to you about.

Fasting Myths

Fasting forces God to answer my prayers.

False. We cannot twist God into doing anything. He is sovereign over all. Fasting positions to hear His voice, but it doesn't twist His hand.

Fasting makes me more spiritual.

False. Fasting does not make us better Christians or more spiritual because we fast. Fasting should bring us into a great posture of humility not pride.

Fasting is only for leaders or 'spiritual people'.

False. Fasting is for everyone disciple of Jesus.

Fasting is only about abstaining from food.

False. Remember fasting is a heart posture of humility, hunger and dependency on God. If all we do is abstain from food, we are just starving ourselves.

Accidental eating ends your fast.

False. Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV) implores God to examine the heart, reveal anxieties, and guide us on the path of eternity. Fasting is about your heart's posture and desire to seek God, even if accidents occur. Continue your fast with a focus on God.

There's no point in fasting.

False. There are a many reasons for fasting (growing closer to God, repentance, seeking direction, etc). Not least of all, there is an open rewards for those who fast in the secret Matthew 6

Types of fasts

Full Fast:

This is when you decide to abstain from any and all kinds of food and only drink liquids. You establish the number of days for your fast during your prayer time.

Daniel Fast:

The Daniel Fast is a fast from meats, sweets, breads and any drinks except for water for a specific time (Daniel 10:2-3). In other words you are basically fasting all but vegetables, fruits and water.

3-Day Fast:

This fast can be a full fast, a Daniel fast or give up one item of food for 3 days.

Partial Fast:

There are many options for partial fasts such as:

- Giving up one item of food or drink such as caffeine, coffee, soft drinks or sweets.
- Giving up one meal a day for a specific amount of time, one meal a week, etc.

- Doing a full or modified Daniel fast for a specific number of days.
- Choosing to fast during set times such as 10am-10pm

There are countless of ways to fast and countless of pleasures to give up. The whole point is to sacrifice the things you love in order to get closer to God. Doing the full fast instead of a partial fast does not make you more 'holy'. God is looking at the heart. 2 Samuel 24:24 shows us that David would not offer a burnt sacrifice that cost him nothing. If your fast means nothing to you, then it means nothing to God. In other words if you are a vegetarian but decide to fast meat then it is costs nothing to you so it means nothing to God.

Because God judges our hearts, He knows whether or not we are really making a sacrifice. For instance, if you are a vegetarian or someone who doesn't eat a lot of meat, abstaining from meats would probably do you no good. There isn't much of a sacrifice there. But, if you're a meat-aholic, and you decide to give up meats, that would be considered a great sacrifice.

Health concerns

Benefits surrounding fasting

There is a mis-conception that fasting is unhealthy for the human body when in fact, fasting actually helps to cleanse the body. The human body generally has enough fat to live off of for weeks, providing they are well hydrated.

When the body has no new sources of fuel coming in, it must use excess sugar and carbohydrates stored as fat to produce the energy it needs. Digesting food takes a lot of the body's energy. Fasting works by redirecting energy away from the digestive process to the immune system. It benefits the body in much the same way as do rest and sleep. It can actually aid individuals in recovering faster from illness or injury. Healing occurs, as the body is able to use more energy to repair damaged bone, tissue or organs.

Fasting contributes to a longer life by cleaning the body of harmful toxins; therefore, chemicals absorbed into the body from the environment are stored in the body's fat. When a person fasts, the body must rely on these reserves, as an energy source. As the body breaks down fat, toxins are released and eliminated through the function of organs like the liver, kidneys, colon, lungs, and skin.

Overall fasting improves immune system function, increases energy, lowers systolic blood pressure, body temperature, and cholesterol, in addition to lowering glucose levels in the blood.

Tips

1. Drink a lot of liquid, especially water! A common mistake when fasting' is to not drink, but it is essential that you are drinking. As you fast your body uses energy and body fat meaning you have less energy. This means you must drink to keep up your energy.
2. Try to keep your exercising to a minimal. As said before, you will have less energy than normal meaning if you are exercising you are using the little energy that you have. You will find you are tired easily and may become dizzy. If your job requires a

lot of manual labor than maybe consider a Daniel fast or a partial fast so you are maintaining some sort of calories within your body.

3. Try and rest your body without over exerting yourself. Sleep will help you as it will help to give you energy. Remember that you are in taking less energy than normal, so be wise during your times of fasting.
4. Overall just remember that the side effects of fasting can be fatigue, dizziness, weakness and weight loss. These are all normal when fasting but as said before make sure you are drinking a lot of water and liquids.

***If you have any health issues, it is wise to consult your doctor before beginning any fast.**