



ROARING TWENTIES

— FAST —

WHAT / WHY / HOW

FASTING FOCUS

(by Matthew Maher)

WHAT IS A FAST?

A “fasting or fast” is a voluntary abstaining from food for a certain period of time and for very specific spiritual reasons.

Practically, fasting **physically flushes us out** so that God can **spiritually fill us up**. Keep in mind, it’s not just about **physically dieting from** food, but more so, it’s about **spiritually dialing in** to God. It is a determinate amount of time to intentionally allow spiritual hunger to trump physical hunger (Matthew 5:6). And yes, to the stomach, fasting may be famishing, but to the soul, fasting is feasting.

During your time of fasting, seeking God through prayer and His Word (spiritual intake) should replace eating/drinking (physical intake). In doing so, we present our bodies as living sacrifices to God (Romans 12:2) and proclaim worship as a priority.

WHY SHOULD I FAST?

1.) ***Fasting may be done for direction.*** In Acts, we see the church seeking God for His will in ministry (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23). Likewise, in Nehemiah, we see one man personally inquiring of the Lord through prayer and fasting about what direction he should take in light of the condition of his country (Nehemiah 1:4).

2.) ***Fasting may be done for intervention.*** David fasted when his son was sick (II Samuel 12:16-23). Esther called for a fast before she told King Ahasuerus about a plot to destroy the Jews which could have resulted in her own death (Esther 4:16). Likewise, Daniel consecrated himself through prayer and fasting on behalf of the sinful state of his people (Daniel 9:3-19).

3.) ***Fasting may be done for submission.*** In light of God's pronouncement of judgment upon the people of Nineveh, through the prophet Jonah, the king of Nineveh commanded all the Ninevites to fast in repentance for their sin (Jonah 3:5-9). In other words, they humbled themselves. "Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it" (Jonah 3:10).

4.) Fasting may be done for revelation. Moses fasted before he received God's law on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 34:28). Daniel fasted before he received a heavenly vision (Daniel 10:2-3). Even Jesus fasted before He began His public ministry (Matthew 4:2; Luke 4:1-2). At the end of His fast, the devil came tempting, yet Jesus overcame temptation by utilizing Scripture, such as, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

5.) Fasting may be done for freedom from oppression or addiction. Isaiah prophesied that God's heart was for His people to fast for the poor and oppressed (Isaiah 58:3-14).

WHAT A FAST IS NOT!

- *Fasting is not to a way to punish your body. The Word of God instructs us to bring our body into subjection, not punishment (**I Corinthians 9:27**), so the Gospel can be advanced in us and through us.*
- *Fasting is not a way to twist God's arm so He will bless us. However, fasting is a way to touch God's heart because the heart of a fast is to bless God. And according to **II Chronicles 7:14**, when God's people begin praying and fasting, we see God responding.*
- *Fasting is not a guilt-ridden practice. God does not work through condemnation (**Romans 8:1-2**).*
- *Fasting is not a diet—as mentioned earlier, it does require physically dieting from the world, but the main focus is about spiritually dialing into the Lord.*
- *Fasting is not for public praise, and that's why God promises a reward when our motives are pure (**Matthew 6:16-18**).*

HOW SHOULD I FAST? (STRENGTH & LENGTH)

- *There is no “one-size-fits-all” fast. Although we have some biblical gauges and guides on how/why to fast, each person should make their fast personal to their faith-walk.*

The strength of every fast comes when the “abstaining” means something to you or else it won’t mean anything to God. In other words, if I choose to “abstain from junk food,” (which I typically don’t indulge in anyway), then I am not really fasting, rather I am just fronting. Again, whatever you decide to abstain from, make sure it’s something that will cause hunger pangs. Why? Because “pangs” are triggers to pray!

- ***As far as the length of a fast goes***, the lengths of fasts recorded in the Old Testament varied. And there is no specific time frame given in the New Testament except for the forty days Jesus fasted. Like Jesus in the wilderness, Moses fasted for forty days (***Exodus 34:28***). Daniel fasted for twenty-one days (***Daniel 10:2-3***). David fasted seven days after Saul’s death (***I Samuel 31:13***); and when his child was sick, he fasted until the child died (***II Samuel 12:16-23***). We also see that Esther fasted for three days before her audience with King Ahasuerus (***Esther 4:16***). Most fasts lasted only one day (from sunrise to sunset) (***II Samuel 1:12***).

NOTE: Most fasts involved an abstaining from food. While Esther’s fast included abstaining from water as well as food (***Esther 4:16***), Daniel fasted only from the king’s delicacies, good food and wine (***Daniel 10:23***).

The strength and length of every fast is a matter of the heart.

Remember, “how” you fast is not nearly as important as to “why” you fast. The “why” of your fast is for spiritual revival and direction, for healing in your soul and society, and for divine grace in the midst of difficulty.

Ask the Holy Spirit to focus you into the “why and how.”

This fasting focus will provide clarity and accountability.

FIVE FAST TIPS!

Replace scrolling through social media with scrolling through Scripture.

Use “pangs” as reminders to pray.

Slipping up does not warrant giving up—stay the course!

Don’t flaunt your fast (Matthew 6:16-18).

Partner with someone because “*two are better than one*” (Ecclesiastes 4:9).