



JANUARY 3-23, 2021

**Prayer Services
During the Fast:
Every Saturday in January
from 9:00-10:00am**

FASTING 101: WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline. Simply put, it means not eating. Instead of using mealtime for food, you use it to spend time with God. Some fasts last for one meal, one day, multiple days, or even weeks. Fasting may begin at sunrise and end at sunset or extend 24 hours per day. There are many ways and reasons to fast, but the basic idea is to set aside the time you would usually spend eating and focus that time on God instead, praying, reading the Bible, and worshipping.

When you're fasting, you're likely to feel hunger pangs. Allow those to serve as reminders that you are hungry to know Jesus and that you rely on him for every need. When you pray, ask the Holy Spirit to deepen your understanding and experience of Jesus in everyday life. You might pray something like, *"Father, you are my daily bread. You are my comforter, my redeemer, my provider. My life is hidden in Christ. What more do I need?"*

WHAT ABOUT MY "TALL EXTRA-HOT HALF-CAF SUGAR-FREE HAZELNUT LATTE?"

A normal biblical fast is to avoid food, but not water. However, you have a great deal of freedom as you fast. Some people avoid everything but water. Others focus solely on not eating and instead drink whatever they want.

Whatever your plan, make sure to consult with your doctor to ensure you are medically fit enough for a fast, and get tips from your doctor on how to fast safely. There are a number of reasons a traditional fast may not be a viable option for you. These reasons range from stage of life to pregnancy to medical conditions to eating disorders and everything in between. Most people are capable of fasting without compromising their health, but if that's not the case for you, don't be discouraged! You can fast in other ways. One option is to eat less than normal rather than not at all. You could fast from coffee or give up the foods you enjoy most, eating only simple, plain foods. This type of fasting is commonly called a "Daniel Fast," referring to the story of Daniel in the Old Testament when he and his friends abstained from eating meat and consumed only vegetables and water (see Daniel 1:12).

While the majority of people are able to fast from food, if you are unable to fast from food, you could consider abstaining from certain activities instead. Though this is technically not a biblical fast, people have abstained from television, social media, music, golf—all sorts of things. The idea is to use the time you would normally spend on the activities you love to focus on the Lord instead, praying, reading the Bible, and worshipping God.

WHY DO WE FAST?

The purpose of fasting is ultimately God himself. There are many reasons to undertake a fast, but the bottom line for them all is to align your heart directly with Him. Think of that as the big picture. The small picture, the immediate purpose for a fast, can vary. So the first step for any kind of fast is to declare our immediate purpose. Fasting can't be done casually, because there isn't any spiritual benefit in simply not eating. Going through the motions just makes us hungry; but genuine, purposeful fasting is a powerful discipline for the disciple of Jesus and can play a part in literally transforming your life.

To help us define a godly purpose for fasting, here are 10 reasons:

1. To strengthen prayer
2. To seek God's guidance
3. To express grief
4. To seek deliverance or protection
5. To express repentance and return to God
6. To humble oneself before God
7. To express concern for the work of God
8. To minister to the needs of others

9. To overcome temptation and dedicate yourself to God
10. To express love and worship to God

Throughout the Bible, we see people fast for a variety of reasons:

1. To be like Jesus (Matt. 4:1–17; Luke 4:1–13)
2. To obtain spiritual purity (Isaiah 58:5–7)
3. To repent from sins (See Jonah 3:8; Nehemiah 1:4, 9:1–3; 1 Samuel 14:24)
4. To influence God (2 Sam. 12:16–23)
5. To mourn for the dead (1 Sam. 31:13; 2 Sam. 1:12)
6. To request God's help in times of crisis and calamity (Ezra 8:21–23; Neh. 1:4–11)
7. To strengthen prayer (Matt. 17:21; Mark 9:17–29; Acts 10:30; 1 Cor. 7:5)

None of these purposes amounts to twisting God's arm to do what we want.

Who can do that? God is not a genie who will grant us whatever we wish. He is a good Father who is working out His sovereign will. Our reasons for fasting are for our own humility. By denying ourselves for a time, we provoke ourselves to rely more on God Almighty. It's not about changing God; it's about changing us. In fasting:

1. We pray more intently
2. We become more receptive to God's guidance
3. We lean more on Scripture to hear His voice
4. We demonstrate our grief and honest repentance
5. We physically declare that we need God to survive
6. We learn to sense spiritual reality more than the physical world
7. We prepare to love others better than ourselves

Lastly, fasting helps us to remember the true source of our utmost joy.

Most people would agree that food is a good thing. If you're unable to fast but chose to abstain from something else, such as a hobby or technology or entertainment, those can also be good things. All good things come from God, but the human heart is inclined to worship God's gifts rather than God Himself. Fasting helps our hearts to look past the good gift to the good God, who blesses us in spite of ourselves.

I DON'T REALLY FEEL LIKE IT

Even if fasting makes sense, you may not feel like you need it right now. But think of fasting as similar to praise and worship. Oftentimes joy overflows in songs of praise, but more often singing leads us into joy. We sing first, and that brings us to a place of thankfulness and joy. Likewise, when our souls overflow with godly emotions and repentance, we may be led to fasting, but far more often we need to choose to fast in order to be humbled and to fight our pride by rejecting the ways we so often cope with our feelings. It's the proactive approach.

ONE FAST, MANY FASTERS

You may fast personally at times, but our 21-days of prayer and fasting is something we will do together as a church family. Biblically, there are instances of corporate fasting where entire nations fasted together (Esther 4; Ezra 8). If it will help you overcome any fear you might have of fasting, ask another Believer to join you. Feel free to fast together and pray for one another. Our church-wide fast will lend itself to this opportunity, because there's a good chance the people around you will be fasting at the same time.

Find out what fasting should look like for you. Begin to pray now about what this 21-Day fast at quest will look like for you. Even if you feel intimidated to try, let us all agree together as a church to fast in some fashion. Then join us in our church-wide fast to dedicate this time to the Lord as we ask Him in prayer for big things at questCHURCH in the coming year!

**If you still have questions, please don't hesitate to contact
one of our pastors or a leader at quest.
We're here to help and support.**