

Fasting

Biblical fasting always has to do with eliminating distractions for a spiritual purpose. The goal of fasting is to draw nearer to God, increase spiritual awareness, and become stronger in your faith. Also, to demonstrate that we are serious about our relationship with Him. The key is to spend time in prayer and reading God's Word. Remember, your personal fast should present a level of challenge, but it is very important to know your body, your options and, most importantly, to seek God in prayer and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

Type of Fasts - Common options include:

- **Selective Fast**
This type of fast involves removing certain elements from your diet. One example of a selective fast is the Daniel Fast, which you remove meat, sweets, and breads from your diet and consume water and juice for fluids and fruits and vegetables for food.
- **Partial Fast**
This type of fast is sometimes called the "Jewish Fast" and involves abstaining from eating any type of food in the morning and afternoon. This can either correlate to specific times of day such as 6:00am to 3:00pm or from sunup to sundown.
- **Complete Fast**
In this type of fast, you drink only liquids, typically water with light juices as an option. Recommended for only a limited number of days.
- **Non-food Fast**
This is an option for those who have health issues that prevent you from fasting food, or if you wish to refocus certain areas of your life that are out of balance. For example, you might choose to stop using social media or watching television for the duration of the fast and then carefully bring that element back into your life in healthy doses at the conclusion of the fast.

The internet offers helpful fasting guidelines, food list and meal planning suggestions for the Daniel Fast.

Be sure to consult your health care professional before fasting or making any major dietary change.

How to Begin

- **Start with a Goal(s)**
Before you begin, decide on the purpose(s) of your fast. Start with a clear goal and be specific. For example, what is your greatest need at this time in your life? Do you need direction, healing, restoration of marriage, or have financial or family issues? Do you desire to become more empowered by the Holy Spirit? Invest some quality time in prayer as you decide.
- **Prepare Spiritually**
Confess your sins to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of weakness. Forgive all who have offended you and ask forgiveness from those you may have offended. Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ and reject the worldly desires that try to hinder you.
- **Decide What to Fast**
The type of fast you go on is up to you. By using wisdom and prayer for guidance, choose the type of fast and the duration.
- **What to Expect**
Fasting teaches us to deny our "selves" and instead put our spirit in control over our flesh.

When you fast, your body detoxifies, and this can cause mild discomfort such as headaches and irritability during withdrawal from caffeine and sugars. Naturally, you will have hunger pains. Let these be a reminder to pray and read God's Word. Be sure to drink plenty of water every day and limit your activity and exercise moderately. Take time to rest.

Don't be surprised when Satan attacks you during the fast and tries to destroy areas of your life. This is a Spiritual battle. But God will give you a holy determination for breakthroughs.

- **During the Fast**

Pray and read God's Word every day. Take each day to spend time with the Lord in praying, reading the Bible and listening.

Write down what you are praying for, what God is speaking to you and answered prayers throughout the fast.

Remove yourself from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mind set on seeking God's face.

Rely on the Holy Spirit to give you strength when you feel tempted or weak. If you fall short of your goal, don't give up. Realign yourself and your expectations and continue your fasting plan as you grow nearer to Jesus.

How to End

Don't overeat when the time comes to end your fast. Begin eating solid food gradually; eating small portions will give our body a chance to get use to the change.

Scripture References

Matthew 6:16-18, "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 9:14-15 Luke 4:-1-14 Luke 18:9-14 Acts 27:33-37
Nehemiah 9:1-3 Daniel 1:12 Daniel 10:2-3

Children's Participation

You are about to embark on an exciting spiritual journey and we encourage families to share and participate together. It is important to model the principle of staying in God's Word, prayer and fasting.

We do not recommend that children skip meals or drastically reduce their food intake, but modification might be an easy place to start. For example, fast from specific items such as sweets, candy, red meats or fried foods.

Another great way to fast is by reducing some of the time an energy spent watching TV, playing video games and using the computer (other than for school).

We suggest each child has a prayer journal and designate a cozy spot to do their devotions each day.

The main thing is for families to recognize the value behind setting aside special times and disconnect from things and treats they enjoy and learn how to connect with God in a closer way.