

FASTING

Biblical definition - Fasting is the laying aside of food for a period of time when the believer is seeking to know God in a deeper experience. It is to be done as an act before God in the privacy of one's own pursuit of God ([Exodus 34:28](#); [1 Samuel 7:6](#); [1 Kings 19:8](#); [Matthew 6:17](#)).

Fasting is to be done with the object of seeking to know God in a deeper experience ([Isaiah 58:1-6](#); [Zechariah 7:5](#)). Fasting relates to a time of confession ([Psalm 69:10](#)). Fasting can be a time of seeking a deeper prayer experience and drawing near to God in prevailing prayer ([Ezra 8:23](#); [Joel 2:12](#)). The early church often fasted in seeking God's will for leadership in the local church ([Acts 13:2](#)). When the early church wanted to know the mind of God, there was a time of prayer and fasting.

Health Benefits of Fasting

- Spiritual awareness
- Increases energy and strength
- Detoxifies cells and tissues
- Assists in weight loss
- Improves mental clarity
- Restores alkaline balance
- Strengthens the immune system
- Helps prevent disease
- Tightens skin
- Smooths wrinkles
- Lowers blood pressure
- Lowers cholesterol
- Lessens aches and pains
- Revitalizes organ systems
- Rests the gastrointestinal system
- Balances the nervous system
- Increases the ease of movement
- Helps the lungs breathe more deeply
- Reduces IGF-1 (promotes cancer)

Types of Fasting

- **Biblical –**

- **Regular Fast** -Traditionally, a regular fast means refraining from eating all food. Most people still drink water or juice during a regular fast. When Jesus fasted in the desert, the Bible says, "After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry." This verse does not mention Jesus being thirsty.
- **Partial Fast** -This type of fast generally refers to omitting a specific meal from your diet or refraining from certain types of foods. Daniel 10:2-3 says, "At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over." In Daniel 1:12, they restricted their diet to vegetables and water: "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink."
- **Liquid Fast** – Involves eliminating food for a period of time and consuming only water, fruit juices and vegetable juices. A great option when fasting for more than 2-3 days.
- **Full Fast** -These fasts are complete - no food and no drink. Acts 9:9 describes when Paul went on a full fast for three days following his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus: "For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything." Esther also called for this type of fast in Esther 4:15-16: "Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 'Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.'" It is recommended that this type of fast be done with extreme caution and not for extended periods of time.

- **Daniel –**

- A partial fast that requires eliminating commonly enjoyed foods for 21 days as an act of worship and of consecrating oneself to God based on the fasting experiences of the prophet Daniel. We should follow his example not so much because his diet was worth emulating as his heart with worth emulating. Daniel's passion for God caused him to long for the spiritual food more than physical food, which should be the ultimate desire of anyone choosing to participate in a fast.
 - Foods that are allowed are fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes (beans), nuts, seeds and oils.

- Restricted foods include dairy, meat, sugar, all forms of sweeteners, yeast, refined and processed foods, deep-fried foods, and solid fats.
- This is a great entry level fast.
- **Steps to complete the Daniel Fast –**
- **Step 1: Be Specific**

Daniel was not vague in his objection to the Babylonian diet. He defined the problem immediately. The king's food was against dietary laws. Daniel and his friends had vowed against wine.

The king's food had been offered up to idols/demons.
- **Step 2: Fast as a Spiritual Commitment**

The Daniel Fast involves a spiritual commitment to God. "Daniel proposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8).
- **Step 3: Reflect Inner Desire by Outer Discipline**

Many people have an inner desire for better health, but they can't discipline themselves to avoid junk food, and other foods that are not good for their health. The physical health you seek from God may be more than an answer to prayer. Your physical health can be linked to any of the following factors:

 - Your food choices.
 - The level of your spiritual commitment as reflected in constant prayer during the fast.
 - Your time commitment. If you determine to fast for a certain time, keep it. For example, if you determine to fast 10 days, don't stop on Day 9.
 - Your testimony commitment. Your fast is a statement of faith to God that you want Him to heal your body, and faith is foundational to the Daniel Fast.
- **Step 4: Pray to Perceive Sin's Role in Poor Health**

Notice James 5:13-16:

 - Sin is something related to the cause of sickness.
 - Lack of health/healing may be the result of spiritual rebellion.
 - Lack of health/healing may be due to sin of wrong intake, i.e. drugs, pornography.
 - Repentance is linked to health according to James.
 - Elders have a role in healing both spiritual and physical health.
 - Sick people must desire to be well.
 - The anointing oil could mean Medicine for healing, Symbolic of the Holy Spirit, or it could be baptism.
 - Prayer alone may not gain healing, faith is the major factor.
 - In Greek there are several words for "sick". James uses "Kanino", which not only includes disease, but also means weak or weary.

- Attitude is important. James said, “are there any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.”
 - **Step 5: Fast as a Statement of Faith to Others**
Daniel was making a statement of faith when he asked for only vegetables to eat and water to drink, then dared the overseer to compare the appearance of the four sons of Israel with the young men who ate the king’s food.
 - **Step 6: Learn the Effects of the Food You Eat**
 - Why are some foods good for us, and other foods not? What does certain food do to your body?
 - If we really knew, there would likely be some things we would never eat again.
 - **Step 7: Yield All Results to God**
Daniel said, “as you see fit, deal with your servants” (Dan. 1:13).
 - **FOOD GUIDELINES FOR A DANIEL FAST**
Daniel 1:12
“Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.”**Daniel 10:3 KJV**
“I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.”
 - When going on a Daniel fast, or any type of fast, if you have questions outside of what Scripture says, prayerfully seek the Lord and be led by the Spirit for the specifics for your personal fast.
- **Two-meal-a-day** – Eat only two meals a day: a big late-morning brunch and a second meal around 5PM.
 - **One-meal-a-day** – Eat one meal around 3PM; water juices, teas and some fresh fruit or vegetable snacks can be eaten at other times.
 - Protein and vegetable meal – fish and salad or steamed vegetables
 - Starch and vegetable meal – brown rice and mixed steamed greens, carrots, celery and zucchini
 - **One-day** – Food is abstained from for 36 hours, from 8PM one night until 8AM two days later.
 - **Intermittent** –
 - **Twice-a-week method 5:2**
 - This approach to fasting focuses on capping your calories at 500 for two days each week. During the other five days of the week, you maintain a healthy and normal diet.

- On fasting days, this approach usually includes a 200-calorie meal and a 300-calorie meal. It's important to focus on high-fiber and high-protein foods to help fill you up, but to also keep calories low.
- You can choose any two days as long as there is a non-fasting day between them. Be sure to eat your normal amount of calories on non-fasting days.
- **Alternate day**
 - This variation involves “modified” fasting every other day. For example, limit your calories on fasting days to 500 (or about 25% of your normal intake). On non-fasting days, resume your regular, healthy diet. (There are also strict variations to this approach that include consuming 0 calories on alternate days instead of 500.)
- **Time-restricted eating**
 - For this option, you have set fasting and eating windows. For example, you fast for 16 hours of the day and are able to eat during eight hours of the day.
 - Since most people already fast while they sleep, this method is popular. It's convenient as you extend the overnight fast by skipping breakfast and not eating until lunch.
 - **16/8 method:** Only eating between 11AM and 7PM or Noon and 8PM
 - **14/10 method:** Only eating between 10AM and 8PM
 - This method can be repeated as often as you'd like or even done once or twice a week – whatever your personal preference is.
 - Finding the right eating and fasting windows for this method might take a few days to figure out, especially if you're very active or if you wake up hungry for breakfast.
- **24-hour fast (eat: stop: eat method)**
 - This method involves fasting completely for a full 24 hours. Often times, it's only done once or twice each week. Most people fast from breakfast to breakfast or lunch to lunch.
 - Side effects can be extreme, such as fatigue, headaches, irritability, hunger and low energy.
 - Return to a normal, healthy diet on your non-fasting days.
- **Fast-mimicking days** – Five consecutive days each month whereby you eliminate animal protein and limit calories to 900 each day to mimic the benefits of a whole month of full-time calorie restriction.

- **Simple** – Remove one item you know is NOT doing your body any favors. Maybe consider removing soda pop, alcohol, gluten, dairy, etc. for one week to see how you feel. If you feel better without it, maybe consider removing for a lifetime or saving for special occasions.

What Fasting is and what it is NOT

- Fasting is the example set by Jesus – Matthew 4:1-11
- Fasting is an intense battle – Romans 8:37
- Fasting gives us victory over the enemy – Ephesians 6:17 and 2 Corinthians 10:4
- Fasting empowers us for ministry – Acts 13:2
- Fasting acknowledges our complete dependence on God – Ecclesiastes 3:11
- Fasting is about food – Abstaining from foods or groups of foods results in a deep spiritual awareness that doesn't come from fasting from shopping or your phone.
 - Fasting is NOT about food – As difficult as it may be, resist the temptation to get so caught up in what you're going to eat that you lose sight of the many benefits of fasting: physical and spiritual cleansing, heightened spiritual sensitivity, joy in serving others, and fellowship with the Lord.
 - Fasting is about you – Whatever you need to receive from the Lord during your fast – whether it's encouragement, discernment, healing, hope, strength or wisdom – know that the Lord desires to give it to you – Matthew 7:11
 - Fasting is NOT about you – Your fast is not all about you or what you want. It's about God and what He wants – Zechariah 7:5.
 - Fasting is life changing – Fasting is an act of humility that is rewarded by the Lord – James 4:8 and 4:10
- Focus your energy on the following five things and you will have done your part to experience a successful fast. The rest will be up to God:
 - Pray often
 - Read the Word daily
 - Believe God's promises
 - Restrict your food intake
 - Praise and thank the Lord!

Preparing for a Fast

- Identify your primary motivation for fasting.
- Decide on a Bible reading plan.
- Read Isaiah 58 and other verses on fasting.
- Ask a friend to be your prayer partner.
- Use a journal or notebook for prayer requests, praises and answered prayers
- Take a few days to one week to eliminate unhealthy foods or habits from your diet.
- Abstaining from alcohol, nicotine, caffeine and sugar is very helpful beforehand.
- Red meats and other animal foods, including milk products and eggs, as well as wheat and baked goods should be avoided for a day or two before fasting.
- Intake of most nutritional supplements should also be curtailed.
- Consider only consuming fruits and vegetable foods for 3-4 days.
- Plan your meals and a grocery list for the first week.
- ***Don't worry if you aren't able to implement everything. The Lord will bless your efforts to get ready for your fasting experience!***

What to do During a Fast

- Focus on the Lord, and make him your top priority over the next three weeks. You may feel tempted to cheat, compromise, and even quit along the way, but don't. God will give you the self-control and perseverance you need to complete your fast. Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.
- Drink plenty of purified water (1/2 your body weight in ounces of water/day)
 - This makes it easier for your body to flush out the waste.
 - Include herbal tea
 - Not a substitute for your water intake
 - Lemon may be added for flavor, but do NOT use any sweetner
 - A drop of two of stevia can be used.
 - Avoid stimulants
 - No coffee, tobacco, alcohol, soft drinks, sweets, etc.
 - Can use small amount of white or green tea.
 - Choose organic vegetables, herbs, and low-sugar fruit, if juicing
 - Improve digestion by eating slowly and chewing your food well.

- Focus on foods you CAN eat, not on foods you CAN'T eat
- If you have any medical condition or health concerns, you should consult with your physician before beginning any type of fast.
- Exercise

Who Should NOT Fast

- People with diabetes, particularly those on insulin
- People with hypoglycemia (although many blood sugar imbalances do well on a short vegetable-fruit fast)
 - People who are malnourished
 - Those who are underweight
 - People with fatigue from nutritional deficiency
 - Children under the age of 18 (unless recommended by a healthcare professional)
 - People with anemia, wasting as with advanced stages of cancer, or extreme weakness
 - People with very aggressive cancer; however, modified fasts may be appropriate
 - People with eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia
 - Women who are pregnant or nursing
 - Those with chronic degenerative disease of the muscles or bones
 - People with serious health problems; these individuals may need professional supervision
 - People with concerns about fasting; these individuals should consult a health professional

When to Break the Fast

- If energy falls for more than a day
- If weight gets too low
- If symptoms are particularly intense or sudden
- If tongue is clear
 - With fasting, the tongue usually becomes coated with a white, yellow or gray film
 - It will clear when the detox cycle is complete
 - Hunger is a sign of readiness to move back into eating

Breaking the Fast

- Breaking the fast is as important as the fast itself, and even more important in some ways
 - Take ½ of our total cleansing time to move back into our regular diet
 - Eat vegetables, seeds, a little low-sugar fruit, and vegetable soups for a day or two after your fast
 - Make sure to eat plenty of those foods raw
 - Chew everything extremely well
 - Let your digestive system gradually return to normal
 - After a fast, the toxins that have been released may still be finding their way out through the channels of elimination, especially the colon
 - It's best not to add too much food back into your diet right away
 - Certainly not heavy animal proteins that are hard to digest
 - Resist having a large meal too soon!
 - Introduce heavy foods like proteins back into your diet slowly in small portions
 - Instead of alcohol, order sparkling water or herbal tea with lemon or lime to drink