

ARLINGTON ASSEMBLY

EXPERIENCE THE PRESENCE AND POWER
OF GOD IN AN EXTRAORDINARY WAY

7-Day Guide to Fasting and Prayer



WHAT IS FASTING?

Stated simply, Biblical fasting is refraining from food, completely or partially, for a specified period and for a *spiritual* purpose. Fasting has always been a normal part of a growing relationship with God.

During a fast, we abstain from eating certain foods or certain activities for a committed period of time. This time we would be eating is spent in prayer, reading God's Word and reflecting on His truth.

This is a spiritual discipline for those who have a genuine desire for a deeper relationship with the Lord and a desire for God's perfect will for them.

WHY FAST?

Scripture states that some answers only come through prayer AND fasting. When you eliminate food from your diet for a number of days, and use the time you would be eating, to instead, read His Word and pray, your spirit becomes uncluttered by the things of this world and increasingly sensitive to the things of God.

Jesus said in **Matthew 6:1-4**: "*When you give...*"

Matthew 6:5-15: "*When you pray...*"

Matthew 6:16-18: "*When you fast...*"

Jesus made it clear that fasting, like giving and praying, was a normal part of the Christian's life. These are things that a disciple of Jesus does on a regular basis. Many believers miss their greatest breakthroughs because they fail to pray; or fail to give; or fail to fast.

If Jesus could have accomplished all He came to do without fasting, then why did *He* fast? The Son of God fasted because He knew there were supernatural things that could only be released through fasting. If Jesus fasted, how much more should fasting be a common practice in our lives?

- 1 Peter 2:21 – Jesus is our example for everything.
- Luke 6:40 – A student is not above his teacher.

God has supernatural blessings He wants to pour into our life... and God knows there is never a convenient time to fast. That's why it must be a decision that we make.

HOW DO I FAST?

The Bible shows us various types and lengths of fasts. You can fast one type of food or a variety of foods. For example, Daniel followed a partial fast for 21 days that brought great spiritual breakthroughs in his life (Daniel 10:2-3).

In addition to a food fast, some choose non-food fasts. Non-food fasts are a good option for those who are on very strict diets due to medical conditions. These non-food fasts can include refraining from media, entertainment, hobbies... things that can take a considerable amount of our time or distract us from time with God.

Deciding what kind of fast you commit to is between God and you. If you fast food, it's important to drink plenty of water during that time. Simply ask the Lord for guidance and see what God does in you as you set aside this time of fasting and prayer.

PREPARING TO FAST

Important Note: Fasting requires reasonable precautions. If you have any health concerns, please consult your physician prior to beginning your fast, especially if you are taking any medication, have a chronic condition, or are pregnant or nursing a baby.

While this guide provides some general information about different types of fasts, it is important to mention that there is nothing more inherently spiritual about one type of fast as opposed to another. If what you go without is important to you, it will be important to God.

Do not let what you eat or do not eat become the focus of your fast. Keep the main thing the main thing, which is drawing closer to God. Remember, this is a time to disconnect enough from your regular patterns and habits in order to connect more closely to God.

1. Start Where You Are

We are all at different places in our walk with God. Likewise, our jobs, daily schedules, and health conditions are all different and place various levels of demand on our energy. So most importantly, whether you've fasted before or this is your first time, start where you are.

Your personal fast should present a level of challenge to it, but it's very important to know your own body, know your options, and most importantly, seek God in prayer and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

Remember, the goal of fasting is not just to do without food. The goal is to draw nearer to God.

2. Choose Your Type of Fast

While preparing for your fast, it is important to choose ahead of time what type of fast, or what combination, you will pursue. Not only will this help with making the necessary preparations to implement your plan, but as you commit to a specific fast ahead of time, you will position yourself to finish strong.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF FASTS & DURATION

Corporately as a church, we are all fasting from:

Monday April 7th - Sunday April 13th (Palm Sunday). Within this time frame, we are asking that everyone fast something. We're fasting for people to be saved, coming to know Christ for the very first time!

TYPES OF FASTS

Food Related Fasts

In the Bible we find various kinds of fasts. You can fast one type of food or combinations of foods. Ideas: No bread for 21 days. OR chocolate, coffee, all drinks but water, etc...

In this type of fast you omit a specific item(s) from your meal plans. For example, you may choose to eliminate all red meat, processed or fast food, or sweets. Most people can incorporate this type of fast relatively easily. It can also prove to be a great solution for people with specific dietary needs or medical conditions that may cause certain limitations.

Meal Fasts

Ideas: Fasting one meal a day, or 2 meals a day, or eating only one meal a day.

Daniel Fast

The Daniel Fast is a great model to follow and one that is extremely effective for spiritual focus, bodily discipline, and heightened sensitivity to God. It is probably one of the most commonly referred-to fasts.

In the book of Daniel we find two different times where the prophet Daniel fasted. Daniel 1 states that he only ate vegetables and water. And in Daniel 10, while the passage does not give a specific list of foods that Daniel ate, people usually eat only fruits, vegetables, beans, and water to drink.

Non-Food Related Fasts

While fasting typically refers to refraining from specific food items, you may find that fasting a regular activity or habit works better where you are right now. Non-food fasts can also be good for those who are on very strict diets due to medical conditions and are unable to fast any kind of food or liquid.

Prayer and fasting is not just about connecting to God but also about disconnecting from the world. Try to tune out some of the regular distractions from your day as much as possible. Replace that time with things that will nourish you spiritually.

Media or Entertainment Fast

A Media or Entertainment Fast is a specific kind of non-food fast that involves abstaining from any kind of media or social media. This might include abstaining from a mobile device, internet, TV, news apps, video games, and/or related media except for those required to carry out your job-related duties.

FASTING WHILE NURSING OR PREGNANT

Strict fasting while pregnant or nursing is not recommended. If you are in this incredible season of life but would like to participate in the fast, here are some great options for you to consider—with the approval of your physician:

- A modified Daniel fast including whole grains, legumes, whey protein, calcium, and iron supplements
- Fasting sweets and desserts
- Fasting red meat but eating lots of fish
- Fasting certain diversions (television shows, movies, social media)

If you are a pregnant or nursing mother, your priority is the health and the development of the baby God has entrusted you with. Make that your guideline and go from there. And please consult your doctor.

FASTING AND EATING DISORDERS

If you have struggled with an eating disorder, and your method of fasting is going to harm to you in any way, you will need to change either your approach or your mindset.

If giving up food is a stumbling block to you, then consider fasting of electronic forms of entertainment, social media, or shopping.

There are many distractions and ways we could eliminate from our daily routine. If you can identify such other things, maybe you can give those up instead of food.

Remember that you are covered by God's grace. God will show you what to do. His "yoke is easy" and His "burden is light" (Matt 11:30). His way will bring rest to your soul.

FINAL FASTING TIPS

To keep your energy up throughout the day, it's important to eat or every two and a half to three hours. If you go longer than that, you can experience an energy lull and be tempted to overstuff yourself at your next meal. Even if you're eating just fruits and vegetables, overstuffing is not recommended.

It is very important to drink lots of water while fasting. Drinking about one hundred ounces of water per day will help to support your critical liver function.

Select your food items wisely. We will not be listing specific ingredients you "should" or "should not" include in your plan. The key is to prepare a plan ahead of the fast, to not get legalistic about it, and to choose menu items well.

For example, if you prefer dressing on your salads, choose a healthy, organic option with natural ingredients—and don't pour a gallon of it on your plate. If you're drinking fruit juices, try to go as natural as possible, and don't drink ones heavily processed with sugar. Remember to not let food become the focus of your fast, but make wise eating choices.

- As you select your type of fast, make a fasting calendar that fits your plan. Determine what each day and week will look like.
- Keep your fridge and pantry stocked with the items you need. Being unprepared to fast sets you up to give into temptation. It also makes it extremely difficult to grocery shop at the store when you're extremely hungry. Choose well when selecting products, stick to raw food as much as you can, and limit artificial ingredients.

- Make it a priority to attend church during your fast. Being around other believers will encourage you to keep going when fasting gets difficult.
- If you mess up, don't get discouraged. Just get right back on track and keep going. God's mercies "are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22–23). He wants you to finish, and He will give you the grace and strength to do it.
- You will feel weak physically and may even experience a headache within the first 2-3 days as your body adjusts. However, fasting will strengthen you spiritually and help you to overcome barriers that might keep you from living victoriously.
- Expect attack. Remember, you are attempting to advance in your relationship with Almighty God and gain ground for His Kingdom. This effort necessitates taking ground away from the devil – and no great movement of God in your life goes unchallenged by the enemy.

How you conduct your fast will largely impact your experience. Fasting will make your time with the Lord more meaningful and spiritually rewarding.

You should enter a fast seriously having repented of any known sins. (Psalm 66:18)

*Fasting is not trying to get God to do what you want Him to do, but rather, to help you align yourself with His will and position yourself for what He wants to say and do.

PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE WHO FASTED

Moses fasted to hear from God (Exodus 34:27-28)

Phinehas fasted to inquire of the LORD (Judges 20:26-28)

All the Israelites fasted for victory before a battle (Judges 20:26)

And to confess their sins (Nehemiah 9:1)

Hannah fasted to have a child though she was barren (1 Samuel 1:7)

Samuel fasted for people to return to the LORD (1 Samuel 7:3-6)

Saul's men fasted in mourning (1 Samuel 31:11-13)

David fasted for forgiveness and healing (2 Samuel 12:16)

Deliverance, mercy, and just part of praying (Psalm 69:10-18; 109:24)

Elijah fasted to break crippling fear (1 Kings 19:2-18)

Ahab fasted for mercy (1 Kings 21:27)

King Jehoshaphat fasted for the LORD's intervention (2 Chronicles 20:3)

For protection and for an answer to a problem (Ezra 8:21-23).

Nehemiah fasted for vision and direction (Nehemiah 1:4)

Esther fasted for the protection of others (Esther 4:16)

Jeremiah fasted before God's Word was read (Jeremiah 36:4-6)

Daniel fasted to be separate from the world (Daniel 10:2-3; 1:12-20)

Ministers and those who belong to God's house (Joel 1:13-14)

Anyone who wants to return to the LORD (Joel 2:12-17)

People of Nineveh fasted for repentance (Jonah 3:5)

Zechariah fasted as a form of intercession (Zechariah 7:1-3)

Nation of Judah fasted for their joy to be restored (Zechariah 8:19)

Jesus fasted for victory over temptation (Matthew 4:2)

John the Baptist fasted for an influential testimony (Matthew 3:4)

Anna fasted for insight into God's will (Luke 2:37)

Disciples fasted for more faith. (Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:29)

Paul fasted to subject his will to God's (Acts 9:9-19)

Peter fasted for clear purpose and revelation (Acts 10)

Paul and Barnabas fasted as part of worship (Acts 13:2-3)

Fasted to commission those going into church service (Acts 14:23)

FINAL THOUGHTS

Fasting isn't just a physical discipline...it's a spiritual feast! "Taste and see that the LORD is good!" (Psalm 34:8) Though you may not be eating physically, you can be assured your spirit is filling up with more of God.

Your hunger for more of God's Presence will be filled! God knows what we need more than we know what we need. And He knows that our greatest need is more of Him.

All the 'fasts' in the Bible brought reward. When you hunger for more of God, He *will* fill you. We must desire Him more than anything... and God *will* answer your hunger!

The Best is Yet to Come!

THANK YOU FOR OBEYING GOD FROM THE HEART!