

How To Fast



Fasting is drawing near to God in dependence and relying on him more than even food. We use the time that we spend preparing and eating food to pray and connect with the Lord.

Fasting is one of the Spirit's tools for strengthening and transforming grace in our lives. This spiritual practice is a gift from God meant to grow us and draw us into a deepening relationship with Him. If you do not already know this power and the importance of fasting, here are some insights drawn from God's Word and personal experience to get you started:

- Fasting was an expected practice in both the Old and New Testament eras. For example, Moses fasted for at least two recorded 40-day periods. Jesus fasted 40 days and reminded His followers to fast. He said, "When you fast," not, "If you fast" (Matthew 6:16).
- Fasting and prayer can restore the loss of your "first love" for the Lord (Revelation 2:4) and result in a more intimate relationship with Christ.
- Fasting is a biblical way to truly humble yourself in the sight of God (Ezra 8:21). King David said, "I ... humbled myself with fasting" (Psalm 35:13, New International Version).
- Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your true spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance and a transformed life.
- Through fasting, the Holy Spirit will imprint God's Word deeper on your heart, and His truth will become more meaningful to you.
- Fasting can transform your prayer life into a richer and more personal experience.
- Fasting can result in a dynamic personal revival and make you a channel of life change to others.

If you fast, you will find yourself being humbled. You will discover more time to pray and seek God's face. And as He leads you to recognize and repent of unconfessed sin, you will experience God's grace to grow and mature you.

Prepare Your Fast

Option 1 - Fasting Until 6pm

This will be a commitment toward fasting for a significant portion of your day, incorporating only 1 meal into your schedule. Or, due to medical and other considerations, it may be necessary to participate by altering your diet for the duration of the fast.

Option 2 -The Daniel Fast

This commitment is to eat only fruits, veggies, and whole grains for the duration of 21 days. See more information in the resource "How to Fast".

Option 3 - All Meals

This will be a commitment toward fasting from all food except for water, juice and other broths for the duration of the 21 days of the fast.

Option 4 - Varied Weeks

This will be a commitment you make by alternating from the above options.

*While we do believe biblical fasting is focused primarily on food, we acknowledge with great care that because of past struggles, a fast from food may not be beneficial for some of you, either because of medical conditions or a difficult season of disordered eating. In that case, we encourage you to consider abstaining from something else not connected to food during these 21 days. A helpful and beneficial fast will be to abstain from anything you tend to depend on for comfort or coping with difficult emotions. Examples would be television/media, alcohol, retail spending, or other entertainment and creature comforts.

Rather than participating in that thing, a fast encourages spending the time you'd normally allot to that thing going to God in prayer instead, and seeking him for comfort instead.

The Daniel Fast

This fast is from the book of Daniel, chapter 1, in which one only eats fruit, vegetables, whole grains and natural foods.

FOODS TO EAT

All Fruits:

Apples, peaches, berries, grapes, pineapples, oranges, bananas, melons etc. (fresh/raw, frozen, dried, juiced or canned in their own juice, not syrup)

All Veggies:

Squash, lettuce, spinach, carrots, kale, broccoli, asparagus, cabbage, greens, corn,

potatoes, sweet potatoes, etc. (fresh/raw, frozen, dried or canned)

Whole Grains:

Brown rice, oats, barley, grits, hot cereal, whole-wheat pasta, etc.

Other Natural Foods:

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Beans and peas, seeds and nuts, oils, rice milk, soy milk, water, healthy beverages and smoothies (with no sugars or artificial preservatives), spices, herbs, tofu, soy, vinegar.

Sweeteners:

Stevia, Equal, Splenda, Agave Nectar

FOODS TO AVOID

X - Meat (including poultry & seafood)

X - White Rice/White Flour (no bread)

X - Fried Foods

X - Caffeine & Caffeinated Beverages

X - Sugar & Artificial Sweeteners

X - Dairy Products (butter, milk, eggs, etc)

Prepare Your Prayer

1. Consider the ways that we are praying together for our church. We want to see unity amongst the body of Christ. We are hoping for the fulfillment of vision and purpose for our church family. We are praying that we see many come to know Christ as their redeemer in 2024
2. Pick up or download our Prayer Journal so that you can follow along with our daily devotionals.
3. Identify some friends and or your community group to be praying with through this time.

Prepare Your Mind

1. Take some time to consider the real implications of how the fast will affect your regular life rhythms. For example, think about how your daily schedule may be altered and have some forethought on how to adjust properly.
2. Ask the Lord to prepare your mind for the challenge in the days ahead.
3. Meditate on scripture and stories that are a reminder of God's faithfulness and ability to sustain us: ex. Psalm 100, Matthew 4:1-4, Matthew 6:25-26

Prepare Your Heart

1. Take some time to ask God to identify potential areas of difficulty during the 21 days. Do you see the potential for emotions like anger, anxiety, and fear to rise up during this fast? Are there areas of sin that you are aware of and have not addressed in your life?
2. Spend some time in confession and repentance concerning these areas to which the Spirit leads you. As it says in 1 John 1:9, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Asking yourself difficult and direct questions and answering them in honesty may help you to enter the fast with a posture ready to receive. (ex. Am I honest in all my acts and words or do I exaggerate? Do I confidentially pass on what has been said to me in confidence?)

3. Ask the Lord to show you any areas of discord or disunity in your life relationally and seek to address them.

Prepare Your Body

1. Drink plenty of water, maintaining proper hydration and water intake leading up to the beginning of the fast.
2. Eat healthier foods (fruits and veggies) directly before the start of the fast in order to make for an easier transition. Avoid overindulging, as well. When the fast is complete, be mindful of easing back into your regular diet, as to not shock your system.
3. If you have potential medical concerns, you should visit your doctor to make sure that you are physically able to participate as you intend. A chronic or severe medical condition, such as diabetes or heart disease, may prevent you from fasting in the manner you'd like. You should also consult your doctor if you are pregnant or nursing in order to enter into the fast in the most informed way.

Prepare Your Schedule

1. Take time to pre-plan what types of juices, liquids, and supplies you will need while engaged in the fast. If you are planning to drink juices for part or all of the fast then you may prepare for this by purchasing a portable cooler to take with you to work, ball games, etc. This practice will keep you from being at the mercy of snack and sports drink machines.
2. Think about when you will set aside time to pray and when you will partake in liquids throughout the day.
3. Discuss with family and those in your household about what the upcoming days will look like together.

Prepare Your Response

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. – Matthew 6:16–18

1. In hopes to avoid pride and self-appreciation, we don't want to broadcast our decision to fast publicly. But, when addressed about it directly, we should prepare a thoughtful response, rather than feeling the need to be dishonest or making a bigger issue of it.
2. When someone asks why you aren't eating, consider simple ways to communicate that you are dedicating yourself toward a time of prayer and listening to God. Seek to respond in a simple and straightforward way without belaboring the point.
3. Consider beforehand how to graciously communicate with those that may invite you to a meal or gathering when it may conflict with the fast. (ex. As you are preparing for the gathering, please note that my family and I are praying and fasting together in this season, so we may not fully take part in the meal portion of the evening. Thanks for understanding.)

How to Make your Spiritual Experience The Best that It Can Be - Dr. Bill Bright

Experiencing God's best from a fast requires solid commitment. Arranging special time each day with God is crucial in attaining intimate communion with the Father. You must devote yourself to seeking God's face, even (and especially) during those times in which you feel weak, vulnerable or irritable.

Read His Word and pray during what were mealtimes. Meditate on Him when you awake in the night. Sing praises to Him whenever you please. Focus on your Heavenly Father and make every act one of praise and worship. God will enable you to experience His command to "pray without ceasing" as you seek His presence.

As you enter this time of heightened spiritual devotion, be aware that Satan will do everything he can to pull you away from your prayer and Bible reading time. When you feel the enemy trying to discourage you, immediately go to God in prayer and ask Him to strengthen your resolve in the face of difficulties and temptations.

The enemy makes you a target because he knows that fasting is a powerful Christian discipline and that God may have something very special to show you as you wait upon Him and seek His face. Satan does not want you to grow in your faith; he will do anything from making you hungry and grumpy to bringing up trouble in your family or at work to stop you. Make prayer your protective shield against such attacks.

My major reason for fasting is for personal revival, revival for our nation and the world, and for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. But praying for our own needs and interceding for others are also important reasons to fast and pray. Bring your personal needs before the Lord, and intercede for your loved ones and your friends. Pray also for your church, your pastor and your community. By your prayers, as you fast with humility, you will help the Great Commission be fulfilled (1 John 5:14-15).

However, do not become so caught up in praying for yourself and others that you forget about simply reverencing and praising God. True spiritual fasting focuses on God. Center your total being on Him: your attitudes and actions, your motives, desires and words. This posture can only happen if God and the Holy Spirit are at the center of our attention. Confess your sins as the Holy Spirit brings them to mind, and continue to focus on God and God alone so that your prayers may be powerful and effective.

A renewed closeness with God and a greater sensitivity to spiritual things are usually the result of a fast. Do not be disappointed if you do not have a "mountaintop experience" as some do. Many people who have completed extended fasts tell of feeling a nearness to God that they have never before known, but some who have

honestly sought His face report no particular outward results at all. For others, their fast was physically, emotionally and spiritually grueling, but they knew they had been called by God to fast. Even so, they completed the fast unto Him as an act of worship, and God honored that commitment.

Your motive in fasting must be to glorify God, not to have an emotional experience and not to attain personal happiness. When your motives are right, God will honor your seeking heart and bless your time with Him.

What should I expect when fasting?

The practice of fasting is in stark contrast to most of the way we live on a day to day basis in our lives. The Bible mentions fasting over 70 times directly and is inferred many more. This practice was clearly important to God, as even Jesus engaged in a 40-day fast immediately following His baptism.

Heightened Emotional Sensitivity

“Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, fear—if they are within us, they will surface during fasting. At first we will rationalize that our anger is due to our hunger; then we know that we are angry because the spirit of anger is within us. We can rejoice in this knowledge because we know that healing is available through the power of Christ.” Richard Foster

Physical Effects

Changing the amount and type of nutrients that you intake on a regular basis could possibly affect your energy levels, leading to physical fatigue. Headaches have also been known to be a symptom during fasting.

Intense Hunger

Although this may seem like an obvious point of awareness, it is important to note that you may feel hunger in a way that you’ve not experienced before. This will become the primary indicator and reminder for times of prayer and listening during the fast.

Further Thoughts of Fasting

Biblical fasting is refraining from food for a spiritual purpose. Our primary focus in fasting is to fix our eyes on Jesus and to listen to hear the voice and direction of God. It is vitally important for us to pay attention to our motives behind the commitment we've made.

"Say to all the people of the land and the priests, 'When you fasted... was it for me that you fasted?' – Zechariah 7:5–6

"If our fasting is not unto God, we have failed. Physical benefits, success in prayer, the ending with power, spiritual insights—these must never replace God as the center of our fasting." – Richard Foster

"First, let [fasting] be done unto the Lord with our eye singly fixed on him. Let our intention herein be this, and this alone, to glorify our Father which is in heaven." – John Wesley

Fasting helps us to realize the things that control us. Practicing the discipline of fasting allows the Lord the venue to help us to bring these areas into alignment. Just as David once wrote, "I afflicted myself with fasting..." in Psalm 35:13, we will be intentional to provide the Lord the venue to instruct us and bring clarity to our lives.

"I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything. – 1 Corinthians 6:12

Fasting from any nourishment, activity, involvement or pursuit—for any season—sets the stage for God to appear. – Dan B. Allender

We fast because it helps to give us balance in life. It makes us more keenly sensitive to the whole of life so that we're not so obsessed by our consumer mentality. – Richard J. Foster