

# Guide to Fasting

Fasting is one of the most important admonitions in Scripture and a powerful spiritual discipline. Through fasting and prayer the Holy Spirit can transform your life. According to Scripture it is evident when God's people fast with proper biblical motive (Matt 6:16). With a broken and repentant heart they will hear from heaven (2 Chronicles 7:14), and the land, churches, schools, homes and families will experience healing.

This much neglected admonition is one of the true powers the Christian church has and it was used by Jesus (Luke 4:2) as one of his vital spiritual disciplines. As a ministry we don't want to neglect this very important discipline.

## Fasting Facts

1. Jesus never talked about fasting as an option he stated "When you fast." (Matthew 6:17)
2. Fasting is a biblical way of humbling yourself; David said "I humbled myself with fasting." (Psalms 35:13)
3. Fasting is the only discipline that fulfills the requirements of 2 Chronicles 7:14.
4. Fasting has the power to result in a personal consecration and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. (Luke 4:2)
5. John Calvin says in his Institutes Book IV that "fasting has three objectives:"
  - 5.1. "We use it to weaken or subdue the flesh that it may not act wantonly [lacking restraint]."
  - 5.2. "That we may be better prepared for prayers and holy meditations."
  - 5.3. "That it may be a testimony of our self-abasement [humiliation] before God when we wish to confess our guilt before him."
6. Fasting can turn the Body of Christ toward repentance - Nehemiah fasted after hearing about the demise of the city of Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 1:3-4)
7. Fasting reminds us to re-prioritize our focus on Jesus and the word of God. "Man shall not live by bread alone." (Matthew 4:4)
8. Fasting and prayer enhanced the life of the Prophetess Anna which accompanied a life of worship. (Luke 2:37)
9. How you end the fast is as important as how you entered the fast. (Isaiah 58:4)
10. The kind of fasting that God has chosen, leads to significant impact in the natural realm of humanity. (Isaiah 58:6)

## How Long and What Type of Fast?

Fasting has been an important part of many church leaders weekly discipline. John Wesley founder of the Methodist denomination fasted every Wednesday and Friday. Effective leaders from the Apostle Paul to Martin Luther and John Calvin made fasting an important part of their relationship with God.

The Bible recounts several types of fasts: **Absolute, Supernatural Absolute and Partial.**

- **Absolute** - Paul went on an absolute fast eating or drinking nothing for three days. (Acts 9:9)
- **Supernatural Absolute** - Jesus went without food for 40 days and yet Moses abstained from food and water for the same length of time. **This kind of fast must be of God with specific directions to do so.** (Luke 4:2) (Deuteronomy 9:9)
- **Partial** - Daniel went on this fast which included vegetables and water better known as the Daniels Fast (Daniel 1:12). He also abstained for ten days (Daniel 10:3), without delicacies such as meat and wine.

Whatever fast or length of time you choose, make sure to drink plenty of liquids unless the leading of the Lord directs you differently. Extended water only fasts require plenty of rest and fluids for electrolyte balance. **Please consult your physician prior to starting any fast if you:**

- **Have a medical condition**
- **Are taking medication**
- **Are thinking of doing a lengthy fast**

When it comes to making a decision on the type of fast, I recommend spending time in prayer to get the leading of the Holy Spirit. He will guide your heart and mind as to what is best for you. Remember the most important part of the decision is your motive, why are you fasting?

### **Preparing yourself Spiritually and Physically**

In preparation for this special time examine your heart to detect unconfessed sin, follow King David who sought God passionately (Psalms 66:16-20). In your prayers confess not only obvious sins but the less obvious ones as well. Because our God is Holy, our time of fasting must be entered reverently; all this in an effort to maximize the experience. Although fasting is primarily a spiritual exercise it begins in the physical realm. If your plan is to fast for several days you will want to prepare yourself by eating smaller meals before abstaining altogether. This will also allow your body to adjust sending the proper signal that less food will be accepted. Another important recommendation would be to draw down on caffeine and sugar, this will ease your initial hunger or discomfort in the early stages.

### **Finishing your Fast**

Breaking the fast is agreed upon by experts as an important stage in the process. While your body is in resting mode, your stomach shrinks and the intestines become idle, so solid food must be reintroduced very slowly. Those on longer fasts (30-40 days) should make a very careful transition for at least three days before returning to eating meats, fats or normal foods. Take the time to pray before breaking your fast and thank God for the special time spent with him. This would also be a good time to commit to new spiritual disciplines and dying to certain acts of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21).

### **10 Tips on Fasting**

1. Educate yourself as much as you can before beginning a fast.
2. Remember; if you are on medication seek your physician's advice regarding your fast.
3. Pray about the kind of fast you will undertake, one meal, one day, a week, several weeks. Beginners should ease into fasting, building up to longer fasts.
4. Before you fast, schedule your time in prayer; and a study of the word should be an addition to your fast. This is important because your time of fasting will also be a time of exercising spiritual disciplines. Also fill your environment with music that edifies.
5. Ask why are you fasting? Is it for spiritual renewal, for guidance, for healing, for the resolution of problems, for special grace to handle a difficult situation? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically.
6. Begin reducing your intake of food, at least several days before you begin. Remember, many have addictions to sugar, salt and caffeine. Reduce them gradually to avoid experiencing headaches, upset stomachs, irritability, etc.
7. Resist the temptation to eat a big "last supper" the night before the fast. Realize there will be opposition to your fast. (Romans 7:21)
8. While on your fast avoid distractions, it may be wise to reduce your television viewing, normal phone conversations that engage you in things that don't edify this time.
9. When your designated time for fasting is finished, you will begin to eat again. How you break your fast is extremely important for your physical and spiritual well-being.
10. End your fast gradually. Do not eat solid foods immediately after your fast. Suddenly reintroducing solid food might cause stomach upset. Try several smaller meals. If you end your fast gradually, the beneficial physical and spiritual effects will result in the best way.