

“The fact still remains that ‘to fast’ means primarily ‘not to eat.’”

— **Arthur Wallis, God's Chosen Fast**

“One way to begin to see how vastly indulgent we usually are is to fast. It is a long day that is not broken by the usual three meals. One finds out what an astonishing amount of time is spent in the planning, purchasing, preparing, eating, and cleaning up of meals.”

— **Elisabeth Elliot, Author and Speaker**

“Prayer is reaching out after the unseen; fasting is letting go of all that is seen and temporal. Fasting helps express, deepen, confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God.”

— **Andrew Murray**

“In Shansi I found Chinese Christians who were accustomed to spend time in fasting and prayer. They recognized that this fasting, which so many dislike, which requires faith in God, since it makes one feel weak and poorly, is really a Divinely appointed means of grace. Perhaps the greatest hindrance to our work is our own imagined strength; and in fasting we learn what poor, weak creatures we are-dependent on a meal of meat for the little strength which we are so apt to lean upon.”

— **Hudson Taylor**

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**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.

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God calls His church to regular fasting as part of a normal Christian lifestyle. We must prepare ourselves adequately so when we fast it honors God and fulfills its purpose.

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 demands 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.

As you prepare to fast, it is important to choose a fasting plan that works for you. While this section provides some general information and answers 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. These are simply guidelines and suggestions on different things you can do.

## **Fasting is Biblical**

Jesus taught that fasting was a part of the normal Christian life (Matthew 6:16-17, 9:15), exercised by the early church (Acts 13:2), and has been the regular discipline of believers throughout church history.

The regular practice of fasting in Scripture included abstaining from food (Daniel 10:3) and may be engaged in for varying lengths of time – typically for a few days at a time.

Abstaining from all food for extended periods of time is biblical, but was rare in Scripture (Exodus 34:28; 1 Kings 19:5-8; Luke 4:2), and thus should never be undertaken without counsel and appropriate medical supervision.

The same standard applies to an absolute fast (Esther fast–no food or water for three days) of any duration (Est. 4:16).

The maximum length of an adult fast that is biblically supported is forty days without food for an adult in good health.

The Bible does not speak of children engaging in fasting food, but if your child is called by the Lord to fast a meal encourage them to do so.

When most people start fasting, there is typically some level of discomfort.

There isn't one approach that works the same for everyone. Follow the Holy Spirit.

## **Different Types of Fasts**

While preparing for your fast, it is important to choose ahead of time what type of fast 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 and know how you're going to do it, you will position yourself to complete the fast.

### *Daniel Fast*

The Daniel fast is probably one of the most commonly referred-to fasts; however, within the Daniel fast there is room for broad interpretation.

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, it does state that he ate no rich (or choice) foods, as well as no meat or wine. So, based on these two verses, we can see that either of these, or combinations of the two, constitute a Daniel fast.

The foundation of the Daniel fast is fruits and vegetables. Some starchy vegetables and dairy could be included, but that depends on the individual. Your goal should be to seek God in prayer about this and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

### *Juice Fast*

A juice fast is simply consuming vegetable and fruit juices and water instead of solid food. Many people include whey protein in their liquid plan as well. This is one of the most popular fasts. Even if you choose not to make your entire fast liquids substituting one or two meals for liquids is a great alternative.

### *Water Fast*

A water-only fast is the normal fast referred to in the Bible. This is how Jesus and the New Testament church fasted. A water fast is just that—no eating of any food or drinking of any liquids except water.

Periodic water fasts can be very beneficial, but extreme precautions should be taken. For some people, it is hard to perform effectively at their jobs and have energy for their families while drinking only water.

We recommend consulting your physician first, and water fasting only for a day or two unless you can get away or your job allows you to disconnect so you can give your best energy to the fast. Remember, when Jesus went on His forty-day fast, He went by Himself out into the wilderness.

Having said all that, there are some people who can water fast and work, and they function fine without much fatigue and are able to work well.

### Total Fast

A total fast is where nothing—neither liquid, solid food, nor even water—is consumed for a very short period of time. There are examples of this type of fast in the Bible. It was an Old Covenant type of fast associated with mourning, or deep grief, such as when David engaged in a total fast for a week, hoping that God would spare the child he had with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12).

### Fasting While Nursing or Pregnant

Fasting while pregnant or nursing is not recommended.

## **Beginning and Breaking a Fast**

Depending on the type of fast you choose, it is very important to prepare your body ahead of time before beginning the fast. Take a week or so to transition into your fast; otherwise, you could get sick. For example, if you would like to go on a fruits and vegetables or juice fast, start eliminating meat, white grains, and refined sugars from your diet the week before. Also, start to cut back quite a bit on dairy products and your caffeine intake.

The same principle applies to breaking your fast. When your fast is over, add foods back in very gradually. Please don't break your fast with a greasy cheeseburger! Because your body is so cleansed and detoxified, you will most likely get sick if you do that.

### Tips:

- When breaking a fast of ten days or more, the break-in period should be extended one day for every four days of fasting.
- After breaking an extended fast, continue drinking fruit or vegetable juices because the stomach is continuing to detoxify.
- During any fast exceeding two days, your stomach will shrink. Do not over-expand it again by overeating. If you have been prone to eating too heavily, guard against going back to this habit. If you train yourself to eat more lightly, your stomach will adjust itself accordingly.
- Take extra care in breaking a water fast. Begin with drinking fruit or vegetable juices and gradually ease into eating fruit and steamed vegetables.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### Q. What does fasting mean?

A. The word fast in the Hebrew means to "cover" the mouth; in the Greek, it means to "abstain". It is also the practice of self-denial. In the bible, it involves abstaining from food, and certain activities.

*2 Sam 12:16-18* -- David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. So, the elders of his house arose and went to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them.

#### Q. What do you mean by a "fast"?

A. Fasting is something that should never be done without prayer. So, spending time in prayer is a very important aspect of the fast. They go hand in hand.

*Dan 9:3* -- Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

Q. Is fasting like going on a diet?

A. No. To miss meals for the sake of weight loss is not a fast. A fast involves *attitude* and *action*. Your *attitude* is one of humility and submission to God, seeking Him to fulfill the purpose of your fast.

*Luke 18:11-14* -- The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men -- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Q. Should a married person talk with their spouse before entering a fast?

A. Yes. Because sexual intimacy is a God given responsibility in marriage, couples should communicate about the length of the fast before starting it. While fasting, you commit to non-sexual intimacy for a period of time. Then come back together after the fast.

*1 Corinthians 7:5-6* -- Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.