

FASTING GUIDELINES

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES FOR FASTING

Matt. 6:16-18 Matt. 9:14-15 Luke 18:9-14 1 Sam. 7:5-6 Ezra 8:21-23
Neh. 9:1-3 Joel 2:15-16 Jonah 3:5-10 Acts 27:33-37

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 demands on our energy. Whether you've fasted before or this is your first time the most important thing is to start where you are. Your personal fast should present a degree of challenge 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.

CHOOSE YOUR TYPE OF FAST

While preparing for your fast, it is important to choose ahead of time what type or combination of fasting you will pursue. This will help you position yourself to finish strong. As you prepare to fast, it is important to choose a fasting plan that works for you. While this section provides some general information about different types of fasts, as well as some suggestions on how to create your own fasting plan, 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.

TYPES OF FASTS

SPECIFIC FOOD FAST

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 foods, or sweets. Most people can incorporate this type of fast relatively easily. It can also be a great solution for people with specific dietary needs or medical conditions that create certain limitations.

DANIEL FAST

The foundation of the Daniel fast is fruits and vegetables. Some starchy vegetables and dairy could be included, depending on the individual. The Daniel fast is a great model and can be extremely effective for spiritual focus, bodily discipline, and purification of the body and soul. In the book of Daniel we find two different times where the prophet Daniel fasted. In Daniel 1:12 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. Based on these two verses we can see that either type of fast or a combination of the two constitutes a Daniel fast.

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 and effective fasts. Even if you choose not to make your entire fast liquids-only, 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 requires that no food or drink other than water is consumed. 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 really 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.

MEDIA FAST

While fasting typically refers to refraining from specific food items you may also find it extremely beneficial to fast from a regular activity or habit. This might include things such as television, social media, and the like. Prayer and fasting are not just about connecting to God but also about disconnecting from the world. Try to tune out some of the regular distractions of your day as much as possible. Replace that time with things that will nourish you spiritually.

TOTAL FAST

A total fast is where nothing (liquid, solid food, or 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, such as after the death of David and Bathsheba's baby. After that sad event David engaged in a total fast for a week (2 Samuel 12). Under the New Covenant we do not fast to mourn or to seek forgiveness. God has already forgiven us and we are commanded to celebrate Jesus because He is alive. Plus, complete abstinence of food and water can be very dangerous to our health. Attempting to go without water for any period of time can be extremely harmful to the body.

FASTING WHILE NURSING OR PREGNANT

Strict fasting while pregnant or nursing also is not recommended. If you are in this incredible season of life but would like to participate in the 21

day plan, here are some great options for you to consider—with the approval of your physician:

- A modified Daniel fast including whole grains, legumes, calcium, and iron supplements

- Fasting sweets and desserts and/or red meats

- Fasting certain diversions (television shows, movies, social media, etc.)

FASTING AND EATING DISORDERS

If you have struggled with an eating disorder, this situation is a battle of the mind you can win through Christ (Philippians 4:13). Remember, fasting is a tool used to get closer to God, and it actually should keep us from being preoccupied with food. If your method of fasting is going to cause you to obsess about what you eat 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 television, reading (other than the Bible, of course), social media, or shopping. We do these things to distract ourselves from the real issues hurting us. If you can identify other similar areas try giving those up instead of food. Remember that you are covered by God's grace and 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.

GUIDELINES CONT'D

START AND END THE FAST WELL

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 do a fruits and vegetables or juice fast start eliminating meat, white grains, and refined sugars from your diet the week before. Also cut back on your dairy and caffeine intake. The same principle applies to

breaking your fast. When your fast is over add foods back in very gradually and don't break your fast with a greasy cheeseburger! Because your body is cleansed and detoxified you will most likely get sick if you do that. There are also several supplements that can help support the detox process during your fast. Ask your doctor for recommendations.

PRAYER + READING THE WORD DURING FASTING

1 Samuel 1:6-8, 17-18, Nehemiah 1:4, Daniel 9:3, 20, Joel 2:12, Luke 2:37, Acts 10:30, Acts 13:2.

Just like prayer and fasting, reading the Bible is about connecting to God in a more powerful way. It's not about duty but about relationship. When we read the Word we engage the very presence of God. His Word is living and active! As we read we draw closer to God and position ourselves to hear from Him in particular ways. Once again, as with prayer, choose the time and the place where you are going to read your Bible and devotional every single day and come prepared to hear what He wants to tell you.

READ CONSISTANTLY

It is better to read a little every day than to try and knock out two hours of Bible reading or devotions in one sitting. It is so important to digest the Word in absorbable chunks. Don't bite off more than you can chew and certainly don't compare your "performance" with that of others. If you miss a few days, pick up at the next reading but stay with it and don't give up. The key is to keep this simple and make it sustainable.

READ PRAYERFULLY

Talk to God as you're reading. Don't rush through. If you come across something you don't understand, pause for a moment and ask God about it. Reading prayerfully is making space and time to talk to God and giving Him time and space to talk to you. Taking time to meditate on God's Word is just as important as reading it.

Get the most out of your devotional time with God

Take time to worship your Heavenly Father and give thanks and praise for who He is and all that He has done and is going to do in your life and the lives of others.

Read and meditate on God's word (as above).

Bring your prayers and petitions to your Heavenly Father. He may lay people on your heart that are not on your list. Pray for them when the Holy Spirit quickens you.

Pray in your heavenly prayer language (tongues) because this is when the Holy Spirit can pray on your behalf.

Talk to God and take time to listen. He wants to give you wisdom, knowledge, revelation and the power to overcome the enemy.

Keep a journal during your prayer times. It will encourage you when you look back and see what God is doing and has done in your life.

**LET THE ENEMY BE DEFEATED
THROUGH YOUR
COMPLETE SURRENDER TO GOD THROUGH
HIS SON JESUS
AND BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
ALLOW GOD TO MOVE IN AND THROUGH
YOU! DON'T GIVE UP AND EXPECT GREAT
THINGS!**