



THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF

Fasting

The spiritual discipline of fasting is described throughout Scripture, in the Old Testament *and* the New Testament. Jesus fasted. The early church fasted. David fasted. Daniel fasted. Job fasted. Many of the kings of Israel, Judah, and even Babylon fasted.

Fasting is an action and opportunity that God's people are invited into as an act of worship. It is part of God's design to sanctify believers and shape them further into the image of Jesus. In fact, when Jesus teaches on fasting, He does not say, "If you fast...", but rather, "When you fast..." (Matthew 6 & 9).

So, as followers of Jesus Christ, how do we understand and enter into this opportunity of fasting?

WHAT IS FASTING?

In simple terms, fasting is the practice of temporarily abstaining from food or some other good gift given by God to increase and intensify a desire for what is better - namely God Himself and His work in our lives. By going without something enjoyable that we give time and attention to regularly, we have an opportunity to use that time and attention to focus on God. Fasting helps us remember our need for and dependence on God. Our need for God is greater than any other need we have.

As we practice the spiritual discipline of fasting, may our temporarily abstaining from something enjoyable significantly increase our affections for what is best - God Himself.

One day, Christ will return and we will be fully united with Him. On that day, He will call us not to fast, but to feast and rejoice in all that He has done to reconcile sinners to Himself. Until that day, may we strive to ready our hearts for His return.



HOW CAN I PRACTICE FASTING?

There are so many ways and options to practice fasting! If you've never practiced the spiritual discipline of fasting before, you may find yourself anxious or overwhelmed. Please don't be! God has given His followers the good gift of fasting. That means it is for our good!

Start by Identifying what you will fast from. The most common type of fasting we see in Scripture is abstaining from food. If abstaining from food, some people with health conditions may not fast from all food, but choose to fast from certain types of food. You can also fast from activities that you participate in frequently/daily (like social media, television, video games, or listening to music in the car).

Identify a time frame that you want to fast within. If you are abstaining from food during your fast, your time frame can range anywhere from abstaining from one meal to abstaining from food for 24-48 hours. If you are abstaining from an activity (social media, television), you may choose to extend the timeframe of your fast from a full day to several weeks.

Make a plan for how you will spend your time during your fast. The goal of fasting is not simply to abstain. The goal is to abstain with the hope of increasing your desire for God and His work in your life. So, we want to be intentional with how we spend the time we would normally be eating or engaging in an activity to focus on God. You can use your fasting time to pray, meditate, read Scripture, or worship through singing. The goal is not to distract yourself from what you are giving up, but rather to focus on God and trust that He is better than everything else you desire or need.

Plan ahead for any standing obligations you typically have while you fast. While you fast, you still have obligations in your daily life. We will still go to work/school, engage with family/friends/co-workers, and carry out normal tasks. We want to fast with responsibility, joy, and consideration of others who are not fasting with us. If you're a parent, plan how you will feed your children and answer questions about why you are not eating. If you normally have lunch with coworkers, make sure to let them know if you will not be joining them. Think through and be prepared to still faithfully undertake daily tasks with responsibility and joy.

Consider health implications before you fast. For a healthy adult, fasting for a meal or a 24 hour period is typically healthy and fine. However, if you have any health conditions, speak with your doctor before fasting. Your doctor can help you assess if fasting is a good option for you or offer alternatives to consider. Women who are pregnant or nursing can ask their doctors for alternatives that are safe for them and their child. If you struggle with an eating disorder or your relationship with food, please seek counsel on ways you can fast that are healthy and safe for your specific needs.

Potential Fasting Schedule for Lent 2026

February 18-28: Social Media

March 1-7: Food

March 8-14: Television and Movies

March 15-21: Caffeine and Sweets

March 22-28: Shopping for Non-Essentials

March 29 - April 4: Radio, Podcasts, and Music

