
TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE FASTING AND PRAYER

This resource contains information about fasting along with simple steps that will help you fast and pray effectively! You can use this tool as you prepare for any fast to help determine the type of fast God is leading you to do and the main focuses of your fast – areas of your life, work, family, etc. in which you desire to see God move! We pray that this resource helps you develop the spiritual discipline of fasting in your life and see powerful results!

ABOUT FASTING

What is a Fast?

- Fasting is the practice of abstaining from food or some other “comfort,” either completely or partially, for a specified period.
- The discipline of fasting is available to strengthen you spiritually and to help you overcome barriers that might keep you from living the abundant life God has for you (John 10:10).
- Fasting is a valuable practice for all believers, especially those who are seeking God for something specific and desire to know and understand His perfect will.
- According to Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14-15, for Jesus, it was a matter of when believers would fast, not if they would do it.

Why Fast?

1. Fasting helps us overcome **temptation**. (Hebrews 12:11; 2 Peter 1:5-15)
2. Fasting brings **breakthrough**. (Daniel 1; 10:12-14; Ephesians 6:12)
3. Fasting **weakens** the flesh (our sin nature) and **strengthens** your spirit.
4. Fasting assists in bringing forth the **will of God** in a specific situation. (Esther 4:16)
5. Fasting brings **clarity** and **understanding**. (Acts 13:2)
6. Fasting reduces and **removes** what we are not so we can become who we are **destined** to be!

Four Kinds of Fasts

1. The **complete** fast is going without food for a definite period.
Judges 20:26 Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel and wept. They sat there before the Lord and fasted that day until evening, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. ESV
2. The **selective** fast includes omitting certain foods for a certain period of time.
 - John the Baptist and Daniel with his three friends practiced selective fasts.
 - Selective fasts are ideal for people who have hypoglycemia or other health issues/needs.
3. A **partial** fast involves avoiding all or certain foods periodically. This could be a rotational plan of fasting.
 - Example: One may choose to fast a certain meal each day for a period of time.
 - Example: One may choose to fast during a certain day each week indefinitely.
4. A **soul** fast is based around a “theme” in your life or a specific situation.
 - This can be fasting something other than food to remind you of the thing that needs to be tempered or removed from your life or situation.
 - Examples: social media, electronic devices, sleeping in, tv, etc.



Abuses of Fasting

1. Some separated the formal practice from internal **devotion** to God and repentance from sin, which it was supposed to represent (Isaiah 58:5; Joel 2:13).
2. Fasting was sometimes practiced to cover other **sinful** motives and/or practices (1 Kings 21:9-13; Isaiah 58:1-4).
3. Others fasted for **economic** rather than spiritual or ministry reasons (Isaiah 58:7).
4. Some Pharisees fasted for **appearances** rather than as a genuine act of worship to God (Matthew 6:16).
5. Fasting, probably for ascetic reasons, was demanded by some **false** teachers in the Early Church (1 Timothy 4:3).
6. Today, we have to avoid the temptation to fast in order to lose **weight**.
7. Don't fast to get God to do what **you** want Him to do.

SEVEN BASIC STEPS FOR EFFECTIVE FASTING AND PRAYER

How you begin and conduct your fast will largely impact your experience and the results of your fast. By following these seven basic steps to fasting, you will make your time with the Lord more meaningful and spiritually rewarding. Make a habit of following these seven steps and writing down your objectives and commitments for each step each time you prepare to fast.

Step 1: Set your objective.

Step 2: Make your commitment.

- Before you fast, decide the following upfront:
 - How long will you fast? (i.e. one meal, one day, one week, several weeks, forty days)
 - What type of fast is God directing you to do? (i.e. complete, selective, partial, or soul fast)
 - What physical or social activities you will restrict?
 - How much time each day you will devote to prayer and God's Word?
- Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

Step 3: Prepare yourself spiritually.

- The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin can hinder your prayers. Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:
 - Remember that God is your Father and He loves you and is for you.
 - Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
 - Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended and forgive all who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3-4).
 - Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1-2).
 - Meditate on the attributes of God: His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others (Psalm 48:9-10; 103:1-8, 11-13).
 - Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart (Hebrews 11:6).
 - Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16-17).

Step 4: Prepare yourself physically.

- Begin omitting certain foods so that your body is ready for the change in your diet. (Example: If you plan to fast caffeine or sugars, begin decreasing the number of caffeinated drinks or sweets in your diet to prevent headaches and other issues when you begin to fast.)
- Have conversations with your spouse and/or family to let them know about your fast and prepare them for any changes you may be making in meals, weekly schedule, etc.

Step 5: Put yourself on a schedule.

- Morning
- Noon
- Evening

Step 6: End your fast gradually.

- If you are fasting foods or certain food groups, be careful not to return to your normal diet immediately. Gradually introduce various types of food back into your diet. Give your body time to get used to foods that you have not eaten for some time.

Step 7: Expect results.

- Write down what you are believing God to do, reveal, or speak in your life during your fast. Pray over these seven steps and your commitment to fast. Believe that God will do what only He can do!

