

What is Fasting?

Fasting is an individual choice to abstain from food, drink, and other fleshly gratifying things for a period of time in order to seek God.

Fasting is “an opportunity to lay down an appetite – an appetite for food, media, entertainment, etc. Fasting clears us out and opens us up to intentionally seek God’s will and grace in a way that goes beyond normal habits of worship and prayer.”¹

Fasting helps us turn down the noise of the world so that we can better hear the voice of God; fasting helps us let go of the things of the world and grab hold of the things of Jesus.

What is Fasting Not?

It is important to understand what fasting is and what it is not. Fasting is “to be seen as a blessing, not a burden; fasting is not about fulfilling a requirement but receiving a reward; in other words, it’s not about what you’re having to let go of, but about what you are preparing to take hold of.”²

“Fasting is **not** a magical guarantee that God would answer just because we fast. We cannot manipulate God into doing our will by self-denial through fasting. When people do not live as God desires they should be prepared for fasting to accomplish nothing (Isaiah 58:3-7). Fasting does not make anyone pious or holy and does not earn points with God (Matthew 6:16; Luke 18:9-4).”³

Why Should I Fast?

Fasting reminds us that we are not simply physical beings but spiritual beings. “Thus, we willingly set aside a little comfort so that we can listen and attend to the voice and nourishment of God alone.”⁴

Some reasons why it’s important to fast:⁵

1. A deeper friendship with God (John 6:27): fasting leads us to develop a deeper, more intimate friendship with God. God is never a means to an end; He is THE end.

¹ Adele Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2015).

² Dave Clayton, *Revival Starts Here: A Short Conversation on Prayer, Fasting, and Revival for Beginners Like Me* (HIM, 2018).

³ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook, Practices That Transform Us*, 246.

⁴ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*

⁵ Clayton, *Revival Starts Here: A Short Conversation on Prayer, Fasting, and Revival for Beginners Like Me*

2. Renewed hunger for heavenly things: as we empty our stomachs for a reason, we often become more aware of the emptiness in our souls. As we begin to pay attention to the hunger pangs, the Lord often awakens us to the true hunger pangs of our hearts, as well.
3. Soul training for self-denial (Mark 8:34): self-denial is not about being miserable for the sake of God but about making space for more of God. Self-denial is a natural response of our heart when we begin to believe that only Jesus knows what is truly best for us in this life and in the next.
4. Intimacy, security, and strength (Luke 4:1-14): The Scriptures surface a clear connection between intimacy with God, security in our identity, and the strength needed to live holy lives in the face of temptation.
5. Clarity in prayer (Daniel 10 & Isaiah 58): A potential breakthrough often comes by way of answered prayer. In seasons of prayer and fasting, you can experience levels of refreshment and clarity.
6. Humility for revival (2 Chronicles 7:14): Humility is a magnet for the presence of God and fasting has a way of bringing us low.
7. Freedom from demonic strongholds (Mark 9:9): Many people may begin experiencing freedom from demonic strongholds in the context of prayer and fasting.

When Should I Fast?

When in need of revival, change, deliverance in times of drought/desert, darkness, confusion; need for clarity/direction, divine intervention, breakthrough, healing (of any kind) desire for closeness and intimacy with God.⁶

How Do I Fast?

The following are some ways for fasting⁷

1. **Major Fast:** This involves abstaining from food or drink for twenty-four consecutive hours or more (Matt. 4:2, Acts 9:9, Esther 4:15-16). Check with your doctor as this type of fasting requires a certain level of physical health.

⁶ Dave Clayton, Revival Starts Here: A Short Conversation on Prayer, Fasting, and Revival for Beginners Like Me

⁷ Clayton, Revival Starts Here: A Short Conversation on Prayer, Fasting, and Revival for Beginners Like Me

2. **Minor Fast:** You choose to abstain from food for a certain period of time – eating only at a set time of the day (i.e., 6am-3pm or sunup to sundown). Most people drink liquids during the day and have one **small** meal after sundown each evening.
3. **Partial Fast:** When you give up only certain foods during the course of your fast out of devotion to God for a period of time. An example of this is the Daniel Fast (from Daniel 1) where you abstain from eating meat, sugar, and processed foods.
4. **Soul Fast:** some people choose to fast from things other than food, like social media, television, shopping, certain entertainment activities, physical intimacy with a spouse (in line with 1 Corinthians 7:5).

A Day of Fasting:

A common question for many people about fasting during the day is, “Besides abstaining from food, what else should I do during the day (or days) that I fast?” Below are a few suggestions that might be helpful:

Morning Suggestions:

- Begin your day in praise and worship
- Focus on reading and meditating on one book of the Bible
- Pray and invite the Holy Spirit to examine and search your heart and life

Midday Suggestions:

Another significant time of day is the lunch hour. Dedicate your lunchtime to the Lord by:

- Reading and meditating on Scripture
- Taking a short prayer walk
- Meeting up with others who are fasting to pray, read Scripture, and worship together.

Evening Suggestions:

The way you end your day will set the tone for the next day.

- Spend some unhurried time with God without the pressures or constraints of work or school
- Avoid or limit outside distractions such as television or social media
- Spend some time on your knees in prayer alone in a closed room

Additional resources:

1. Fasting: Spiritual Freedom Beyond Our Appetites by Lynne M. Baab
2. A Hunger for God: Desiring God Through Fasting and Prayer by John Piper
3. Simplicity and Fasting by Jan Johnson
4. Soul Feast by Marjorie Thompson, chapter 5
5. Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us – “Fasting” by Adele A. Calhoun.
6. Revival Starts Here: A Short Conversation on Prayer, Fasting, and Revival for Beginners Like Me by David Clayton.

Some Helpful Reflection Questions When Fasting:

1. What sin is the Holy Spirit bringing to light? What sins do you need to confess to Him right now?
2. Who do you need to confess your sin(s) to? (James 5:16)
3. Who do you need to forgive? Who do you need to go and reconcile with? (Matthew 5:23-24)
4. When you feel empty or restless, what do you do to try to fill the emptiness? What does this tell you about your heart?
5. What feelings arise in you when you spend time in prayer instead of eating, watching tv, etc.?
6. What thoughts or worldly cares interrupt your prayer, your sleep?
7. What is the Holy Spirit revealing to you about your temptations? What is He asking you to give up or let go?
8. What idols is the Lord revealing to you so you surrender and repent from them?
9. What do you fear the most? What are your anxious thoughts? Do you need to confess them and cast them upon Jesus? (1 Peter 5:6-7)
10. Where do you operate from an entitlement mentality? How can you wean yourself from this way of life?
11. What changes or breakthroughs do you hope to experience as a result of fasting?
12. Are you seeking God's will for your life? If so, what is it?
13. Do you know what your calling is?
14. How are you using your time, talent, and resources for the Kingdom of God?
15. Is there any sense in your life that God has His hand on you for eternal purposes?

Topical Scriptures to read when Fasting:

The following themes and scripture references are from Dr. Tony Evan's sermon series on fasting:

Praise/Thanksgiving: Psalms 34, 118, 100:4, 105:1-3

Deliverance: 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Romans 7:14-25; Matthew 17:14-21; 13:31-32; Mark 9:14-29

Burdens: Nehemiah 1:1-2:1-9; Lamentations 3:1-66; Matthew 11:28-30

Protection: James 4:1-10; 2 Chronicles 20:1-30; 1 Samuel 17:1-54; 2 Kings 6: 8-23; Esther.

Future Spouse: Genesis 24:1-67

Marriage: Isaiah 58:1-11; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5; Matthew 9:14-17; Genesis 22:1-12

Healing: Exodus 15:26; Deut. 32:29; Psalm 103:1-3; Exodus 23:25; Luke 8:43-48; 2 Chronicles 16:12-13; Isaiah 58:1-11; 1 Samuel 1:3-20; James 5:16; Matthew 9:1-6; 2 Samuel 12:1-23; James 5:13-15

Crisis/Need: 1 Kings 17:2-16; Luke 4: 24-27; 6:38; Proverbs 11:25; Acts 20:35; Matthew 7:7-12; Philippians 4:16-19; Ecclesiastes 11:1-6; Psalm 50:14-15

Guidance: Ezra 8:21-34; Proverbs 16:9; Romans 4:20-21; 1 John 2:20; John 16:13; Hebrews 4:12

Revival: Joel 1:1-2:32; James 4:5-10; Jonah 3:1-10

Spiritual Warfare: Luke 4:1-13; Deut. :1-3; Habakkuk 3:17-19; Philippians 4:12-13

Suffering: John 16:33; Job, James 5:11; John 11:1; Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 10:5; 12:7-10; 1 Peter 5:10-11; James 5:13-15

Ministry/Calling: Acts 13:1-5; 14:21-23

Intimacy: Matthew 9:15; 6:16-18; Revelation 3:15-22; James 4:8; Psalm 42:1-2; 139:23-24; Luke 2:36-38

Justice: Isaiah 58; James 5:1-6; 1 John 3:17; 4:20; Luke 10:25-37

Purity/Holiness: Genesis 39:1-23

Lent Fasting: Matthew 26-28

Suggestions on What to Fast From:

Processed Sugar

Meat

Fast food

Alcohol beverages

Podcasts

Music

Coffee or Soda

Dating

Sports

Video games

Television

Social Media

Shopping

Digital Resources:

1. [Pastor Joby – True Fasting Devo](#)
2. [Pastor JR Vassar – Spiritual Warfare](#)
3. [Dr. Tony Evan - Fasting](#)