

About Fasting

What is Fasting?

Fasting is the act of **giving something up** and **redirecting our attention** to God.

1. Fasting is not necessarily about just giving up food. Fasting from food is the primary method we see in Scripture, but we can choose to give up anything that is important to us.
2. Spiritual fasting is different from an exercise in self-control or dieting because we intentionally choose to redirect our focus towards God. By giving something up we make space in our lives for Him and allow our hearts to align to His will.

Fasting is something personal between you and God. God wants hearts that are open to Him, not a legalistic following of laws. This means the way each of us chooses to engage with a fast can be different, even when we are fasting from the same thing!

How Do I Know What I Should Fast?

If you are unsure of what you should fast from, some great questions to reflect on with God are:

- Over the course of my day, what seems to take more time and attention than I would like it to?
- Is there anything that distracts me when I try to spend time with God?
- Is there anything that really worries me / scares me that I might be prompted to fast? (This question helps to highlight things in our life that we might have an unhealthy level of attachment to)

If you are still unsure some suggestions could be:

- From your phone – it is possible to lock your phone down without uninstalling apps so you only have access to messages and phone calls if needed for work.
- From television/screens – choosing to give your attention to God when you would normally be engaging with entertainment.
- From media – fasting from social media, news, shows etc. These items can all steal lots of our attention during the day.
- From comfort – maybe choosing to sleep simply on the ground for the week.

What Types of Food Fasts are There?

Fasting is a personal sacrifice between you and God. You can decide what that looks like, but here are some ideas that might help as you discern how to engage.

- **'Daniel' Fast** – This is named after Daniel 1:11-14 where Daniel and his friends choose to forgo the rich food of the king for simple vegetables and water to drink. A Daniel fast chooses water and unspiced vegetables as a sacrifice and reminder to focus attention on God. This is a good fast for extended periods.
- **Partial Fast** – A partial fast chooses to forgo certain foods/food products. Sometimes people choose to forgo all food but drink fresh juices instead.
- **Normal Fast** – A normal fast is a good but accessible challenge to fasting for the first time. Here you go without food, and only drink water.
- **Full Fast** – A full fast is when you go without **food and water** for a certain period of time. Please be aware, **this is not a good introduction to fasting** and can be **dangerous**. Dehydration is a serious concern.

How Can I Fast From Food Safely?

The idea of fasting from food can be quite intimidating, particularly if you are new to spiritual fasting. Here are some simple guidelines to follow:

1. ***Check With a Doctor/Medical Professional First!***

God does not want us to hurt ourselves in pursuit of Him. If you are diabetic; pregnant; have a heart condition, are currently sick, **or for any reason are unsure if you can/should fast from food** please talk to a doctor or medical professional who is aware of your conditions and history.

2. ***Be Wise About When You Fast***

Choosing to fast from food can affect your concentration levels a little, so consider the best times to fast. Think about the best times to start and end your fast. This might be sunset to sunset the following day, or it could be from lunch to lunch. Fit it in with your schedule.

Fasting food can affect concentration so consider if you need to make quick decisions at work or will be doing long distance driving before fasting. For these options, choosing to fast one meal a day over a longer period might be more accessible.

3. ***Start and End Your Fast Well***

The start and end of your food fast are important times. Sometimes people try to 'stock up' before a fast, or gorge at the end of a fast but this is unwise. Instead, eat small meals of fresh food and vegetables before and after the fast. Likewise, we recommend avoiding greasy and heavily processed foods directly before and after.

FAQs

What if I fail/make a mistake during my fast?

Fasting is something personal between you and God. God wants hearts that are open to Him, not a legalistic following of laws. The point of a fast is to intentionally fix our eyes on God, it is not about completing some sort of ritual. If you forget and eat something, take the opportunity to come before God and acknowledge it knowing that in Jesus we are forgiven.

Am I Allowed to Tell People I Am Fasting, Or Do I Need to Keep It A Secret?

Matthew 6:16-18 contains teaching from Jesus about fasting. Jesus speaks of not drawing attention or making a performance to the fact you are fasting. He spoke in similar ways about praying and giving, yet we will still pray with others. This passage is a reminder that we do these things to grow closer to God, not get praise from other people. Sometimes our stories that emerge from the practice of spiritual fasting can be an encouragement or teaching opportunity for others in their faith journey.

Can I take Communion while fasting?

It is up to you and the way you have defined your fast. Remember, a fast is between you and God. It depends upon the boundaries you have set for yourself.