

QUICK TIPS for a SUCCESSFUL FAST



WHY SHOULD WE FAST?

The Bible presents fasting as something that is good, profitable, and expected. The Book of Acts records believers fasting before they made important decisions (Acts 13:4; 14:23). Fasting and prayer are often linked together (Luke 2:37; 5:33). Too often, the focus of fasting is on the lack of food. Instead, the purpose of fasting should be to take your eyes off the things of this world, and instead focus on God. Fasting is a way to demonstrate to God, and to yourself, that you are serious about your relationship with Him. Fasting helps you to gain a new perspective and a renewed reliance upon God.

Although fasting in Scripture is almost always a fasting from food, there are other ways to fast. Anything you can temporarily give up in order to better focus on God can be considered a fast (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). Fasting should be limited to a set time, especially when the fasting is from food. Extended periods of time without eating are harmful to the body. Fasting is not intended to punish your flesh, but to focus on God. Fasting should not be considered a "dieting method" either. Do not fast to lose weight, but rather to gain deeper fellowship with God. Yes, anyone can fast. Some may not be able to fast from food (diabetics for example), but everyone can temporarily give up something in order to focus on God.

By taking our eyes off the distractions, we can focus better on Christ. Fasting is not a way to get God to do what we want. Fasting is a means through which God changes us. Fasting is not a way to appear more spiritual than others. Fasting is to be done in a spirit of humility and a joyful attitude. Matthew 6:16-18 declares, "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

PREPARING SPIRITUALLY

- Start with a clear goal. Why are you fasting? Do you need direction, healing, restoration of marriage or family issues? Are you fasting for the salvation of loved ones? Are you facing financial difficulties?
- Confess your sins to God.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of weakness.
- Forgive all who have offended you and ask forgiveness from those you may have offended (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3-4).
- Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ and reject any life struggles that try to hinder you (Romans 12:1-2).
- You are following Jesus' example when you fast.

PREPARING PHYSICALLY

- If you have health concerns, consult your doctor prior to beginning a fast and explain what you plan to do. This is especially important if you take prescription medications or have a chronic ailment. Some people should never fast without professional supervision.
- Choose a fast that is appropriate for your physical condition and daily demands of work, etc. Be led by the Holy Spirit, not through guilt or condemnation.
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HOW TO BEGIN

- Start slowly and gradually. Take at least 3-4 days and prepare your body by gradually eating smaller meals.
- Gradually wean your body from caffeinated drinks such as soft drinks and coffee. Abrupt removal of these drinks will "shock" your body making it difficult to focus during the fast.

DURING THE FAST

- Pray daily and read the Bible. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and strength.
- Expect God to speak to You. When you begin a conversation with Him he will speak to you through dreams, visions or prophetic words. Write these down.
- Refrain from critical speaking, spreading negative words about or to anyone else.

- Consider limiting how much you watch TV, and how much time you spend on things that are distracting. Remember to replace that time with prayer and Bible study. That time with Jesus will produce dramatic change in your life.
- Spend time listening to praise and worship music.
- Pray as often as you can throughout the day. Get away from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mind set on seeking God's face.
- Expect tiredness. It will be important that you get plenty of rest during your fast.
- Exercise only moderately.
- Drink plenty of water and juices.
- Expect some discomfort. You are detoxifying your body. Headaches, hunger pains and nausea are likely to happen at first.
- Diarrhea is likely as your digestive system adjusts to solid foods/meats being removed from your diet.
- Bad breath is to be expected. Avoid sugar mints, but brush teeth and tongue with toothbrush regularly.

HOW TO END // BREAKING YOUR FAST

- Avoid eating solid foods immediately after your fast.
- Don't overeat when the time comes to end your fast. Practice restraint by eating smaller portions of soft foods, soups, etc. Begin eating solid foods gradually.

DECIDING WHAT TYPE OF FAST

The type of fast you choose is up to you. If you are new to fasting, you may want to choose a partial fast where you give up one meal and replace that time with prayer. Or you may want to consider a Daniel fast for several days and include a complete fast for a couple of days in the middle of your fast. However you choose to fast, God will honor your sacrifice.

- What you fast is up to you.
- Complete Fast— Drink only liquids; water, 100% juice and clear broth (you establish number of days). *Consult your doctor.*
- Daniel Fast—Eating only vegetables and drinking only water (you establish number of days).
- Partial Fast— This fast is from 6 am to 3 pm or from sun-up to sundown. A partial fast can also be any type of fast (you establish number of days).
- 3-day fast—This fast can be any type of fast (Complete Fast, Daniel Fast, or you can give up one item of food).

DECIDING HOW LONG

Most people can easily fast from one to three days, but you may feel the grace to go longer, even as much as 21 to 40 days. Use wisdom and pray for guidance. Beginners are advised to start slow. There are Biblical patterns examples of 1-day, 3 days, 7 days, 14 days, 21 days and 40 days.

WHAT TO EXPECT

When you fast, your body detoxifies, eliminating toxins from your system. This can cause mild discomfort such as headaches and irritability during withdrawal from caffeine and sugars. And naturally, you will have hunger pangs. Limit your activity as much as possible, and exercise moderately. Take time to rest. Fasting brings about miraculous results.

Suggested Fasting Schedule for the 14-day fast:

Week 1: Partial fast—give up 1 meal/day and replace with a time you can pray alone; reduce caffeinated drinks 1/day.

Week 2: Daniel fast*—vegetables and water only; no caffeinated drinks; no sweets
 (*Called a Daniel fast after the manner in which Daniel fasted in Daniel 1:8-14)

Suggested Fasting Schedule for the 21-day fast:

Week 1: Partial fast—give up 1 meal/day and replace with a time you can pray alone; reduce caffeinated drinks 1/day.

Week 2: Daniel fast—vegetables and water only; no caffeinated drinks

Week 3: Partial fast—give up 1 meal/day and replace with a time you can pray alone; reduce caffeinated drinks to 1/day.

Types of Fasts

The PARTIAL FAST—eliminates certain foods, drinks or non-food pleasures. The Holy Spirit may lead you to do a partial fast—eating and/or drinking certain foods and avoiding others. For example:

- drinking fruit juices
- eating bland foods (foods which are nutritional and yet are not especially desirable for sweetness or flavor)
- eliminating meats
- eliminating sweets
- eating only fruit, nuts and vegetables
- abstaining from non-food items like a favorite TV show, or eliminating TV altogether

The DANIEL FAST—eliminates meats; focuses on fruits and vegetables

The concept of a Daniel fast comes from Daniel 1:8-14, "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you." Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days."

The background of the "Daniel fast" is that Daniel and his three friends had been "deported" to Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians had conquered Judah (2 Kings 24:13-14). Daniel and his three friends were put into the Babylonian court servant "training program." Part of the program was learning Babylonian customs, beliefs, laws, and practices. The eating habits of the Babylonians were not in complete agreement with the Mosaic law. As a result, Daniel asked if he and his three friends could be excused from eating the meat (which was likely sacrificed to Babylonian false gods and idols).

So, a Daniel fast is eating only fruits and vegetables for a certain amount of time, abstaining from meat products. Some people use a Daniel fast as a dieting method. Some people use a Daniel fast instead of fasting from food entirely. The Bible nowhere commands believers to observe a Daniel fast. As a result, it is a matter of Christian freedom whether to observe a Daniel fast.

The TOTAL FAST—eliminates meats and solid foods. This is a liquid fast only. This type of fast should be done under the direction of your physician if you have health issues of any kind.