

# Guidelines on Fasting

Isaiah 58:3-14.

Fasting is about **prayer and seeking God**. It is a particular way of devoting yourself to seeking God and listening to him. By fasting you can create more time to focus on God and **deepen your dependence upon Him**. Remember that fasting is not the same as dieting or hunger strike! We can't manipulate God - but we can respond to Him and seek him. Fasting is not for show .

*" But you, when you fast anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" Matthew 6:17-18.*

Remember that the purpose of fasting is to meet with God, not to damage our bodies or create condemnation.

Fasting isn't just about what we do or do not eat or drink; it is about the attitude with which we come, humbling ourselves before God in repentance and sincerity of heart, seeking His will and not our own.

One day set aside before the Lord in true prayer and fasting, humbling our hearts before Him, reading his word and spending more time than usual in prayer can be more effective than an extensive time of "prayer" without impact.

Luke Ch4 Jesus fasted 40 days to

- Resist temptation
- Raise faith
- Release heaven to earth ( after fasting Jesus was "empowered by the Holy Spirit" )

Biblical ref on the purpose of fasting:

For humility: Ezra 8:21, Ps 35:13. Seeking the Lord: 2Chron 20:3-4. Appointing and sending workers: Acts13:2-3, Acts 14:23. Confession of sin: 1 Sam7:6, Neh 9:1-3. Mourning: 2 Sam1:12, Joel 2:12, Prayer and intercession: Dan 9:3,Ezra 8:23. Preparing for spiritual warfare: Matt 17:21. Releasing Faith: Matt17v21 (to move mountains)

## Five Types of Fasts:

In the scripture there are a number of different examples of types of fast.

### 1. Normal Fast

No food is eaten - drinking either water or juice (cup-a-soup doesn't count!). Most people would be able to fast for up to two weeks without any ill affects (Matt 4:1-2).

### 2. Absolute Fast

To fast completely without food or water up to a **MAXIMUM OF TWO OR AT MOST THREE DAYS**. Please note that it is dangerous to go without drinking water. See Esther 4:16, Ezra 10:6, Acts 9:9.

### 3. Forty Day Fast!

There are only 3 people who fasted for forty days in the Bible: Moses, Elijah and Jesus. Moses fasted for forty days twice in the actual presence of God (Exod 34:28, Deut 10:10),

Elijah fasted for 40 days after being fed by an angel (1 Kings 19:8) and Jesus (who is the Son of God) was led by the Holy Spirit to fast for 40 days in the desert (Matt 4:2). If we take the Bible as our guide, we should only fast for 40 days (or a similarly long period) if led by God to the same degree.

#### **4. Simple or Partial Fast**

Daniel resolved not to eat 'fine food' (Daniel 9:13, 10:2-3). This is a practical way to fast for longer periods, for those involved in heavy work, long driving, or who have medical reasons for requiring regular food intake. Simplify the food you eat and the time it takes to prepare it and/or cut down the number of meals you eat (e.g. skipping lunch to pray).

#### **5. "20th Century" Fast**

The complexities of modern living can easily become a barrier to knowing God. For some giving up television, videos, video games and the Internet can bring great results. Good for children.

#### **Common sense guidelines when fasting from food.**

1. If you have little experience of fasting start with a partial or one day fast.
2. Be careful if you do a lot of driving, heavy manual work or operate dangerous equipment.
3. If you are fasting for more than two days make yourself accountable to someone else. Be willing to stop if you become too weak - remember it's not a competition.
4. If drinking juice, drink low or non-acidic diluted juices.
5. Drinking juice on longer fasts can be a hindrance as your hunger mechanism may not 'shut off' - switch to drinking water only.
6. **Don't fast if you are: underweight, pregnant, on medication, epileptic, diabetic, a child (i.e. still growing) or have any reason to suspect it may be harmful to you. If in doubt seek the advice of a doctor or responsible Christian leader.**
7. Prepare well if you are going on a longer fast. Eat less for the 2-5 days before starting and cut out rich, greasy and high cholesterol food. Eat salad, fruit and fibre-rich food for the few meals before starting. If you are fasting for a long time, break the fast slowly and gently. If on a long fast (more than a week or so) stop when your hunger returns - it is time to break the fast. If fasting for more than two weeks your stomach will 'shut down' and will need to be 'coaxed back into action'. Allow yourself about 7 days to return to normal eating. Start with non-acidic juice, then fruit and 'soft' salad, then light soups, then small meals. Beware of the temptation to eat too much too soon.
8. You are unlikely to be led by God to fast for 40 days. Seek the advice of a spiritual mentor.

#### **Notes**

- Hunger pains normally fade after two or three days.
- Headaches are normal in the first few days (as the toxins from tea coffee and alcohol come out of your system). Drinking extra water will help.
- After a day or so you may feel dizziness or tiredness - don't stand up too quickly, take a little extra rest.

- Exercise only lightly.
- If you are unsure about anything please feel free to speak to one of the leaders.
- For further reading on fasting see 'God's chosen fast' by Arthur Wallis, and 'Celebration of Discipline' by Richard Forster.

When fasting it is helpful to:

- Set yourself a daily schedule of reading Gods word and to pray.
- Keep a notebook at hand to write down any revelations or impressions and scriptures God gives you.
- Write out prayers of worship, thanksgiving, and praise to our wonderful God.
- Write prayer requests to God for yourself, others, the church, the place you live ,work
- Write His answers (we forget very easily!!!)

**Colossians 3:1-4**

"If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your mind on the things above , not on the things that are on the earth.

For you have died and your life is hidden in Christ in God

When Christ who is our life is revealed then you also will be revealed with him in glory"

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