

AN INVITATION TO FASTING

If fasting is new to you, don't worry—there's no need to feel intimidated. It's not about perfection or meeting specific expectations; it's about taking a step closer to God and expressing our dependence on him. Fasting is an ancient biblical practice, used throughout church history and even embraced by teenagers and entire communities.

Fasting is more than just abstaining from food; it is a spiritual discipline that invites believers into a deeper relationship with God. In a very real sense, fasting brings our physical bodies into greater awareness and alignment with spiritual realities. In the Bible, fasting is often associated with prayer, repentance, humility, and seeking God's will. It is an invitation to focus the heart and mind on God, and it can serve as a means of spiritual renewal, self-reflection, and growth.

KEY BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF FASTING

- 1. Purpose of Fasting:** Fasting is not an end in itself, but is a means to a deeper connection with God. Throughout Scripture, fasting is often accompanied by prayer and a desire for God's guidance or intervention. In Matthew 6:16-18, Jesus teaches that fasting should be done with the right heart—not to be seen by others, but as a private act of devotion to God. The ultimate goal is to align one's heart and desires with God's will rather than to gain personal recognition.
- 2. Humility and Repentance:** Fasting in the Bible is frequently linked to repentance and a humble acknowledgment of one's need for God. In the Old Testament, fasting was often a response to sin, a way for people to express sorrow and seek God's forgiveness. In Joel 2:12-13, God says to the people, "Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." The act of fasting in this context signifies a turning away from self-reliance and a return to God's grace and mercy.
- 3. Spiritual Strength and Focus:** Fasting also serves as a means of spiritual strength. In Matthew 4:1-11, Jesus fasted for 40 days in the wilderness, preparing for his public ministry and overcoming the temptations of the enemy. Through fasting, a believer is able to remove distractions and gain clarity, allowing them to focus

more fully on prayer, worship, and the Word of God. It is a way to intentionally shift attention from earthly concerns to heavenly priorities.

- 4. Spiritual Warfare:** In some cases, fasting is a way to engage in spiritual warfare. In Mark 9:29, Jesus speaks about a certain kind of demon that can only be cast out by prayer and fasting. Fasting is seen as a tool to strengthen one's spiritual resolve and seek God's intervention in areas of intense spiritual struggle or need.

THE OPPORTUNITY FASTING PRESENTS

Fasting offers believers a unique opportunity to grow spiritually. When a person fasts, they are invited to:

- **Strengthen Their Dependence on God:** Fasting helps break the illusion of self-sufficiency. By willingly choosing to forgo food or other comforts, the believer is reminded of their dependence on God for provision and strength.
- **Increase Sensitivity to God's Voice:** With fewer distractions, fasting creates space for the Holy Spirit to speak more clearly to a person's heart. It invites a deeper level of intimacy and listening to God's voice through prayer and reflection.
- **Experience God's Presence in New Ways:** Just as Jesus fasted to prepare for his ministry, fasting can help prepare the heart for God's work. It opens the door to new revelations, personal breakthroughs, and a renewed sense of God's presence.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN FASTING

- 1. Motivation:** The Bible cautions against fasting for the wrong reasons, such as to appear spiritual or to manipulate God. It is essential to fast with humility, sincerely seeking God rather than personal gain (Matthew 6:16–18). Also on a practical note, when you fast you may not feel very spiritual, but instead you may feel easily agitated. You can count on feeling natural emotions that are normal when a person goes without food. That doesn't mean you are doing it wrong. It's just another opportunity to tell God you need him.
- 2. Health and Practicality:** While fasting is a biblical practice, it's important to consider one's health and circumstances. Fasting from food, especially for extended periods of time, should be done cautiously. While the term "fasting" is limited to specifically abstaining from food, other alternatives, such as giving up other comforts (e.g., sugar, beverages besides water, social media, or entertainment), can also be beneficial for those who may have health issues.

- 3. Spiritual Community:** Fasting is often a communal practice in the Bible. Though it can be done privately, fasting with others can deepen the experience and provide mutual support in seeking God's will.

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HOW TO FAST

A biblical fast means to reduce or eliminate food intake for a specific period of time for the purpose of seeking God. The proper way to fast is to use the time you would have spent preparing, eating, and sharing a meal to feast on the Word and talk to the Lord. Think of it this way: How long would it take for you to have lunch with a friend? And what would you do when you had lunch together? You would eat and talk. Think of reading the Word as the eating part of the meal, and prayer as the conversational part of the meal. Take your time. Don't wolf down the meal. Read the Scriptures slowly. And don't rush the conversation. Instead, enjoy God's company. Give God your full attention, and tell him why you are fasting.

There are many ways to fast. You can abstain from food and liquids for one or more days. You can fast just from food. You can do a partial fast from certain foods (sometimes called a Daniel fast). If fasting is new for you, you might just try fasting from one meal. Fast during your lunch break and use that time to "feast" on the Lord. Go out to your car, sit at your desk, or go for a walk, but use that time to read your Bible and talk to God in prayer.

A SPECIAL NOTE FOR STUDENTS

It's important for all of us to carefully consider our decision to fast. If you are a student, we are excited that you are journeying deeper with God and your church family! We encourage you to process your plans with your parents or guardians. After that conversation, continue that discussion with your life group leader or another trusted adult. Young bodies are developing and there are special considerations for those who may have a complicated relationship with food, or have a medical concern. Fasting can be a very powerful way to experience more of God and align your heart and mind with his purposes, so don't shy away from the idea just because you are young, but please make a careful decision together with your parents and spiritual leaders.

Fasting, ultimately, is a practice that invites believers into a deeper relationship with God, enabling them to grow spiritually, discern God's direction, and experience his power in new ways. It is a sacred opportunity to be transformed by God's presence.

As we join together in this ancient spiritual practice of fasting, may our hunger for food be overshadowed by an increasing hunger for more of God in our midst.

[CLICK HERE](#)

for additional resources on fasting.