

## Quick Guide to Fasting

In over fifty references to fasting in the Old Testament there is no specific command to fast, with the exception of the Day of Atonement for the Jews. In the New Testament it was assumed that fasting would be a part of the normal devotional life of the believer.

Matthew 6:16 - “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.”

Acts 13:2 “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said...

These verses indicate that fasting should be a normal discipline in the church (and the numerous examples of fasting in Scripture support the idea.)

1. **Definition of “Fasting”** — going without food and sometimes water voluntarily, generally for religious purposes. There are four types of fasts referred to in the Bible.

- a. Normal fast: Going without food (Ex. 34:28; Ezra 8:21, 23; Dan. 6:18; Luke 2:37; Matt. 4:2).
- b. Partial fast: Abstaining from certain foods (Daniel 10:3).
- c. Absolute fast: Going without food or water no more than three days (Esther 4:16, this is very rare in the Bible).
- d. Group fast: Called for a specific reason for a specific group of people (I Samuel 7:6; 2 Chronicles 20:3; Jonah 3:5 and others).

### 2. Purpose of Fasting

- a. As worship: God-centered, God-initiated, and God-ordained.
- b. An expression of distress, grief, or repentance.
- c. A preparation for God to give guidance and renewal (Daniel 9; Ex. 34:28).
- d. An opportunity for revelation of things that control us and hinder our intimacy with God.
- e. A balance in life (1 Corinthians 9:27; Psalm 35:13).

### 3. Scriptural references on fasting (reasons & occasions):

- For revelation — Daniel 9:2, 3, 21,22
- Humbling the soul—Psalm 69:10; Ezra8:21; Isaiah 58:3
- To be heard on high—Ezra 8:23
- Whole-heartedness—Joel 2:12; Jeremiah 29:13, 14
- Victory awarded — II Chronicles 20:1-30
- Harm averted—Ezra 8:21; 23,31
- Judgment deferred — Jonah 3:5 and 10
- To free the captives — Isaiah 58:6
- Jesus’ example — Matthew 4:2
- Actions God rewards — Matthew 6:16
- Ordaining ministry—Acts 14:21-23
- Encounter with God —Acts 10:30

### 4. Practice of Fasting

- a. For an occasional fast, eat a light meal (fruit, vegetables, yogurt, etc.) prior to beginning. Drink a lot of water. Skip 2-3meals and break the fast with fruit juices followed by a light meal. Avoid oils, dressings and starch for a couple of meals.
- b. When starting a regular discipline of fasting, begin slowly with a partial 24-hour (2 meal) fast once a week for several weeks while drinking fruit juices.
- c. Monitor your inner attitudes and maintain a worshipful attitude.
- d. Break the fast with a light meal of fruits and vegetables.
- e. After a few weeks, try a normal fast, drinking lots of water only.
- f. Always be careful not to call attention to what you are doing.
- g. After succeeding with this for several weeks, move to a 36-hour (3 meal) fast.
- h. Seek the Lord regarding extended fasts. Get additional information on conducting extended fasts and clear the fast with your physician. (People with certain physical conditions should not fast).
- i. If skipping meals is not possible, try fasting certain types of foods (like sweets or soft drinks) or you can fast activities (like TV or sports). It’s important to convert that time to devotional activities, not just abstain from them.