

Knowing and Experiencing God Through Fasting

George Stahnke 1995

What Is Fasting? Fasting is a biblical discipline meaning to withhold food and/ or drink from your body in order to come into more intimate and powerful contact with God.

While all believers are encouraged to fast, there are no regulations or set rules given as to how long or how often. That is determined by individual desire and need: the “calling of God” in our hearts.

You may decide to fast because of your personal circumstances, or God Himself may prompt you. There are also times when church or government leaders will call for corporate fasting. (Joel 1:14; 2:12) Either way, fasting is of no spiritual value unless you do it deliberately, with a desire but to seek God. “... I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread” (Job 23:12)

Why Should I Fast? Your fast should be motivated by a sincere desire to communicate with God. It is a time when you stop and give Him your attention and respond from the heart to His word to you. It is a time to humble oneself before the Lord and to acknowledge our need of Him. It is also a time of intercession for a specific need for yourself or others. “I set my face to the Lord God by prayer, with supplication, with fasting.” (Daniel 9:3)

Fasting does wonders when combined with prayer and faith. The power of and efficacy of prayer is multiplied many times through fasting. (Isaiah 58:6-9) When you pray with fasting you are giving heaven notice that you are truly in earnest; that you will not give up nor let God go without the blessing. You are using a means that God has chosen to make His voice heard on high! When we fast it should not be to draw attention to ourselves, but rather done for spiritual purposes in secret. (Matthew 6:16-18)

How Should We Fast? First you should determine which one of the three basic forms of fasting God is calling you to. There is the absolute fast with no food or drink; there is the normal with no food, but water. There is the partial fast with a limited diet.

The Absolute Fast is abstinence from all food and water for an extended period of time. Ezra spent a night not eating bread or drinking water. (Ezra 10:16) Queen Ester instructed Mordecai to hold a fast and neither eat or drink for three days. (Ester 4:16) Paul fasted for three days having nothing to eat or drink. (Acts 9:9) Moses fasted forty days without food or water -- clearly a supernatural fast. He would have died with out food and water for such a long period of time. (Exodus 34:28; Leviticus 9:9) **Note:** It is not advisable to go beyond 3 days without fluids.

The Normal Fast is abstinence from food and liquid except for water. Nehemiah is seen praying and fasting for the restoration of Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 1:4) Jesus was lead into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, and eat nothing for forty days. (Luke 4:2)

The Partial Fast is a restriction of diet rather than complete abstinence from food. Daniel said, “I ate no

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delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth.” Daniel and his friends ate only vegetables and drank water for ten days. The partial fast is of great value where circumstances make a normal fast impossible. (Daniel 1:9-16;10:3)

Some Practical Guidelines:

- Stop drinking tea, coffee and soft drinks a few days before you start your fast. This will help to prevent the headaches often experienced with fasting due to caffeine withdrawal.
- Resist the temptation to indulge yourself with excessive eating just before you start a fast. Purpose to cut down in advance; this is a battle of self-discipline.
- Just before and after the fast, eat plenty of fresh fruit, and roughage such as high fiber breads and cereals. This will help keep your system working smoothly.
- Enter your fast with expectant faith. Determine to seek God diligently by fasting, and you will have every right to expect that God will reward you. (Hebrews 11:6)
- Set objectives for fasting, and write them down. Besides listing your goals, you also want to write down a daily schedule for prayer, Bible study, reading study books or listening to tapes. Be sure to get some exercise, such as walking, and plenty of rest. Do not allow yourself to get so busy that forfeit your scheduled time to seek God!
- Add one-third teaspoon of uncooked honey and one teaspoon of lemon juice to a glass of water to take while you are fasting. This dissolves mucus and helps flush toxins out of your system.
- You may experience some physical discomfort while fasting such as dizziness, headaches, nausea, and general weakness. This usually indicates that your body needs to clean itself. Do not become discouraged. Fasting will help to accomplish that. Avoid the temptation to quit your fast prematurely.
- Don't worry about your body's regularity. While fasting bowel movements will cease towards the end of the first week. They will resume shortly after the fast is broken.
- If you are on prescription medication, pregnant, elderly, or under a doctor's supervision, obtain medical advise before fasting. It may be best for you to elect a partial fast.
- You can expect to loose some weight. A normal person will loose up to two pounds per day; an overweight person may loose much more.
- It's a good idea to carry some type of breath mint with you to avoid offending others.
- Upon breaking a fast, consider which eating, drinking, and lifestyle habits should remain eliminated, or at least restricted. Take to heart the continuing benefits of a fast by riding yourself of those things that hinder you in your relationship with God! (1 Corinthians 6:12, 10:23)

How Do You Break A Fast? You may be tempted to eat a big meal when the time comes to break your fast. This could make you sick, especially after a long fast. Break your fast gradually with foods that are easily digested. If you are breaking a long fast cultured yogurt is suggested. Be careful to curb your appetite. This will be a real test of self-discipline.

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Some Benefits Of Fasting

- A controlled appetite.
- A healthier body free of toxins, giving needed rest for the digestive system.
- Increased victory over carnal desires and the power of the devil. (James 4:7)
- Increased power in prayer. (James 5:16)
- Increased sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:2-3)
- Increased self-discipline.

For more information on fasting read:

God's Chosen Fast, by Arthur Wallis.

Fasting for Spiritual Break Through, by Elmer Towns