

## How to Fast?

Fasting with the right motives and under biblical principles can release huge potential in our lives. The primary purpose of fasting is self-humbling. When 'we set aside' needs, enjoyments we encourage our spiritual lives to thrive.

When it comes to fasting many religious groups adopt it as a requirement for faith. Jesus presented fasting as a responsibility that we set ourselves ("When you fast... Matthew 6:16) where we connect our natural lives with the supernatural realm. Two of the most natural things we do are eat and drink and by denying ourselves these we show God how much we love Him and our desire to put Him first!

Jesus in the desert used fasting to give him supernatural focus and get prepared for the task ahead. Fasting removes natural hindrances and self-reliance important to tackle when serving God. Fasting was not a single occurrence but was regularly practiced in the New Testament church as a discipline. The expansion of the early church revolved around collective humbling.

It's important to know that even despite some of the physical and mental health benefits, the major breakthroughs are in the realm of the Spirit.

## Getting started

Set a time to fast together or individually. Encourage your Connect group or Team to take a fast! Give the time saved to God and record anything you learn from the experience. Try fasting from phones, tv and social media too!

For health reasons total food fasts for a day or more aren't recommended for anyone under 16, expectant or breast-feeding mothers, or anyone with a medical disorder affected by diet like Diabetes.

We also recommend that food fasts should not be entered into by anyone with a history of eating disorders.

### **1. Start small**

Don't go from no fasting to attempting a weeklong. Start with one meal; maybe fast one meal a week for several weeks. Then try two meals, and work your way up to a daylong fast. Perhaps eventually try a two-day juice fast. A juice fast means abstaining from all food and beverage, except for juice and water. Allowing yourself juice provides nutrients and sugar for the body to keep you operating, while also still feeling the effects from going without solid food. It is not recommended that you abstain from water during a fast of any length.

### **2. Plan what you'll do instead of eating**

Fasting isn't merely an act of self-deprivation, but a spiritual discipline for seeking more of God's fullness. Which means we should have a plan for what positive pursuit to undertake in the time it normally takes to eat. Each fast should have a specific spiritual purpose. Identify what that is and design a focus to replace the time you would have spent eating.

### **3. Consider how it will affect others**

Fasting is no license to be unloving. It would be sad to lack concern and care for others around us because of this expression of heightened focus on God. Love for God and for neighbour go together. Good fasting mingles horizontal concern with the vertical. If anything, others should even feel

more loved and cared for when we're fasting.

So as you plan your fast, consider how it will affect others, assess how abstaining will affect them, and let them know ahead of time, instead of just being a no-show, or springing it on them in the moment that you will not be eating.

#### **4. Try different kinds of fasting**

The typical form of fasting is personal, private, and partial, but we find a variety of forms in the Bible: personal and communal, private and public, congregational and national, regular and occasional, absolute and partial. In particular, consider fasting together with your family, Connect group, or team.

#### **5. Fast from something other than food**

Fasting from food is not necessarily for everyone. Some health conditions keep even the most devout from the traditional course. However, fasting is not limited to abstaining from food. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "Fasting should really be made to include abstinence from anything which is legitimate in and of itself for the sake of some special spiritual purpose." If the better part of wisdom for you, in your health condition, is not to go without food, consider fasting from television, computer, social media, or some other regular enjoyment that would bend your heart toward greater enjoyment of Jesus.