



Church Theme:

“Connecting, Growing, Serving”



Intro Guide to Fasting

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But you, when you fast, anoint your head
and wash your face so that your fasting will
not be noticed by men, but by your
Father who is in secret; and
your Father who sees what is
done in secret will reward
you. Matthew 6:17-18

Jesus

Fasting helps express, deepens,
confirms the resolution that we are
ready to sacrifice anything, even
ourselves, to attain what we seek for
the kingdom of God.

Andrew Murray

Fasting is abstaining from
anything that hinders prayer.

Andrew Bonar

Here are a few verses to help us get started...

Nehemiah 1:4 “I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.”

Isaiah 58:6 “Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke?”

Daniel 9:3 “So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.”

Joel 1:14 “Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly; Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord.”

Joel 2:12 “Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning.” *Jonah 5:3 Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.*

Matthew 6:16-18 “Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”

Matthew 17:21 But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.

Acts 13:2 While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

Acts 14:23 When they had appointed elders for them in every church, **having prayed with fasting**, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

What Is fasting?

In the Christian Scriptures, fasting is the abstinence from or a modified diet of food and sometimes drink. An expanded view of fasting can include a pre-determined period of time in which an individual (or group) separates himself or herself from such things as social media, certain activities, habits, etc. Several types of fasting will be discussed in another section.

Am I Commanded To Fast?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline. It was a regular part of spiritual activities in both the Old and New Testaments. John the Baptist disciples fasted (Mark 2:18). Jesus taught on fasting also in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:16-18).

What Are Some Purposes For Fasting?

Many religions around the world include fasting as a part of their religious experience. Fasting has been used by people of different faiths for different purposes, including an effort to gain social influence. Such was the case with Gandhi, who began a political hunger strike on September 16, 1932 to protest the British government's changes to the electoral system,

Christian Fasting

Fasting from a Christian perspective is multi-faceted. In this section, we will mention: 6 purposes for fasting; 4 types of fasting; and 2 motives for fasting.

6 Purposes for Fasting

There are a number of valid reasons for a believer to commit to a fast. Here are at least 6 purposes found in the Bible. There may be others, but we will focus on these.

1. **Repentance of sin** – Jonah 3:1-10 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.” So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days’ walk. Then Jonah began to go through the city one day’s walk; and he cried out and said, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a **fast** and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. He issued a proclamation and it said, “In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish.” When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity, which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.

Joel 2:12-13 “Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “Return to Me with all your heart, and with **fasting**, weeping and mourning; And rend your heart and not your garments.” Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness

2. **Draw close to God** – Isaiah 58:6-9 “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.”

3. **Seek direction from God** – Acts 13:1-3 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were ministering to the Lord and **fasting**, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4. **Humble yourself before God** - 1 Kings 21:27-29 When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and **fasted**. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly. Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite: “Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son.”

5. **Express grief** - 1 Samuel 31:11-13 When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, all their valiant men marched through the night to Beth Shan. They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan and went to Jabesh, where they burned them. Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they **fasted** seven days.

6. **Seek deliverance or protection** 2 Chronicles 20:2-4 Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar” (that is, En Gedi). Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.

4 Types of Fasting

1. **Complete fast:** this type of fasting is to abstain from all food and drink including water or other liquids. It is estimated that an individual could survive 3-4 days without water. Moses survived 40 days and 40 nights without food or water but he was in God's presence on Mount Sinai. This fast is sometimes called a 'dry fast' and typically is not recommended for more than 24 hours. Our example of this type of fast is Moses.

Exodus 34:28 So Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

2. **Typical fast:** this type of fasting is to abstain from food and drink but not water. Sometimes individuals will include coffee, fruit drinks, Ensure or Boost. Including other drinks beyond water is between you and God. Our example of this type of fast is Jesus.

Matthew 4:1-2 *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.*

3. **Partial fast:** this type of fast is to abstain from certain types of foods. It could also include certain types of drinks. At times this fast is called a Daniel Fast. Our example of this type of fast is Daniel while in captivity in Babylon.

Background: Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon conquered Jehoiakim king of Judah and took into captivity slaves. One of those slaves was named Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar "appointed for

them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank."

Daniel 1:8-16 But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of

the commander of the officials, and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king." But Daniel said to the overseer, "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see." So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food. So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

4. Comfort Fast: this type of fast is to abstain from something other than food or drink. It has also been called a Comfort or Soul Fast. Strictly speaking, biblical fasting is to abstain from food and sometimes drink. This type of fasting can be helpful when seeking to focus our attention of God and break any soul-ties that might be controlling us, such as television, social media, electronics, alcohol, or other items.

2 Motives for Fasting

We must have the right motives for fasting. Below are two passages, which speak directly to our motives. As you begin your fast, consider if your motives are correct.

Incorrect – Luke 18:9-14 And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will

be exalted.”

Correct – Matthew 6:16-18 “Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your God who is in secret; and your God who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”

Getting Started

We have looked at a number of biblical aspects of fasting, now let's consider some practical guidelines for our fast. You will need to determine the guidelines of your fast. Here are a few items to help you get started.

Your Fast Purpose

The purpose of our fast is to participate in Calvary's 21-Day Prayer Focus, which begins on Monday, January 8th and ends midnight on Sunday, January 28th.

Your FastType

To which type of fast do you feel called? You have several options. During our 21-Day Prayer Focus, you might choose only one type of fast or you might choose to follow several types of fasts. For example, one week you might follow one type of fast then another week follow a different type of fast.

☐ complete fast ☐ typical fast

☐ partial fast ☐ comfort fast

Your Fast Plan

What are the guidelines of your fast? This chart will help you plan your fast and assist you to stay on track through its completion.

- ☐ number of hours each day ____
- ☐ a full day every week ____
- ☐ more than one day each week _____
- ☐ a specific food(s) _____
- ☐ a specific comfort(s) ____

Your Fast Preparation

Making the proper preparations to fast are very important. Here are a few items to consider as you get started.

Prepare Wisely - if you have health limitations, it might be beneficial to consult with your medical provider before you begin. This could help you determine which type of fast is most appropriate for you when you consider various medicines that require food. You might have other limitations as well. Give yourself flexibility and plenty of grace in your efforts. Stay safe.

Prepare Yourself - since each of the types of fasting will require an adjustment to your daily schedule, you will want to prepare mentally and physically. Mental preparation will involve not getting discouraged. This is the biggest battle you will face while fasting. Physical preparation will involve drinking plenty of water and not overeating before you begin.

Prepare Spiritually - as you fast, expect to be tempted to eat or to quit. Adjust your schedule around the times when your family might have regular meal times. Also, be prepared for spiritual discouragement to come your way.

Prepare Others - create an accountability partner(s). You will need encouragement along the way so have someone(s) who can pray for you and who will stay in contact with you. Who are two or three people you can enlist as accountability partners?

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Your Fast Notes

Don't forget to write out your thoughts while fasting. What spiritual insights is God giving you during this time?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be a standard notebook page or a sheet of stationery designed for writing. The edges of the paper are slightly irregular, suggesting it might be a scan of a physical document. There is no handwriting or other markings on the page.

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