

Basic Guide to Fasting

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“Fasting, is voluntarily abstaining from food for spiritual purposes.” Derek Prince

One of the primary purposes of fasting is self-humbling. It is a scriptural means ordained by God for us to humble ourselves before Him. Throughout the scriptures we see the admonition to “Humble Yourself.”

Fasting is one of the primary ways we can humble ourselves. David says; *I humbled my soul with fasting. PSALM 35:13.*

By fasting we deny the physical for the sake of the spiritual. We are saying in effect, “God, I want and need You more than I want or need food. I hunger for You.” Fasting increases our awareness of the presence of God.

Here are a few examples of different fasts:

ONE DAY FAST: This is a 24-hour period. Usually sunset to sunset. This is typically limited to water, or just fluids depending on your body’s response. If you have never fasted before, one recommendation is to begin the first time by fasting for one meal. The next week, fast for a 24-hour period.

Fasting was a common practice for God’s people as well as a regular rhythm in the life of Jesus; *Matthew 6:16* –

When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

In *ACTS 13:2* we read: *While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”*

God gave the Church of Antioch direction in response to their seeking Him through fasting.

THREE DAY FAST: This is normally a fast of only water, and no food. In the book of Esther, we see Esther instruct her uncle Mordecai to do the following:

Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. ESTHER 4:16a

God used this fast to turn the tables and spare the Jewish people.

TEN DAY FAST: This fast, often referred to as a Daniel Fast, can be one that limits your food intake to vegetables and water. In the book of Daniel, we see Daniel purposing in his heart not to be defiled by the King of Babylon's food and wine. He proposed to the chief official in *Daniel 1*;

“Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.” So, he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So, the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. DANIEL 1:12-16

TWENTY-ONE DAY FAST: This is often a Daniel fast that has been extended beyond ten days to twenty-one days. There is nothing special about 21 days; it simply serves as an example of the freedom we have to choose the length of our fast.

FORTY DAY FAST: Moses fasted forty days while on Mount Sinai in the presence of God (*EXODUS 34:28*). Jesus fasted forty days before he entered the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (*MATTHEW 4:1-2*).

If you have not practiced the spiritual discipline of fasting, begin with a one day fast. After several one day fasts, consider pressing in for a three day or ten day Daniel fast. In the event you feel led of God to begin a forty day fast, we encourage you to seek out a trusted spiritual friend for accountability, and possibly a medical professional for physical limitations.

For more insight on how to prepare your body and spirit for fasting, read *7 Steps to Successful Fasting and Prayer*, by author Bill Bright, or *Revival Starts Here* by author Dave Clayton.

Additional Suggestions are:

- 1** – Consider fasting with another person for accountability and encouragement.
- 2** – Journal your daily experience; what are you hearing from God?
- 3** – Begin with the end in mind. What is your purpose for fasting? Do you have a specific request in mind?
- 4** – Come expectant. Fasting activates your sensitivity to God!