

Rock City Fasting

What is Fasting and Why Do We Fast?

Fasting is defined as willfully denying yourself food or other pleasures. It's an ancient discipline that is seen throughout the old and new testament and was practiced by many of the great people of the Bible, including Jesus himself.

But fasting is NOT a “hunger strike” to try to force the hand of God to move in our favor—it's not a manipulation. Rather, when we empty ourselves of everything we make room for God to fill us up; it's bowing down. While we fast in the natural, we feast in the spiritual—relying on the daily “manna” of His presence to sustain us. It's about the exchange of the natural substance for the supernatural substance, so it's important to replace our meals with the word, worship and face-to-face time with God.

- Jesus expected his followers to fast.
 - *Jesus didn't say “if you fast”, he said “WHEN you fast”—so Jesus assumed that his followers would fast. He also gave instructions for how to fast properly (Matt. 6:16-18). Jesus also spoke of his followers fasting when He was taken from them (Mark 2:20, Luke 5:35, Matt. 9:15). And there were circumstances where deliverances were only possible through prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29, Matt. 17:21).*
- Fasting kills the flesh and puts it in submission to the Spirit (Gal. 6:8, Gal. 5:17) - *Fasting is one of the quickest ways to kill the desires of the flesh. Just as we build our physical muscles through resistance training, we build our spiritual muscles with resistance to food or other. In a way, fasting is like a reversal of the very first sin—eating wrongly. Symbolically by fasting we are choosing instead to eat from the Tree of Life.*
- Fasting leads us deeper into intimacy with the Lord through deeper dependence on Him for all we need.

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As you read through the Bible you can find lots of occasions for fasting. Here are the main circumstances that the people of the Bible fasted and where you can find examples of this in Scripture:

- Preparation
 - *Matt. 4:1-17, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-14, Deut. 9:9, Acts 13:1-3, Exodus 19:4*
- Repentance
 - *Jonah 3:10, Acts 9:9, Lev 16 & 23, Joel 2:12,*
- Deliverance and Protection
 - *Ezra 8:21-23, Esther 9:31, 1 Kings 19:4-8, Dan 6:18-23*
- Victory & Healing
 - *Jonah 3:10, Isa. 58:3,*
- Worship & Response
 - *Luke 2:37, Acts 9:9*
- Seeking God's Wisdom & Answers for Prayer
 - *Acts 14:23, Dan 10:1-3, Psalm 35:13, Exod. 34:28*
- Mourning & Grief
 - *Neh. 1:1-4, 2 Sam 12:15-20, Ezra 10:6, 1 Sam 31:13, Zech 7:1-10*
- Humbling Yourself
 - *Ezra 8:21, Psalm 35:13*

What can/should I fast? Different Fasting Types

While fasting in the Bible is usually thought of as abstaining from food, drink or both, there are several other kinds of fasts that you can participate in. Ultimately it's about the position of the heart and offering up an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord.

- Complete Fast (Water Fast)
 - *This fast is abstaining from all food and drinking only water. Sea Salt or Pink Himalayan Salt is recommended to be added to purified water to add electrolytes.*
- Absolute Fast (Dry Fast)
 - *Absolute fasting is abstaining from both food AND drink. These fasts are not recommended for longer than 3 days and should be approached with Spirit-led caution. (Esther 4:16, Acts 9:9)*
- Partial Fast
 - *Refraining from eating sun up to sundown, or a specific timeframe. One of the most flexible forms of fasting suitable for people who cannot do a complete fast.*
- Daniel Fast
 - *Daniel Fast is based upon Daniel 10:2-3. It includes abstaining from meat, wine, sweets, treats, and leavened bread. You can eat fruit, nuts, veggies and water. The traditional duration is 3 weeks (21 days), but can be done for any length of time.*
- Sexual Fast
 - *A mutual agreement between a husband and wife to abstain from sex for an*

agreed upon period of time. (1 Corinthians 7:3-6, Exodus 19:14)

- Corporate Fast

- *A fast that is done by a group of people. (Ezra 8:21-23, Acts 13:2-3)*

- Soul Fast

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- *A "soul fast" is fasting from things that may be hindering your relationship with God. It might be an idol or just a distraction. They aren't necessarily sinful things, but things that are causing imbalance and bondage.*

- *Some ideas for a soul fast are television, social media, sugar, vanity fast (ie: no manicures, make-up, weighing yourself, jewelry, etc), Dopamine Fast (things that cause a dopamine spike such as caffeine, sugar, social media, sex, social interaction, music).*

- *Anything that you can't imagine wanting to give up is probably a good thing to bring before the Lord as a possible fast ("I could never give up my coffee!" "There's no way I could go without my gym workout!" "I don't think I could get through my day without Tik-Tok").*

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What if I have a medical condition?

Fasting is a very healthy practice that can reduce inflammation, improve blood sugar control, promote cell autophagy, prevent serious conditions, boost heart health, reduce oxidative stress, increase longevity and so much more. Even so, there are a few groups of people who should not do a prolonged water fast. If you have a serious medical condition, you should seek guidance from your Doctor or medical supervision before attempting a prolonged water fast. Here are a list of people who should not attempt a prolonged water fast or should fast with caution:

- People who shouldn't fast at all
 - *Pregnant and nursing women*
 - *Children and adolescents*

- *People with less than 10% body fat*
- People who should be careful and spirit-led with fasting
- *People with diabetes and heart disease (ask your doctor; fasting can cause extreme changes to blood sugar levels and changes in heart rate.)*
- *People with eating disorders (seek inner healing first and be spirit-led)* - *People who are very sick (you are immunocompromised when you fast).* - *People with extremely physically demanding jobs*

If you are unable to do a traditional water fast, there are lots of different kinds of fasting alternatives. Ultimately It's about the position of your heart and offering up a sacrifice. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what He'd like you to go without, or try filling in this blank: "I don't think I could ever go without ____." If the answer isn't oxygen, water or sleep there's a good chance that's something you're in bondage to that you could give up as a fast.

See the "Different Fasting Types" section for more ideas on fasting alternatives. 5

Can Children Fast?

It's not recommended for growing children and adolescents to participate in a prolonged water fast because of all of the growth and changes that are taking place in their bodies. However, the "spirit" of fasting can be encouraged.

- Use this time to teach them about fasting.
 - *While kids shouldn't do a full water fast, they can still learn the principles of fasting. Encourage questions and discussion surrounding the practice.*
- Be a good example.

- *While it can be challenging at times, being cheerful at fasting and spending time in worship, study of scriptures and just having face-to-face time with God during your fast will speak volumes to your children as they watch you and will encourage them to desire fasting someday themselves.*
- *Share about your experiences and challenges along the way. Pray with your kids during your fast, or ask your kids to pray FOR you during your fast!*
- Let them choose a “fast”
 - *After ensuring that they understand why we fast, you can encourage your children to “fast” from something such as having candy, a favorite TV show, screen-time or playing with a favorite toy.*
 - *Encourage them to fill that space with worship, talking to God, reading scriptures, doing prophetic art, etc. It’s great to emphasize how God FILLS US as we empty ourselves.*

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What happens if I “mess up” while fasting?

Fasting is definitely a challenge and you might find yourself messing up. Even Jesus was hungry when He fasted (Matthew 4:2), so He knows that temptation! Whether it’s a weak moment or a total accident, here are some things to remember if you “slip” during your fast:

- Fasting is a discipline!
 - *Fasting is challenging, and like building a muscle it takes time to build it up. If it weren’t a challenge, it wouldn’t be a sacrifice. Remember that when we’re weak,*

He is strong! His power is perfected in our weakness (2 Corinthians 2:9). Take your slip-up as a moment of weakness and then pick your cross of fasting back up knowing that God is strong! Focus on His strength instead of your weakness.

- Breaking a Fast isn't a Sin: There's Grace upon Grace
 - *Don't allow yourself to go to an attitude of defeat and condemnation; despise the shame and "get back in the ring". Realize that God is covering you with his grace and as we draw near to Him, He draws near to us (James 4:8). Draw near to him again and pick up where you left off and praise Him for his grace! Receive it and finish strong.*
- It's the Position of Your Heart
 - *Fasting is all about the position of the heart (You can read about God's heart for fasting in Isaiah 58, and it's not about food). Allow the Lord to examine your heart and realign it with His purposes and give it another shot. If you sincerely desire to go deeper with the Lord he will honor every step you take toward Him, even if you stumble a little. (See also Col. 2:20-23, Col. 3:1-3, Jeremiah 14:12, 1 Corinthians 8:8).*