

# FASTING

In a culture of indifference, instant gratification, and self-centeredness, one of the best ways to get our eyes off of ourselves and back onto the Lord is through fasting. Fasting means to abstain from food; especially to eat sparingly or refrain from eating certain foods (in observance of a religious duty or a token of grief). Fasting is a gift which God has given to the church in order to help us persevere in prayer. The practice draws us closer to God and gives power to our prayers. It is a common biblical practice and is mentioned approximately 85 times in the Old and New Testaments.

## Why Fast?

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:16-18), Jesus taught a lesson about how to fast:

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.  
<sup>17</sup> But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,  
<sup>18</sup> that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Jesus said when you fast, not if you fast, indicating that there is not an option but rather an obligation to fast. In our tradition, fasting is one of the five means of grace (pray, search the Scriptures, the Lord's Supper, Christian conferencing, fasting) and none is less important than the other. Fasting can bring breakthroughs in the spiritual realm that will never happen in any other way.



## Reasons for Fasting

The Bible records numerous accounts where people, cities, and nations have turned to God by fasting and praying: Hannah grieved over infertility “wept and did not eat” (1 Samuel 1:7); Anna, who was an elderly widow, saw Jesus in the temple and “served God with fasting and prayer” (Luke 2:37). Saul encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus, “was three days without sight, neither ate nor drank.” (Acts 9:9). Cornelius told Peter, “Four days ago I was fasting until this hour...” (Acts 10:30). There are several specific reasons that the Bible tells us to fast.

1. *To be Christ like.* (Matthew 4:1-17; Luke 4:1-13).
2. *To obtain spiritual purity.* (Isaiah 58:5-7).
3. *To repent from sins.* (See Jonah 3:8; Nehemiah 1:4, 9:1-3; 1 Samuel 14:24).
4. *To influence God.* (2 Samuel 12:16-23).
5. *To request God’s help in times of crisis and calamity.* (Ezra 8:21-23; Neh. 1:4-11).
6. *To strengthen prayer.* (Matthew 17:21; Mark 9:17-29; Acts 10:30; 1 Cor. 7:5).

## Types of Fasting

In the same way that God appointed times and seasons to fast, He also designated several types of fasts.\* There are three primary types of individual fasts: **Absolute** (abstaining from all food and water for a certain period of time); **Solid Food** (an individual may drink juice and water, but chooses not to eat solid food; and **Partial** (abstain from certain foods and drinks instead of complete abstinence of food or drink. The Bible tells us that Daniel abstained from bread, water, and wine for twenty-one days (Daniel 10:3).

## OBSERVING THE FAST

**Pray** - *Lord Jesus Christ, I offer you this fast for your glory and my good. All I am and all I have I offer to you for your purposes in the world and my progress in your grace, Amen.*

**Read - Romans 12:2 (NLT)** *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

**Re-Read in the context of Romans 12:1-8** Meditate on the words of the text. Pay attention to what you hear from the Holy Spirit, as well as the feelings which arise.

**Pray** - Spend time in prayer—if/when you lose focus, just start again.

**Mealtime Focus** (Read and meditate instead of eating)

Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT) *"Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!* **and** 1John 4:4 (MSG) *"My dear children, you come from God and belong to God. You have already won a big victory over those false teachers, for the Spirit in you is far stronger than anything in the world.*

Meditate on the connections the Holy Spirit raises for you with these texts.

**Our Walking Around Breath Prayers for the day:**

God is the Giver of my new life. / I am living into who God wants me to be.



## **Closing the Fast**

Note any insights, impressions, or implications from this time of fasting.

Pray - *Lord Jesus Christ, I offer you this fast for your glory and my good. All I am and all I have I offer to you for your purposes in the world and my progress in your grace, Amen.*

\*A person should exercise wisdom and consult his/her physician if there is any medical concern before fast, otherwise it could actually be harmful to your health.

