

TWO TYPES OF FASTING

Food

This is the most common biblical example. You can fast a meal a day, fast for a day, or take the full three days to go without food (January 6-8). Since this is a fast and not a diet, we strongly encourage you to take times when you would be eating to feast on the Word and to pray diligently.

Screens

The average American is on screens 4-5 hours a day (Social Media, TV, Streaming Services, Sports, Video Games, etc.). 89 percent are on their devices before they ever get out of bed; could it be that all of these screens are dulling our hunger for the Lord? Going for a week without screens would ensure time to read, seek, and listen to the Lord. You can do this individually or as a family.

RECOMMENDED READING

1. Fasting article included in this document
2. "Hunger for God" by John Piper - a book on fasting - Introduction and chapter 2, if not the whole thing. The appendix is filled with quotes from his studies about fasting. Free online version - http://cdn.desiringgod.org/pdf/books_hfg/hfg_all.pdf

SCHEDULE

The fast will begin Monday, January 6 and end Wednesday evening, January 8. Each campus will host a Worship Night on Wednesday, January 8. Please subscribe to the email to find out what we are praying for each day.

FASTING . . . “FOR THE PURPOSE OF GODLINESS”
From Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life – Donald
Whitney

“Self-indulgence is the enemy of gratitude, and self-discipline is usually its friend and generator. That is why gluttony is a deadly sin. The early desert fathers believed that a person’s appetites are linked: full stomachs and jaded palates take the edge from our hunger and thirst for righteousness. They spoil the appetite for God” (Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.). One of the Spiritual Disciplines which helps sharpen the edge of our hunger and thirst for righteousness and which intensifies our hunger for God is fasting. To practice it biblically would be one way to obey the command of 1 Timothy 4:7, “Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”

I. FASTING EXPLAINED

In a broad sense, fasting may be defined as “the voluntary denial of a normal function for the sake of intense spiritual activity” (Richard Foster). So then, fasting does not always deal with abstinence from food, though all specific references in Scripture do. Sometimes we may need to fast from involvement with other people, the media, the telephone, sleep, etc.

In the Bible, a **normal fast** involves abstaining from all food, but not from water (Mt. 4:2; Lk. 4:2). A **partial fast** is a limitation of the diet but not abstention from all food (Dan. 1:12; Mt. 3:4). An **absolute fast** is the avoidance of all food and liquid (Ezra 10:6; Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9). The Bible also describes the **super-natural fasts** of Moses (Deut. 9:9) and Elijah (1 Kin. 19:8), **private fasts** (Mt. 6:16-18), **congregational fasts** (Joel 2:15-16), **national fasts** (2 Chr. 20:3), **regular fasts** (Lev. 16:29-31; Lk. 18:12), and **occasional fasts** (Mt. 9:15).

II. FASTING IS EXPECTED

Jesus said in Mt. 6:16-17, “And whenever you fast, . . . But you, when you fast, . . .” By giving us instructions on what to do and what not to do when we fast, Jesus assumes that we will fast. Compare these words with His statements about giving in that same passage, Mt. 6:2-3: “When therefore you give alms, . . . But when you give alms, . . .” Compare also His words in the same section about prayer, Mt. 6:5-7: “And when you pray, . . . But you, when you pray, . . . And when you are praying, . . .” No one doubts that we are to give and to pray. It is quite common to use this passage to teach Jesus’ principles on giving and praying. Since there is nothing here or elsewhere in Scripture indicating that we no longer need to fast, we may conclude that Jesus still expects us to fast today. In fact, Jesus says of His followers in Mt. 9:15 that after He leaves and returns to Heaven “then they will fast.” The only instructions about fasting He left in addition to those already in Scripture are His words in Mt. 6:16-17.

III. FASTING IS TO BE DONE FOR A PURPOSE

- A. To strengthen prayer
EZRA 8:23; NEHEMIAH 1:4; DANIEL 9:3; JOEL 2:12-17; ACTS 13:3
- B. To seek God’s guidance
JUDGES 20:26-28; ACTS 14:23
- C. To express grief
JUDGES 20:26; 1 SAMUEL 31:11-13; 2 SAMUEL 1:11-12
- D. To seek from God deliverance or protection
2 CHORITHIANS 20:3-4; EZRA 8:21-23; ESTHER 4:16; PSALM 109:21-26
- E. To express repentance and the return to God
1 SAMUEL 7:6; JOEL 2:12; JONAH 3:5-8
- F. To humble oneself before God
1 KINGS 21:27-29; PSALM 35:13
- G. To express concern for the work of God
NEHEMIAH 1:3-11; ISAIAH 58:6-7; DANIEL 9:3
- H. To minister to the needs of others
ISAIAH 58:6-7
- I. To overcome temptation and dedicate yourself to God
MATTHEW 4:1-11
- J. To express love and worship to God
LUKE 2:37