

What is Fasting?

Throughout Scriptures, fasting refers to abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. The Hebrew word for fasting means “to cover the mouth.” The Greek word means “to abstain.” So while fasting from TV may be a good idea, it is not a biblical fast in the same sense as going without food.

NORMAL FAST-This involves abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, but not from water. Jesus fasted in the wilderness when he was tempted by Satan. Luke 4:2, "...And in those days he did eat nothing."

PARTIAL FAST- This is a restriction of diet but not total abstention. The normal fast was the custom but the partial fast is seen in the restricted diet of vegetables and water of Daniel and his friends (Daniel 1:8-14). Additionally, it is noted in John the Baptists' diet of locust and wild honey (Mark 1:6).

ABSOLUTE FAST-This fast is going without food and water. It usually appears as a desperate measure to meet a dire emergency. Esther called a three day fast of this type when she learned of the execution awaiting her and her people (Esther 4:16). The absolute fast is the EXCEPTION and should never be engaged unless one has a VERY CLEAR COMMAND FROM GOD, and then for not more than three days.

Making
Room
for
Others

Fasting
Guide

◆ IS FASTING A COMMANDMENT?

No, but Jesus assumed that fasting would be a part of a person's devotional life. In the Sermon on the Mount He states, "When you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do," (Matthew 6:16). Jesus did not say, "If you fast, neither did He say, you must fast. He made the assumption that people would fast, and what was needed was instruction on how to do it properly.

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting."
-Mark 6:16



◆ HOW TO HAVE A SPIRITUAL FAST:

- Purify your motives-The purpose of a spiritual fast is to focus upon and worship God. We fast because we desire godliness and because we want God's power to be seen in the church and in the world.
- Begin gradually, perhaps with a partial fast. Many people find that beginning with a 24 hour fast from lunch to lunch works well (missing two meals). Consume fresh fruit juices during this time. Replace your meal with your devotional readings and prayer. The most important thing to monitor is the inner attitude of worship. Outwardly, you will be performing the regular duties of your day; but inwardly, you will be in prayer. Adoration, song, and ministry to the Lord. The more you pray, the more you will feel sustained by God.
- Progress to a 24 hour normal fast as the Lord gives you the grace to extend the time. Use only water and a healthy amount of it.

"Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions."
-Ezra 8:21

Fasting can have a powerful impact on your spiritual life. Consider a regular discipline of fasting one day a week for six months. Regular or weekly fasting had a profound effect in the lives of early church leaders that some even sought to find a biblical command for it.

"Train yourself to be godly."
-I Timothy 4:7

◆ THE PURPOSES OF FASTING

- To intensify prayer efforts. Fasting simplifies our lives so that we are more able to focus on God. In fasting, we turn from a normal schedule and give ourselves to God in a concerted way. It should draw us closer to God where we will experience a deeper relationship with Him.
- To pursue holiness. Paul says, "Train yourself to be godly." (I Timothy 4:7). Fasting is one way to do that. It teaches us submission. It opens the spirit to the Lord because it quiets the flesh that is so often screaming for attention. Whatever is flesh-denying can also be character-forming.
- To help us keep balance in our life. How easily we begin to allow nonessentials to take precedence in our lives. How quickly we crave things we do not need until we are enslaved by them (I Cor. 6:12). Fasting is not removing ourselves from the world but disciplining ourselves in the world; discipline brings freedom.

"Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and BUILD the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord."

-Haggai 1:8