

# What is Fasting?

Fasting is a means of humbling ourselves before God, letting Him know that we are willing to exchange physical nothings for a spiritual feast! As a spiritual discipline, fasting is the act of abstaining from feeding the body in order to focus more fully on seeking God's face and feeding the spirit. This is a powerful discipline where God's Spirit is poured out upon us as we earnestly seek Him.

*"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land"*

*(2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV).*

The Church is called to seek God's face in all humility through the disciplines of fasting and prayer. Based on the principle of II Chronicles 7:14, the vision is that as the Church participate in these disciplines, they will be personally renewed and enjoy greater intimacy with our Lord, our communities will be restored, and, ultimately, the Great Commission will be fulfilled!

Through **Fasting and Prayer** the church will find healing, revival and a spiritual awakening.

## Why Fast?

As a nation, we are faced with the gravest crisis in our history, because we have rejected God and His commandments. Though America was founded on biblical principles by godly men and women, we have officially declared the Creator of the universe as "not wanted" in our schools and other public areas, and His status has been lowered to that of the many false gods of the world.

Because of our impurities, God is bringing judgement on America and on His church in America by removing His hedge of protection and giving us over to the consequences of our sins. Unless we repent, the gravity of His judgement will intensify with each passing day as He begins to pour out His wrath in turning us over to disasters.

The Church in America has disregarded God's Lordship for our own selfish desires and self-serving practices, and has not honored His holiness by becoming holy as He is Holy. His standards and commandments in His Word are not being used to determine right and wrong, and we have become disoriented to Him and apathetic to His voice and activities. His house is not known as a "house of prayer for all nations," and many leaders remain in personal sin and disobedience and have not led His people to corporate repentance.

The good news is that God is a God of mercy - always preferring mercy to judgment if His people meet His conditions. So the problem is not what the world is doing, but what God's people are doing, or not doing, that will determine God's blessing or judgment on our nation. God promises us,

*"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV).*

## **What does the Bible say about Fasting?**

In the Old Testament, fasting was the way people individually and collectively humbled themselves before God. God's people have always fasted to humble themselves, to receive cleansing of their sins by effective repentance, for spiritual renewal, and for special helps. Fasting is often associated with weeping and other acts of humility before God.

Fasting is mentioned throughout the Old Testament. In Joel 2:12, 13 the Lord commanded:

*"Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God..."*

In the book of Ezra, Ezra calls a fast to seek God's protection for the Jews returning from Babylon to Jerusalem:

*"There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions." (Ezra 8:21, NIV)*

Coursing through the Bible, there are many other examples of how fasting can change the course of events. Moses twice fasted forty days (Deuteronomy 9:9, 18) till his face shone with the glory of God. The Bible records all of Israel fasting in the time of the Judges and the time of Samuel (Judges 20:26; I Samuel 7:6).

King David fasted on many occasions, including before he was crowned, when his child was ill, when his enemies were ill (Psalm 35:13) and because of the sins of his people (Psalm 69:9, 10). Elijah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel all fasted in times of need.

In the Old Testament, fasting was an integral part of seeking God's face. This also carries over into the New Testament.

Jesus set the example for fasting when he fasted for forty days after His baptism. For Jesus it was a matter of when believers would fast, not if they would do it. He spoke in these terms:

*"When you give to the needy, When you pray, When you fast,...*

Luke records the account of a prophetess named Anna who, in her eighties, *"never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying."* (Luke 2:36,37) Prophets and teachers fasted at Antioch (Acts 13:2) and Paul—who wrote much of the New Testament—said he was, *"in fastings often"* (II Corinthians 11:27).

## **For the believer, the question is not should I fast, but will I fast?**

### **Types of Fasting**

**Absolute Fasts:** fasts during which a person abstains from all food and drink, including water.

**Note:** **Due to the dangers of dehydration, absolute fasts are not recommended for extended periods of time.**

**Partial Fasts:** fasts during which a person eliminates some or all foods from their diet. The juice fast is particularly popular. (Always remember that it is important to take in plenty of liquids in order to remain safe and healthy!)

The Bible itself includes examples of these different types of fasts. A type of partial fast is described in the book of Daniel. Although the water fast seemed to be the custom of the prophet, there was a three-week period in which he only abstained from "delicacies," meat, and wine (Daniel 10:3). (See Daniel's Fast for more information)

The other fasts mentioned in the Bible are the "absolute" and "supernatural absolute" fasts. These are total fasts, no food (solid or liquid) and no water. Paul went on an absolute fast for three days following his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:9).

Moses and Elijah engaged in what must be considered a supernatural absolute fast of forty days (Deuteronomy 9:9; I Kings 19:8).

## **NOTE:**

**Due to the dangers of dehydration, absolute fasts are not recommended for extended periods of time. Do not fast more than three days without water.**

Water and juice fast is recommended, especially if you are going to fast for an extended period of time. This type of fast will provide you with more energy than absolute or water only fasts and still lead you into the humbling experience of denying your desire for solid food that you can chew.

Water-only fasts that last for more than several days need to be undertaken with complete rest and under medical supervision because of the extreme danger of over-toxicification, breakdown of vital body tissues, and loss of electrolytes.

In terms of length, there are many types of fasts. Some people fast one meal, some one day, some three days, some forty days! There is no "formula fast" that is the only "right" way to do things. For the Christian, fasting is about the condition of the heart, not the number of days.

# Daniel's Fast

*Daniel 10:2 - 3 (KJV) "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." (Also see Daniel chapter 1.)*

## Objective of the Fast

To chasten ourselves before the Lord (Daniel 10:12) and to fight the spiritual battle (Daniel 10:13) asking the Lord to open doors of revival in our city.

### "No Pleasant Bread"

This can be translated to mean anything that you eat for the pleasure of it. It may have some nutritional value, but is mainly a pleasurable item or to enhance the taste and increase the pleasure of something else that you may be eating. You may also decide to use no sweeteners. There are many sources in the Bible, however, that indicate when someone ate a small amount of honey, their understanding was opened. Science has found honey contains a glucose that the brain requires to function. However, the Bible also says that to eat too much honey can cause you to be sick, so don't over do it.

### "Neither came flesh"

This is obviously meat. Daniel 1:12 (KJV) says they only ate pulse. This can be translated to mean only things that are grown. Genesis 1:29 (KJV) says, *"And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat."*

You can eat a strictly vegetarian diet and receive everything your body needs. However, it is important that you receive an adequate amount of protein each day. One way of accomplishing this is by eating grits (which are a complete protein because of the way they are processed) or by being sure to include one serving of legumes (beans) and one serving of grains to make a complete protein. Strict vegetarians (no dairy products) should have 3 servings per day and pregnant women should have 5 servings each day. The average serving size is ½ to 1 cup of each. Dairy products that contain complete proteins are skim milk, cottage cheese, yogurt (perhaps plain with a little honey in it) and eggs.

### "Nor Wine"

Daniel 1:12 (KJV) says they drank only water. Wine was the common drink of the day. You may decide to drink only water during this time. It is recommended that you drink 8 eight-ounce glasses of water each day. You will be eating more fiber than you may be accustomed to and you will need to be sure your body can eliminate this increase. Drinking the proper amount of water each day and eating fruits will help in this process. If you are coming off of caffeine products, you may experience headaches or other physical aches. They will probably last a couple of days and it is recommended that you eat plenty of fruits and drink extra water to help your body flush these toxins out.

### Other Considerations

You may find it hard to keep your fast a secret. For some reason, people take note when you remove meat from your diet and start eating vegetables, fruits and grains. There are indications in the Bible that everyone knew of Daniel's fast. Don't let this disturb you, and just remain pleasant in the face of questions. You may also find that you enjoy eating the pleasant things that God has provided.

Don't allow your pleasure of the good fruits and vegetables to become a stumbling block in terms of removing pleasant foods from your diet during this time.

Ask the Lord to give you direction in what to remove from your diet and what to keep. Once the decision is made, don't question yourself.

## Benefits

This is a way for you to be able to fast for extended periods of time and still continue your daily activities. The Bible indicates in Daniel Chapter 1 that Daniel continued fasting only pulse and drinking water for three years. The ten days of testing was to ensure the king's chief eunuch that they would be able to stand before the king at the end of the three years that was set aside for them to eat the king's meat and drink the king's wine. (See Daniel 1:5). You may also find that you feel better as a result of this fast.

## Results in Fasting

As a result of fasting and truly seeking God's face, you can expect:

- a new, refreshing intimacy with God.
- a renewed sense of His presence and love for you.
- a sense of humility and awe before God.
- a recaptured first love and personal joy in the Lord.
- a rejuvenated desire to reach those around you.

Millions around the world who practice fasting and prayer tell of how it changes their life: how their personal witness to others is impacted, how those around them are drawn to the Lord, how dramatic reconciliation occur, even how people are miraculously healed!

A renewed closeness with God and a greater sensitivity to spiritual things are usually the results of a fast. But, do not be disappointed if you do not have a "mountaintop experience," as some do. Many people who have successfully completed fasts tell of feeling a nearness to God that they have never before known, but others who have honestly sought His face report no particular outward results at all. To others, their fast was physically, emotionally, and spiritually grueling, but they knew they had been called by God to fast, and they completed the fast unto Him as an act of worship and God honored that commitment.

Your motive in fasting must be to glorify God, not to have an emotional experience, not to attain personal happiness. When your motives are right, God will honor your seeking heart and bless your time with Him in a very special way. Fasting is not about what you get out of it; fasting with the right motives is selfless an act of worship and an expression of obedience and love for God.

## **How to begin Fasting**

### **Step One Set Your Objectives**

Why are you fasting? Is it for spiritual renewal, for guidance, for healing, for the resolution of problems, for special grace to handle a difficult situation? Ask God to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically.

Through fasting and prayer we humble ourselves before God so the Holy Ghost will stir our hearts, awaken our churches, and heal our land according to II Chronicles 7:14. Make this a priority in your fasting.

## **Step Two**

### **Make Your Commitment**

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus implied that all of His followers should fast (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14-15). For Him it was a matter of when believers would fast, not if they would do it. Before you fast, decide the following up front:

- How long you will fast — one meal, one day, a week, several weeks, forty days (Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts.)
- The type of fast God wants you to undertake (such as water only, or water and juice; what kind of juices you will drink and how often.
- What physical or social activities you will restrict.
- How much time each day you will devote to prayer and reading the Word of God.

## **Step Three**

### **Prepare Yourself Spiritually**

The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Non-confessed sin will hinder your prayers. Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:

- Ask God to help you make a comprehensive list of your sins.
- Confess every sin that God calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (I John 1:9).
- Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3,4).
- Make restitution as the Holy Ghost leads you.
- Ask God to fill you with the Holy Ghost according to His **command** in Ephesians 5:18 and His **promise** in I John 5:14,15.

- Surrender your life fully to the Lord and make Him the master of your life; refuse to obey your worldly nature (Romans 12:1,2).
- Meditate on the attributes of God, His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others (Psalm 48:9,10; 103:1-8, 11-13).
- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart (Hebrew 11:6).
- Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16,17).

## **Step Four**

### **Prepare Yourself Physically**

Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision. Physical preparation makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so that you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer.

- Do not rush into your fast.
- Prepare your body. Eat smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high-fat and sugary foods.
- Eat raw fruits and vegetables for two days before starting a fast.

## **While You Fast**

Your time of fasting and prayer has come. You are abstaining from all solid foods and have begun to seek the Lord. Here are some helpful suggestions to consider:

- Avoid drugs, even natural herbal drugs and homeopathic remedies. Medication should be withdrawn only with your physician’s supervision.
- Limit your activity.
- Exercise only moderately. Walk one to three miles each day if convenient and comfortable.
- Rest as much as your schedule will permit.
- Prepare yourself for temporary mental discomforts, such as impatience, crankiness, and anxiety.
- Expect some physical discomforts, especially on the second day. You may have fleeting hunger pains, dizziness, or the “blahs.” Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches. Physical annoyances may also include weakness, tiredness, or sleeplessness.

The first two or three days are usually the hardest. As you continue to fast, you will likely experience a sense of well-being both physically and spiritually. However, should you feel hunger pains, increase your liquid intake.

## **Step Five**

### **Put Yourself on a Schedule**

For maximum spiritual benefit, set aside ample time to be alone with God. Listen for His leading. The more time you spend with Him, the more meaningful your fast will be.

#### *Morning*

- Begin your day in praise and worship.
- Read and meditate on the Word of God, preferably on your knees.
- Invite the Holy Ghost to work in you to will and to do His good pleasure according to Philippians 2:13.
- Invite God to use you. Ask Him to show you how to influence your world, your family, your church, your community, your country, and beyond.

- Pray for His vision for your life and empowerment to do His will.

### *Noon*

- Return to prayer and God's Word.
- Take a short prayer walk.
- Spend time in intercessory prayer for your community's and nation's leaders, for the world's unreached millions, for your family or special needs.

### *Evening*

- Get alone for an unhurried time of "seeking His face."
- If others are fasting with you, meet together for prayer.
- Avoid television, videos, and any other distraction that may dampen your spiritual focus.

When possible begin and end each day on your knees for a brief time of praise and thanksgiving to God. Longer periods of time with God in prayer and study of His Word are often better spent alone.

A dietary routine is vital as well. Modify this schedule and the drinks you take to suit your circumstances and tastes.

### *5:00 AM - 8:00 AM*

Fruit juices, preferably freshly squeezed or blended and diluted in 50 percent distilled water if the fruit is acid. Apple pear, grapefruit, papaya, watermelon, or other fruit juices are generally preferred. If you cannot do your own juicing, buy juices without sugar or additives.

### *10:30 AM - Noon*

Fresh vegetable juice made from lettuce, celery, and carrots in three equal parts.

*6:00 PM - 8:30 PM*

Broth made from boiling potatoes, celery, and carrots with no salt. After boiling about half an hour, pour water into container and drink it.

### **Tips on Juice Fasting**

- Drinking fruit juice will decrease your hunger pains and give you some natural sugar energy. The taste and lift will motivate and strengthen you to continue.
- The best juices are made from fresh watermelon, lemons, grapes, apples, cabbage, beets, carrots, celery, or leafy green vegetables. In cold weather, you may enjoy warm vegetable broth.
- Mix acidic juices (orange, tomato) with water for your stomach's sake.
- Avoid caffeinated drinks. Avoid chewing gum or mints, even if your breath is bad. They stimulate digestive action in your stomach.

## **Breaking Your Fast**

When your designated time for fasting is finished, you will begin to eat again. But how you break your fast is extremely important for your fast is extremely important for your physical and spiritual well-being.

### **Step Six** **End Your Fast Gradually**

Begin eating gradually. Do not eat solid foods immediately after your fast. Suddenly reintroducing solid food to your stomach and digestive track will likely have negative, even dangerous, consequences. Try several smaller meals or snacks each day.

If you end your fast gradually, the beneficial physical and spiritual effects will result in continued good health.

Here are some suggestions to help you end your fast properly:

- Break an extended water fast with fruit such as watermelon.
- While continuing to drink fruit or vegetable juices, adding the following:
  - First day:* Add a raw salad.
  - Second day:* Add a baked potato, no butter or seasoning.
  - Third day:* Add steam vegetable.
  - Thereafter:* Begin to reintroduce your normal diet.

Gradually return to regular eating with several small snacks during the first few days. Start with a little soup and fresh fruits such as watermelon and cantaloupe. Advance to a few tablespoons of solid foods such as raw fruits and vegetables or a raw salad and baked potato.

## **Final Word**

### **Step Seven Expect Results**

If you sincerely humble yourself before the Lord, repent, pray, and seek God's face; if you consistently meditate on His Word, you will experience a heightened awareness of His presence (John 14:21). The Lord will give you fresh, new spiritual insights. Your confidence and faith in God will be strengthened. You will feel mentally, spiritually, and physically refreshed. You will see answers to your prayers.

A single fast, however, is not a spiritual cure-call. Just as we need fresh infillings of the Holy Ghost daily, we also need new times of fasting before God. A 24-hour fast each week has been greatly rewarding to many.

It takes time to build your spiritual fasting muscles. If you fail to make it through your first fast, do not be discouraged. You may have tried to fast too long the time out, or you may need to strengthen your understanding and resolve. As soon as possible, undertake another fast until you do succeed. God will honor you for your faithfulness.

I encourage you to unite together with others in fasting and prayer again and again until we truly experience revival in our homes, our churches, our nation, and throughout the world.

## **How to Experience and Maintain Personal Revival**

1. Ask God to reveal any unconfessed sin in your life.
2. Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you. Make restitution where God leads.
3. Examine your motives in every word and deed. Ask the Lord to search and cleanse your heart daily.
4. Ask God to guard your walk against complacency and mediocrity.
5. Praise and give thanks to God continually in all ways on all days, regardless of your circumstances.
6. Refuse to obey your carnal (worldly) nature (Galation 5:16,17).
7. Surrender your life to God. Develop utter dependence on Him with total submission and humility.
8. Study the attributes of God.

9. Hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6).
10. Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37).
11. Read, study, meditate on, and memorize God's holy, inspired, inerrant Word daily (Colossians 3:16).
12. Pray without ceasing (I Thessalonians 5:17).
13. Fasting and prayer one 24-hour period each week. Prayerfully consider fasting for forty days once in a calendar year.
14. Seek to share your testimony daily as a way of life.
15. Determine to live a holy, godly life of obedience and faith.

*"...It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord..."*

-Abraham Lincoln; Proclamation of a National Fast-Day; March 30, 1863

# GOD'S CHOSEN FAST

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**Isaiah 58:6**

*Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?*

- Half of a day.
- Whole day.