

A Short Guide to Fasting

What is fasting?

Fasting is an intensified form of prayer where we forgo the use of food for a period so we can focus our whole self on our connection with God. Adele Calhoun says "fasting is the self-denial of normal necessities in order to intentionally attend to God in prayer. Bringing attachments and cravings to the surface opens a place for prayer. This physical awareness of emptiness is our reminder to turn to Jesus who alone can satisfy".

How should I start fasting?

Start by picking a single meal one day a week (lunch on Tuesday, breakfast on Saturday). As you approach that meal choose a focus for your time of prayer (repentance, thanksgiving, a special request for someone or some situation). Let your hunger be your call to prayer. As often as you experience hunger pray for the cause you have chosen.

You may choose to grow your practice of fasting to two meals or an entire day. Fasts longer than 24 hours should be done in consultation with someone experienced with fasting.

Can you tell me more?

Sure, here are some down-to-earth, practical suggestions.

- Take fluids during your fast. You are not breaking any rules by staying hydrated.
- Consider writing out a short prayer to help you stay focused. Repeat this prayer during your time of fasting.
- Keep a journal of your prayers and what the Spirit is prompting you with.
- Don't fast when you are sick, in a hurry, or not able to find some alone time.
- Don't break your fast by eating a huge meal. The longer you fast the better it is to break the fast gently.
- Read scripture during your fast. The Psalms are a good place to start.

What if I cannot fast?

Certain people with medical conditions may not be able to fast entire meals and long periods of time. However, there are other options.

- Fast a particular food or reduce portions safely.
- Consider fasting something other than food: TV, computer time, shopping, music. All these can be time dedicated to the Lord.

What scriptures should I keep in mind?

¹⁶ When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:16-18

³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:33

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Hebrew 11:6

