

Fasting Resources

Why Fast?

Why do people experienced in prayer fast periodically? What's the point of fasting anyway? Is it like going on a spiritual hunger strike? Is fasting a way to say to God "I'm really serious about this thing I'm praying for – pay attention!"? Not really. Fasting is not about changing God's mind about something He was planning to do or not do. It's not about getting Him to sit up and take notice of your situation. *Fasting changes the fast-er*. Think about what it means in the physical sense to fast from food or even water. We deprive the body of what it wants, and ultimately needs, for survival. Fasting disciplines the body so that its appetites are not dictating the direction of our lives. For the period of time I am fasting, I am immobilizing the desire of my flesh to eat pleasant food or perhaps and food. That doesn't mean that the desire to eat goes away. It means that I train myself not to be mastered by that desire – not to let it determine my activities in that day.

Types of Fast

- Total food fast – water only, no food
- Juice fast – drinking fruit and vegetable juices only
- Partial fast – abstaining from certain foods: a certain meal each day, fasting certain days each week, etc
- Non-food fasts – TV, movies, video games, certain books/magazines, shopping, internet, you name it!

Practical Guidelines

- First choose what you are fasting from, then the length of time and when. Please consider the health concerns listed on the next page in your decision.
- Your choice is between you and God. Please pray and listen to God to see what He would have you commit to. It's helpful to pick something that is going to constantly remind you to pray, help you spend more time with God, or break the power of something that has too much control over you.
- Combine fasting with prayer, Bible study, books that are spiritually good for you, etc. Satisfying your spiritual hunger will help you through the fast, besides many other benefits.
- Expect to have physical, spiritual and emotional ups and downs during the fast. At times, the focus on your own desires will try to dominate. Other times grace (power from God) will help you overcome that focus on self.
- Avoid impure motives such as trying to manipulate God or earn His favor. This is about humbling ourselves and seeking God.
- Tell mainly the people who will be most affected by your fast. You do not have to keep it secret, especially if you're participating in a church-wide fast, but you shouldn't flaunt it either in order to look more "spiritual".
- Do not expect to do an extended total food fast if you have never fasted before. It is only wise to work your way up to an extended one. Several shorter ones of 1-3 days could be possible.
- If you are planning to do an extended total food fast, do your research and prepare first! For total food fasts of a week or longer, you will need to prepare your body as well.
- Fasting is not a weight loss tool, you can gain back more afterwards if not careful. Also, don't expect that you will not lose weight since it is a spiritual thing you are doing, you will.

Health Concerns

If you struggle with any eating disorder or psychological issue related to food, please participate by choosing a non-food fast.

DO NOT DO A TOTAL FOOD FAST IF YOU...

- are a child
- are pregnant
- are a nursing mother

DO NOT DO A TOTAL FOOD FAST IF YOU...

- HAVE ANY SERIOUS HEALTH CONDITIONS, such as cancer, diabetes, hypoglycemia, heart disease, digestive disorders, etc
- or are on any PRESCRIPTION DRUGS
- If any of these apply, please consult your physician before undertaking a food fast of any kind.

Helpful Tips and Verses

- Keep the reason you are fasting in mind. At the start, when your motives and determination are clear, make yourself a commitment card to carry with you. This will help you stay focused and keep your commitment when times are hard.
- When possible, avoid temptation. Put the TV in the closet, don't drive by your favorite store, keep that chocolate out of sight, etc.
- Consider having an accountability partner, if that is helpful to you.
- These verses might help during hunger pains or temptations:
 - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. / Phil 4:13
 - In view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God- which is your spiritual act of worship. / Romans 12:1
 - My food, said Jesus, is to do the will of him who sent me. / John 4:34
 - Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. / Deut 8:3b

Useful Resources

- www.billbright.com/7steps or www.billbright.com/howtofast
- www.freedomyou.com
- Mahesh Chavda, "The Hidden Power of Prayer and Fasting"
- Richard Foster, "Celebration of Discipline"
- Elmer Towns, "Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough" 41

Don't hesitate to discuss your decision or any questions with any one of our pastors.