



Fasting Guide



Guide for Fasting

What is fasting?

A short period of deliberately denying oneself the physical need for food.

Why should Christians fast?

- You feel spiritually dry and God feels distant.
- You are facing a big decision.
- There's a need to pray intently for your family, community, nation or world.

Fasting intensifies our spiritual focus. It's a way to force our spiritual desires to overcome our physical desires. It takes our focus off of being fulfilled by anything but God.

How long should I fast?

You wouldn't start a new exercise routine by running a marathon. If you aren't accustomed to fasting, work your way slowly into it. Skip a meal or two over the course of a day.

What are the rules?

There aren't any! This is between you and God. People in the Bible fasted differently. It's all about the condition of your heart toward God.

It is a good idea to schedule extra time with God during your fast (don't just work a longer day).

What should I know, physically?

- Drink water. Lots of it. You won't be getting your usual additional water through food.
- A glass or two of non-acidic fruit juice can provide energy during the day.
- Get moderate exercise, like taking a walk around your neighborhood.
- If you do physically demanding work, it's best to fast during a day off.
- If you have a health condition or take prescription meds, don't fast without first checking with your doctor.
- Don't binge before or after fasting. Eat healthy and lightly to let your body prepare, and recover.
- Avoid caffeinated drinks before and during a fast. They start digestive action in your stomach and make you hungrier.

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What mistakes can Christians make when they fast?

- Fasting is not a weight-loss plan. The goal is to intensely focus on prayer. Any other goal will be a distraction.
- Don't let the world know you are fasting. Jesus gave specific cautions here: "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others 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, NIV)

In *Recapturing the Wonder*, Mike Cospers writes about spiritual disciplines like fasting, prayer and reading Scripture:

“If we fail to understand the gospel, then the disciplines become a means to an end—a way of trying to earn God’s attention and favor. But if our starting place with God is the radical grace extended through Jesus, then the spiritual disciplines are invitations, not obligations—ways of being with God, not appeasing him.”



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