

Fasting



Fasting is the believer's secret weapon. This book is a compilation of numerous trusted sources that help you to understand the power and practicality of fasting. The Bible is filled with invitations, commandments, and examples of how we are to pursue God. Here are a few:

“But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find Him if you look for Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey Him.” Deuteronomy 4:29-30

“You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity.” Jeremiah 29:13-14

“And will not God bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly.” Luke 18:7

“Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD...” Isaiah 55:6-7

I want to encourage you to make the biblical practices of fasting and prayer a part of your lifestyle and seriously run after God by using all the ‘weapons of our warfare’ that have been given to the Church. Every year Victory Church takes several key seasons to fast, worship, and pray. Although we pray throughout the year, these are times when the concerted focus of the entire body is in unity and laser-focused on the greater things God has for us. These “holy days” are extremely powerful and necessary to see the kind of spiritual advancement we are believing for.

Fasting, both privately and as a body of believers, is significant because fasting and prayer release the blessing and power of God over our lives, our families, our businesses, our church, and our communities! As you read the following pages I pray the Holy Spirit will draw you in and speak to you about this season of your life as you consider your involvement in a special time of seeking God. My desire is to provide some

basic guidelines, scriptural instruction, and testimony of what God can do through fasting, as well as plant some seeds of faith to motivate and equip you to pursue God through fasting and prayer.

The best is yet to come,



Pastors Curt & Pam Seaburg

How To Use This Guide

How you begin and conduct your fast will largely determine your success. By following these seven basic steps to fasting, you will make your time with the Lord more meaningful and spiritually rewarding. These pages are designed to answer your practical questions about fasting and ease any concerns you might have. In this booklet, you will read about:

- Why you should fast and how to do it safely.
- How long and what type of fast is right for you.
- How to prepare yourself spiritually and physically.
- How to manage your schedule while fasting.
- How to respond to friends and loved ones.
- How to make your spiritual experience the best it can be.
- How to maintain nutritional balance and health from beginning to end (including specific juice and broth recipes).
- What physical benefits to expect.
- How to finish your fast and return to your normal schedule in a HEALTHY way.

We recommend using a journal to capture your prayers, fast commitment, and the schedule you plan to follow.

Table of Contents

<i>Your Personal Guide</i>	1
<i>8 Steps of Fasting & Prayer</i>	2
<i>Great Men & Women Who...</i>	19
<i>Steps to Guide a Daniel Fast</i>	24
<i>21 Topics & Questions to Focus...</i>	29
<i>Fasting Q&A</i>	31

Your Personal Guide to Fasting & Prayer

"IT'S A MEANS OF GOD'S GRACE TO STRENGTHEN AND SHARPEN OUR GODWARD AFFECTIONS," WRITES DAVID MATHIS IN HIS BOOK HABITS OF GRACE.

How desperate am I for God?

Fasting is one of the most powerful spiritual disciplines of all Christian disciplines. It is a way to align our hearts with the psalmist, "My soul thirsts for God, the living God" (Psalm 42:2).

Through fasting and prayer, the Holy Spirit can transform your life. According to Scripture, personal experience, observation, fasting, and prayer can also effect change on a much grander scale. When God's people fast with a proper biblical motive – seeking God's face not His hand – with a broken, repentant, and contrite spirit; God will hear from heaven. He will heal our lives, our churches, our communities, our nation, and the world. Fasting and prayer can bring about a change in the direction of our nation, the nations of Earth, and the fulfillment of the Great Commission. This is a powerful motivation in today's unsettled world. For those who desire both inward and outward impact, humbling yourself before God through fasting is a good place to start. His power can be released in and through you by the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

During this 21-Day Fast, I pray that the Lord's love and blessings will be poured out on you as you take this exciting step of faith.

8 Steps of Fasting & Prayer

BY DR. BILL BRIGHT

THE IMPORTANCE OF FASTING

Fasting is one of the Spirit's tools for strengthening and transforming grace in our lives. This spiritual practice is a gift from God meant to grow us and draw us into a deepening relationship with Himself. If you do not already know this power and the importance of fasting, here are some insights drawn from God's Word and personal experience to get you started:

- Fasting was an expected practice in both the Old and New Testament eras. For example, Moses fasted at least two recorded 40-day periods. Jesus fasted for 40 days and reminded His followers to fast, "when" you fast, not if you fast.
- Fasting and prayer can restore the loss of your "first love" for the Lord and result in a more intimate relationship with Christ.
- Fasting is a biblical way to truly humble yourself in the sight of God (Psalm 35:13; Ezra 8:21). King David said, "I humble myself through fasting."
- Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your true spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance, and a transformed life.
- The Holy Spirit will imprint God's Word deeper on your heart and His truth will become more meaningful to you.
- Fasting can transform your prayer life into a richer and more personal experience.
- Fasting can result in a dynamic personal revival and make you a channel of life change to others.

When you fast, you will find yourself being humbled. You will discover more time to pray and seek God's face. And as He leads you to recognize and repent of unconfessed sin, you will experience God's grace to grow and mature you.

Step One: Why are you fasting?

Begin by deciding why you are fasting. Is it for spiritual renewal, guidance, healing, the resolution of problems, or special grace to handle a difficult situation? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. Pick the top 1-3 prayer requests or things you would like to seek God regarding. Then, write them below or in a prayer or fasting journal. Don't overwhelm yourself and make a laundry list of items; this will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically.

Through fasting and prayer we humble ourselves before God so the Holy Spirit will stir our souls, awaken our churches, and heal our land according to 2 Chronicles 7:14. Make this a priority in your fasting.

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 I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14

Step Two: Choose Your Type of Fast

HOW LONG AND WHAT TYPE OF FAST IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

If you have never fasted before, it is exciting that you are seeking to learn more about it. Though seemingly counter-cultural today, this discipline has been a major emphasis in the lives of many of the great spiritual leaders throughout history.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist denomination, fasted every Wednesday and Friday and required all of his clergy to do the same. Effective ministers of God from the apostle Paul to Martin Luther to John Calvin made it a continual part of their walks with God. There are numerous Christian leaders today, such as Tim Keller and John Piper, who relish and teach of a deepening hunger for God through fasting.

Though convinced of its great value, none of these men had a formula for fasting that they considered to be the only “right” way. Fasting is about the condition of the heart. So, start slowly. Fast for one meal a day, or one day a week, or one week a month.

TYPES OF FASTS

A 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).

The two primary types 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; 1 Kings 19:8).

It is strongly advised that you drink plenty of liquids as you fast. Obviously, if God leads you to undertake an absolute fast, you should obey. If so, be certain, to the best of your ability, that God is leading you.

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-toxication, breakdown of vital body tissues, and loss of electrolytes. Water and juice fasting is recommended 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.

When it comes to making your final decision about what type of fast is right for you, the best advice is to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. He will guide your heart and mind as to what is best for you. Remember, the most important consideration in fasting is your motive. Why are you fasting – to seek something personally from God’s hand or to seek His face in worship, praise, and thanksgiving?

Full Fast

Drink only liquids (you establish the number of days).

The Daniel Fast

Eat no meat, no sweets, and no bread. Drink water and juice. Eat fruits and vegetables. To learn more about the Daniel Fast, see page 37.

3-Day Fast

This fast can be a Full Fast, Daniel Fast, or give up at least one item of food.

Partial Fast

A partial fast is from 6:00 am to 3:00 pm or from sunup to sundown. You can select from three types of fasting—a Full Fast, Daniel Fast, or give up at least one item of food.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES FOR FASTING:

Matthew 6:16-18, Matthew 9:14-15, Luke 18:9-14

RELATION TO PRAYER AND READING OF THE WORD:

1 Samuel 1:6-8, 17-18, Nehemiah 1:4, Daniel 9:3, 20, Joel 2:12, Luke 2:37, Acts 10:30, Acts 13:2

CORPORATE FASTING

1 Samuel 7:5-6, Ezra 8:21-23, Nehemiah 9:1-3, Joel 2:15-16, Jonah 3:5-10, Acts 27:33-37

Remember that it is the attitude of a heart sincerely seeking Him to which God responds with a blessing (Isaiah 58, Jeremiah 14:12, 1 Corinthians 8:8).

HOW TO FAST SAFELY

As you begin your fast, you may hear from concerned loved ones and friends who urge you to protect your health. And they are right – you should protect your health. However, be assured, if done properly, fasting will not only prove to be a spiritual blessing but a physical blessing as well.

By all means, it would be wise to ask your doctor for a physical exam to make sure you are in good health. You may have a physical problem that would make fasting unwise or dangerous. Also, if you are taking any type of medication, make sure to talk to your doctor before changing your regimen. Prudence and caution are in order. When you are assured that you are in good health, you are ready to begin your fast. In spite of the safety and benefits of fasting, there are certain persons who should NEVER fast without professional supervision.

For example:

- Persons who are physically underweight or emaciated.
- Persons who are prone to anorexia, bulimia, or other behavioral disorders.
- Those who suffer weakness or anemia.
- Persons who have tumors, bleeding ulcers, cancer, blood diseases, or who have heart disease.
- Those who suffer chronic problems with kidneys, liver, lungs, heart, or other vital organs.
- Individuals who take insulin for diabetes or suffer any other blood sugar problem such as hyperglycemia.
- Women who are pregnant or nursing.

Consult your doctor before you fast.

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 upfront:

- How long you will fast – one meal, one day, a week, several weeks; whatever you decide, try to discipline yourself for the entire 21 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 juices; what kinds 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 God’s Word

Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life’s pressures tempt you to abandon it.

There are several types of fasting. The one you choose is between you and God. He will honor your best sacrifice.

Step Three: Prepare Spiritually

In preparation for this special time with God, examine your heart through prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any unconfessed sin. Scripture records that God always requires His people to repent of their sins before He will hear their prayers. King David said:

“Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he did for me. For I cried out to him for help, praising him as I spoke. If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But God did listen! He paid attention to my prayer. Praise God, who did not ignore my prayer or withdraw his unfailing love from me.” Psalm 66:16-20, NLT

In your prayers, confess not only the obvious sins that come to mind, but allow yourself to linger in His presence, giving Him time to show you the less obvious ones as well.

You may want to ask God if you are experiencing any of these signs of leaving your first love: worldly-mindedness, self-centeredness, spiritual indifference, unwillingness to share your faith in Christ with others, not spending sufficient time in God’s Word and in prayer, a poor relationship with your spouse, your children, your friends, or other members of your church tribe.

The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed 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 the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God’s forgiveness (1 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 Spirit leads you.
- Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit according to His command in Ephesians 5:18 and His promise in 1 John 5:14,15.
- Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Master; 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 (Hebrews 11:6).
- Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16,17).

Step Four: Prepare Physically

Although fasting is primarily a spiritual discipline, it begins in the physical realm. You should not fast without specific physical preparation. If you plan on fasting for several days, you will find it helpful to begin by eating smaller meals before you abstain altogether. Resist the urge to have that “last big feast” before the fast. Cutting down on your meals a few days before you begin the fast will signal your mind, stomach, and appetite that less food is acceptable. Some health professionals suggest eating only raw foods for two days before starting a fast. It is also recommended to start weaning yourself off caffeine and sugar products to ease your initial hunger or discomfort at the early stages of your fast.

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 fruit and vegetables for two days before starting a fast.

HOW LONG AND WHAT TYPE OF FAST IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

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 discomfort, 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.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING YOUR FAST

When you fast your body detoxifies, eliminating toxins from your system. This can cause mild discomfort such as headaches and irritability during withdrawal from caffeine and sugars. And naturally, you will have hunger pains. Limit your activity and exercise moderately. Take time to rest. Fasting brings about miraculous results. You are following Jesus’ example when you fast. Spend time listening to praise and worship. Pray as often as you can throughout the day. Get away from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mind set on seeking God’s face.

Step Five: Create a Fasting and Prayer Schedule

HOW LONG AND WHAT TYPE OF FAST IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

How long you fast, the kind of fast you undertake, and how you adjust your schedule, depends mostly on the flexibility of your daily life.

Whether you go to work in an office or work virtually, are a student or a stay-at-home mom, there is a way to manage your fast. There are thousands of men and women, of all ages and life stages, who have already completed both short and extended fasts, many up to 40 days.

There are some whose work or lifestyle involves strenuous physical activity and still have enjoyed an extended fast. However, if this is your situation, you may want to consider a limited fast of only one or more days of the week. Or you may look to weekends as the prime time to abstain from food.

There are a couple of reasons to consider adjusting your schedule, especially during an extended fast: The first is physical. Throughout your fast, you may feel somewhat weaker than normal. During the first few days, you may feel tired and irritable. Lightening your workload and cutting down on strenuous exercise would be a very good idea to maintain your health and your morale.

The second reason is spiritual. Fasting is not just denying yourself food. It is exchanging the needs of the physical body for those of the spiritual. Long times of prayer and reading God's Word will be essential if you are to enter into more intimate communion with God and maintain your fast to its completion. While fasting, if your life is continually filled with activity and busyness to the neglect of spending extended time with God, you will starve both physically and spiritually. You will find yourself discouraged and frustrated with your fast instead of being benefited and blessed.

The more time you spend with God in fellowship and worship, and the more you read and meditate upon His Word, the greater your effectiveness will be in prayer. This kind of focused attention will make for a more meaningful fast. So, be encouraged to arrange your schedule accordingly!

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

Step Six: While Fasting

HOW SHOULD I RESPOND TO OTHERS ABOUT MY FAST?

Many people are reluctant to tell others that they are fasting so they will avoid the sin of the Pharisees: fasting just to gain recognition for themselves.

This attitude could be perceived as a result of a wrong interpretation of Jesus' teaching, "that your fasting may not be seen by others" (Matthew 6:18). His point is avoiding self-praise, not total secrecy. Our misguided silence can be a trick of the enemy who does not want us to fast, nor to share with loved ones and friends the benefits of fasting.

By isolating ourselves from the support of other Christians, we will be more susceptible to doubts and negative influences. We need the prayers of our Christian friends and family members to help us continue when we feel alone and when the enemy tempts us to give up. Eventually, people will notice you are not eating.

However, unless you see certain people daily, they do not consider your skipped meal much of a concern. If you are asked by someone who does not follow Christ, they may be satisfied by such a brief answer as, "I have other plans for lunch today." Or Christians should be satisfied when you answer that you are fasting.

If friends and family express concern for your health, ease their fears by telling them that you will stop fasting the moment you feel you are harming your body or if the Lord leads you to end your fast. Tell them you are fasting under your doctor's care, which you are urged to do if you have any questions concerning your health.

There is usually no reason for telling strangers or casual acquaintances that you are fasting. If you do, they may subject you to a lot of questions that you may not want to answer. But in any case, use your best judgment and the Lord's leading in telling people about your fast.

HOW SHOULD I RESPOND TO OTHERS ABOUT MY FAST?

Experiencing God's best from a fast requires solid commitment. Arranging special time each day with God is crucial in attaining intimate communion with the Father. You must devote yourself to seeking God's face, even (and especially) during those times in which you feel weak, vulnerable, or irritable.

Read His Word and pray during what were mealtimes. Meditate on Him when you awake in the night. Sing praises to Him whenever you please. Focus on your Heavenly Father and make every act one of praise and worship. God will enable you to experience His command to "pray without ceasing" as you seek His presence.

As you enter this time of heightened spiritual devotion, be aware that Satan will do everything he can to pull you away from your prayer and Bible reading time. When you feel the enemy trying to discourage you, immediately go to God in prayer and ask Him to strengthen your resolve in the face of difficulties and temptations.

The enemy makes you a target because he knows that fasting is a powerful Christian discipline and that God may have something very special to show you as you wait upon Him and seek His face. Satan does not want you to grow in your faith; he will do anything from making you hungry and grumpy to bringing up trouble in your family or at work to stop you. Make prayer your protective shield against such attacks.

One major reason for fasting is for personal revival, revival for our nation and the world, and for fulfillment of the Great Commission. But praying for our own needs and interceding for others are also important reasons to fast and pray. Bring your personal needs before the Lord, and intercede for your loved ones and your friends. Pray also for your church, your pastor, and your community. By your prayers, as you fast with humility, you will help the Great Commission be fulfilled.

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. 1 John 5:14-

15

However, do not become so caught up in praying for yourself and others that you forget about simply reverencing and praising God. True spiritual fasting focuses on God. Center your total being on Him: your attitudes and actions, your motives, desires, and words. This posture can only happen if God and the Holy Spirit are at the center of our attention. Confess your sins as the Holy Spirit brings them to mind and continue to focus on God and God alone so that your prayers may be powerful and effective. A renewed closeness with God and a greater sensitivity to spiritual things are usually the results of a fast. Do not be disappointed if you do not have a “mountaintop experience,” as some do. Many people who have completed extended fasts tell of feeling a nearness to God that they have never before known, but some who have honestly sought His face report no particular outward results at all. For others, their fast was physically, emotionally, and spiritually grueling, but they knew they had been called by God to fast. Even so, 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, and not to attain personal happiness. When your motives are right, God will honor your seeking heart and bless your time with Him.

MAINTAINING NUTRITIONAL VALUES

The prospect of going without food for an extended period of time may be of concern to some. But there are ways to ensure that your body is getting the nutrients it needs so you can remain safe and healthy during your fast.

For an extended fast, water, fruit, and vegetable juices are recommended. The natural sugars in juices provide energy, and the taste and strength are motivational to continue your fast. Try to drink fresh juices, if possible. Off-the-shelf juice products are acceptable, as long as they are 100% juice with no sugar or other additives.

If you are beginning a juice fast, there are certain juices you may wish to avoid and certain ones that are especially beneficial. Because of their acid content, most nutritionists do not advise orange or tomato juice (these are better tolerated if mixed with equal portions of water). The best juices are fresh carrot, grape, celery, apple, cabbage, or beet. They also recommend “green drinks” made from green leafy vegetables because they are excellent “detoxifiers.”

Fruit juices are “cleansers” and are best taken in the morning. Since vegetable juices are “restorers” and “builders”, they are best taken in the afternoon.

You may choose to dedicate a portion of the 21 Day fast to a special liquid formula. Below are some recipes and a schedule that have been found to be effective.

- One gallon of distilled water
- 1-1/2 cup lemon juice
- 3/4 cup pure maple syrup
- 1/4-teaspoon cayenne pepper

The lemon juice adds flavor and vitamin C, the maple syrup provides energy, and the cayenne pepper – an herb – acts to open small blood vessels, which, some believe helps the body as it cleanses itself of stored toxins. (A word of caution: cayenne pepper could cause severe physical reactions in persons with a specific allergy to this herb.)

A favorite juice is a mixture of 100% pure white grape juice and peach juice. The juice is available in frozen cans under the Welch label. Most knowledgeable nutritionists recommend:

- Watermelon – just put it in the blender without adding water
- Fresh apple juice
- Green juice – blend celery, romaine lettuce, and carrots in equal proportions (Vegetable juices like this one are important, for they supply the electrolytes necessary for proper heart function.)

Some nutritionists recommend warm broth, especially if you live in a colder climate. You may find their recipes helpful:

- Boil sliced potatoes, carrots, and celery in water.
 - Do not add salt.
 - After about a half-hour, drain off the water and drink.
- Gently boil three carrots, two stalks of celery, one turnip, two beets, a half head of cabbage, a quarter of a bunch of parsley, a quarter of an onion, and a half clove of garlic.
 - Drain off the broth and drink up to two or three times daily.

Any products containing protein or fat, such as milk or soy-based drinks, should be avoided. These products will restart the digestion cycle and you will again feel hunger pangs. Also, for health reasons, stay away from caffeinated beverages such as coffee, tea, or cola. Caffeine is a stimulant and therefore has a more powerful effect on your nervous system when you abstain from food. This stimulant works both against the physical and spiritual aspects of the fast.

Another key factor in maintaining optimum health during a fast is limiting your physical activity. Exercise only moderately and rest as much as your schedule will permit (this especially applies to extended fasts). Short naps are helpful as well. Walking a mile or two each day at a moderate pace is acceptable for a person in good health and on a juice fast. However, no one on a water fast should exercise without the supervision of a fasting specialist.

PHYSICAL EFFECTS TO EXPECT AND SUGGESTED RELIEF

Although fasting can be an indescribable blessing, it is not always easy for everyone. In this time of discipline, self-sacrifice and reflection, do not be surprised if you experience mental and physical discomforts.

To begin, you may experience some inner conflict when you deny yourself the pleasure of eating food. Any sort of fast may sometimes leave you feeling impatient and irritable. During a 3-day fast, this struggle can intensify toward the end of the second day. That seems to be a favorite time for the “self” to rise up and say, “This is as far as I want to go. I have done enough.”

PHYSICAL EFFECTS	SUGGESTED RELIEF
<p>Hunger pangs are usually the greatest during the first three days of the fast. Your body is adjusting from using the food in your digestive tract (which remains for about three days) to consuming stored fats.</p>	<p>Psyllium bulk will help eliminate hunger pangs and also aid in cleansing the body. Several capsules can be taken throughout the day with plenty of water.</p> <p>Silymarin tablets may also be helpful, for they are believed to protect and enhance the cleansing of the liver.</p>
<p>Headaches or stomach aches may be a result of salt, sugar, or caffeine withdrawal.</p>	<p>Eliminating those items from your diet prior to fasting is the best way to avoid these pains.</p>
<p>Coldness, bad breath, and heightened body odor are possible. Also, changes in elimination (constipation or diarrhea), lightheadedness, changes in sleeping and dreaming patterns, aches and pains are likely.</p> <p>A white-coated tongue at the beginning of a fast may be a part of the body’s pattern of throwing off toxins.</p> <p>Expect to go to the bathroom often (you will be drinking lots of water).</p>	<p>After the first two weeks of an extended fast, many of these symptoms subside. Continuing aches in a certain area of the body usually means elimination of fatty tissue is going on in that area, which is not harmful. However, any extensive pain should be examined immediately.</p>

PHYSICAL EFFECTS	SUGGESTED RELIEF
Lower back pain may indicate that you are dehydrated.	Drink more fluids.
Dizziness may be caused by a sudden change in position, such as rising suddenly from a chair.	Stop for a second or two, then recover. Move slowly. (A word of caution: these conditions may be symptoms of other problems requiring medical attention.)
Minor fasting discomfort.	Take one teaspoon of psyllium seed powder morning and evening. Mixed in lukewarm water, it becomes like Jello. This powder will hasten the elimination of toxins from your colon and help to prevent headaches and dizziness for most healthy people. Alfalfa tablets can help control bad breath and cleanse the system. Two tablets at a time can be taken several times a day.

YOU SHOULD STOP FASTING IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING SEVERE PAIN OR SWELLING.

During your fast, you may have your struggles, discomforts, spiritual victories, and failures. In the morning you may feel like you are on top of the world, but by evening you may be wrestling with the flesh—sorely tempted to raid the refrigerator and counting how many more days are left in your fast. This is especially true if you are new at fasting. To counteract temptations like these, take extra time with the Lord. Step outside for some fresh air and talk to Him as you walk along. And in the process, always keep on sipping water or juice frequently during your waking hours.

Step Seven: 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 tract 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, add the following:
 - First day: Add a raw salad.
 - Second day: Add baked or boiled potato, no butter or seasoning.
 - Third day: Add a steamed 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 fruit 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.

SAMPLE PLAN FOR BREAKING AN EXTENDED FAST

5:00P (as you end your last day of the fast)

Peel four or five medium-sized tomatoes – cut them up, bring them to a boil, and then turn off the heat. When they are cool enough to eat, have as many as you desire.

The day after the last day of your fast

Salad of grated carrots and grated cabbage, with half an orange squeezed over it.

- Bowl of steamed greens (spinach, Swiss chard, or mustard greens) and peeled tomatoes. Bring the greens to a boil, then turn off the heat.
- You may eat two slices of 100 percent whole-wheat bread, which has been toasted until it is thoroughly dry - this is called “Melba toast.” After it has been cooled, the toast should be so dry that it would powder if you squeezed it in the palm of your hand. As I have stated, this first food should be in the morning.
- During the day, you may have all the distilled water you wish to drink.
- For dinner, you may have a salad of grated carrots, chopped celery, and cabbage, with orange juice for dressing. This salad will be followed by two cooked vegetables, one such as spinach, kale, chard, or mustard greens, and one such as string beans, carrots, steamed celery, okra, or squash. You may have two pieces of whole-grain “Melba toast.” These meals are not to contain oils of any kind.

The second day after your fast

- You may have a dish of any kind of fresh fruit, such as banana, pineapple, orange, sliced grapefruit, or sliced apples. You may sprinkle this with two tablespoonfuls of raw wheat germ and sweeten it with honey, but not over one tablespoonful.
- At noon you may have a salad of grated carrots, cabbage, and celery, with one cooked vegetable and one slice of “Melba toast.”
- At dinner, you may have a salad dish of lettuce, watercress, parsley, and tomatoes, and two cooked vegetables.

Most experts agree that breaking a fast with vegetables, either steamed or raw, is best. Your stomach is smaller now, so eat lightly. Stop before you feel full. Stay away from starches like pasta, potatoes, rice, or bread (except for “Melba toast”) for at least a week. Also avoid meats, dairy products, and any fats or oils for a week or more. Introduce them very slowly and in small amounts.

Extended fasts are not the only fasts that need to be ended with caution. Even a 3-day fast requires reasonable precautions. It is wise to start with a little soup – something thin and nourishing such as vegetable broth made from onion, celery, potatoes, and carrots – and fresh fruits such as watermelon and cantaloupe.

In terms of resuming any sort of exercise routine, the advice is the same. Start out slowly, allowing time for your body to readjust to its usual regime.

Step Eight: 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-all. Just as we need fresh infillings of the Holy Spirit daily, we also need new times of fasting before God. A 24-hour fast each week has been greatly rewarding to many Christians.

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 first 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.

Be encouraged to continue fasting and prayer again and again until we truly experience revival in our homes, our churches, our beloved nation, and throughout the world.

Great Men & Women Who Experienced the Power of Fasting

What is your greatest need today? Do you need wisdom, power, healing, or protection? The Bible tells of men and women with the same struggles that you face today. They sought God's face through prayer and fasting for the different seasons of their lives...and so can you.

The Disciples

Ezra

Samuel

Elijah

The Widow

Paul

Daniel

John the Baptist

Esther

The Disciples Fast

FREEDOM FROM ADDICTIONS TO SIN

Besetting sins, referred to in Hebrews 12:1, are those that ensnare us and hinder us from achieving God's purpose for our lives.

In Mark chapter 9, Christ's disciples were frustrated because they could not cast out an evil spirit. Jesus said, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29). Through fasting we can break free from the addictions and habits that are not pleasing to God.

"Is this not the fast that I have chosen; to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?" Isaiah 58:6 NKJV

Lisa from Georgia, wrote: "I overcame a lifetime of smoking and am 17 months free from nicotine addiction."

Suzan from Perry, Florida, sent this praise report: "I fasted in January for my mother to be delivered from an addiction to alcohol. She is now free from the desire for alcohol . . . with NO physical withdrawal symptoms. This is a miracle. Praise God!"

The Ezra Fast

HELP WITH FINANCIAL TROUBLES

"The Ezra Fast" is found in the Book of Ezra, the eighth chapter (Ezra 8:21). Ezra had been given silver and gold to take back to Jerusalem from King Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:14-17). But there was a problem — thieves!

Maybe you feel like thieves have stolen what belongs to you financially. When Ezra faced an uncertain financial journey, what did he do? He declared a fast and God answered his prayer! If you will fast, pray, and obey God's commandments, He said you will be blessed (Deuteronomy 28:2).

The Samuel Fast

FOR NATIONAL REVIVAL

When the Philistines were preparing to attack Israel, Samuel declared a fast for national revival. Samuel told the people to fast and seek God to return His presence to the nation (1 Samuel 7:3).

Our society today critically needs believers who will take “The Samuel Fast” — a fast for national revival.

“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 I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land”.

2 Chronicles 7:14 NKJV

We can return God’s presence and glory to our personal lives and our nation . . . if we fast, pray, and seek Him now.

The Elijah Fast

BREAK NEGATIVE EMOTIONAL FEELINGS AND HABITS

In 1 Kings 17:10-16, we read the vivid story about a woman with very little who helped the man of God, Elijah. It was all part of God’s plan.

The widow made a choice to fast so that someone else could eat. The book of Isaiah puts it this way, “...is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out...” (Isaiah 58:6-7).

Today, you can meet the humanitarian needs of other people while you’re fasting by using the money you would normally feed yourself with to help a food bank, support world missions, or give to some other ministry that is helping the needy. When you do that, it pleases God and He will meet your needs. In the story of the widow, God multiplied the meal in her barrel to last for THREE AND A HALF YEARS!

The Paul Fast

MAJOR LIFE DECISIONS

Maybe you have a job opportunity, a broken relationship, or an unfulfilled dream. God has provided a way you can discern His voice—“The Paul Fast.” Saul was going the wrong way in life. He was hunting down followers of Christ and persecuting them when the light of God’s truth knocked him off his path (Acts 9:3-6).

Saul headed to Damascus and “was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank” (Acts 9:9). Saul didn’t know what to do. But he fasted for God’s divine direction. Then God sent the disciple Ananias to Saul with guidance (Acts 9:17). Through this process Saul became Paul, one of God’s chosen disciples. Through his fast, Paul got the direction he needed and so can you.

Angela of North Little Rock, Arkansas, needed a job when she began her fast. “I was believing God for a new job. I received a call from the CEO of a company offering me a full-time position with a salary increase and benefits. I thank God! Fasting really works!”

The Paul Fast

FOR HEALTH AND HEALING

John and his disciples fasted often, according to Matthew 9. He was on the Nazarite diet, which fasted alcohol all the time. He ate little more than locusts and wild honey (Matthew 3:1-4). Because of John the Baptist’s constant fasting, I believe he had a greater testimony and influence on the lives of people in his generation than any other man (Matthew 11:1), (John 1:6-7).

Jodi of Thibodaux, Louisiana, wrote: “I chose to join in the 21-day fast. For many years, I have been praying for (my sister’s) marriage and her salvation. She gave her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ on the 21st day of the fast! What a super release of His favor!”

Maria from Quezon City, Philippines, said that by the third week of her fast, she received invitations to teach outside of her church. “It was like what you said about God just opening doors for ministry. Fasting now is a way of life I cannot do without.”

The Esther Fast

FOR PROTECTION AGAINST DANGER

We live in a world full of predators, disasters, and evil. But don't live in fear. God has provided the blessing of protection.

Esther was in a very dangerous position. Her uncle Mordecai discovered a plot by Haman, one of the king's advisors, to destroy her family. When he asked for Esther's help, she knew it was very dangerous to approach the king without being called for. She could lose her life. So Esther declared a three-day fast for God's protection (Esther 4:16).

Haman wanted to hang Mordecai on the gallows he was building in his courtyard, but God turned it around and the evil conspirator was hanged instead, on his own gallows! When you fast and pray, God will extend His protection to you and your household.

Steps to Guide a Daniel Fast

Step One: Be Specific

Daniel was not vague in his objection to the Babylonian diet. He defined the problem immediately.

- The king's food was against dietary laws.
- Daniel and his friends had vowed against wine.
- The king's food had been offered up to idols/demons.

Step Two: Fast as a Spiritual Commitment

The Daniel Fast involves a spiritual commitment to God.

"Daniel proposed in his heart that he would not defile himself..." Daniel 1:8 NKJV

Step Three: Reflect Inner Desire by Outer Discipline

Many people have an inner desire for better health, but they can't discipline themselves to avoid junk food and other foods that are not good for their health. The physical health you seek from God may be more than an answer to prayer. Your physical health can be linked to any of the following factors:

- Your food choices.
- The level of your spiritual commitment as reflected in constant prayer during the fast.
- Your time commitment. If you are determined to fast for a certain time, keep it. For example, if you determine to fast for 10 days, don't stop on Day 9.
- Your testimony commitment. Your fast is a statement of faith to God that you want Him to heal your body, and faith is foundational to the Daniel Fast.

Step Four: Pray to Perceive Sin's Role in Poor Health

"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." James 5:13-16 NIV

Notice James 5:13-16:

- Sin is something related to the cause of sickness.
- Lack of health/healing may be the result of spiritual rebellion.
- Lack of health/healing may be due to the sin of wrong intake, i.e. drugs, or pornography.
- Repentance is linked to health according to James.
- Elders have a role in healing both spiritual & physical health.

The anointing oil could mean:

- Medicine for healing
- Symbolic of the Holy Spirit

Prayer alone may not gain healing; faith is the major factor. In Greek, there are several words for “sick”. James uses “Kanino”, which not only includes disease but also means weak or weary.

Attitude is important. James said, “are there any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.”

Step Five: Fast as a Statement of Faith to Others

Daniel was making a statement of faith when he asked for only vegetables to eat and water to drink, then dared the overseer to compare the appearance of the four sons of Israel with the young men who ate the king’s food.

Step Six: Learn the Effects of the Food You Eat

Why are some foods good for us, and other foods not? What does certain food do to your body? If we really knew, there would likely be some things we would never eat again.

Step Seven: Yield All Results to God

Daniel said, “as you see fit, deal with your servants” (Daniel 1:13).

Food Guidelines for a Daniel Fast

DANIEL 1:12

“Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.”

DANIEL 10:3 KJV

“I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.”

When going on a Daniel fast, or any type of fast, if you have questions outside of what Scripture says, prayerfully seek the Lord and be led by the Spirit for the specifics for your personal fast.

Daniel Fast Sample Menu

BREAKFAST

Fruits, vegetables, juices, and water fruit smoothie with whey protein

MID-MORNING SNACK

Fresh fruit or fresh vegetables

LUNCH

Raw vegetable salad with light, organic dressing, and vegetable broth soup

MID-AFTERNOON SNACK

Fresh fruit or fresh vegetables

DINNER

Fresh salad with light, organic dressing, and steamed or grilled vegetables

WATER

Drink plenty of water - at least 100 ounces

Modified Daniel Fast Sample Menu

BREAKFAST

1-2 servings whole grains with fresh fruit juice

MID-MORNING SNACK

Fresh fruit or fresh vegetables

LUNCH

1-2 servings whole grains. Fresh salad with legumes and light organic dressing

MID-AFTERNOON SNACK

Fresh fruit juice or fruit smoothie with whey protein

DINNER

1-2 whole grains: fresh salad with legumes & light, organic dressing

WATER

Drink plenty of water - at least 100 ounces

Daniel's Fast 21 Day New Testament Bible Reading Plan

<i>Day One</i>	<i>Matthew Chapters 1-12</i>	<i>Day Twelve</i>	<i>Acts Chapters 9-21</i>
<i>Day Two</i>	<i>Matthew Chapters 13-23</i>	<i>Day Thirteen</i>	<i>Acts Chapter 22- Romans Chapter 7</i>
<i>Day Three</i>	<i>Matthew Chapter 24 – Mark Chapter 4</i>	<i>Day Fourteen</i>	<i>Romans Chapter 8 – 1 Corinthians Chapter 5</i>
<i>Day Four</i>	<i>Mark Chapters 5-10</i>	<i>Day Fifteen</i>	<i>1 Corinthians Chapter 6 – Ephesians Chapter 6</i>
<i>Day Five</i>	<i>Mark Chapters 11-14</i>	<i>Day Sixteen</i>	<i>Philippians Chapter 1 – 1 Timothy Chapter 4</i>
<i>Day Six</i>	<i>Mark Chapter 15 – Luke Chapter 5</i>	<i>Day Seventeen</i>	<i>1 Timothy Chapter 5 – Hebrews Chapter 3</i>
<i>Day Seven</i>	<i>Luke Chapters 6-12</i>	<i>Day Eighteen</i>	<i>Hebrews Chapter 4 - Hebrews Chapter 11</i>
<i>Day Eight</i>	<i>Luke Chapters 13-22</i>	<i>Day Nineteen</i>	<i>Hebrews Chapter 12 – 1 John Chapter 4</i>
<i>Day Nine</i>	<i>Luke Chapter 23 – John Chapter 6</i>	<i>Day Twenty</i>	<i>1 John Chapter 5 – Revelations Chapter 14</i>
<i>Day Ten</i>	<i>John Chapters 7-19</i>	<i>Day Twenty One</i>	<i>Revelation Chapters 15-22</i>
<i>Day Eleven</i>	<i>John Chapter 20 – Acts Chapter 9</i>		

21 Topics & Questions to Focus our Fast

Fasting is one of the most powerful ways to return to God. As you fast, use the 21 topics and questions to focus your efforts. We believe as you ask for God's help in each of these areas, He will remove distractions that have built up over time and bring you closer to Him.

PRAY	<i>What is the best time each day for you to connect with God?</i>	YOUR IDENTITY	<i>Are you focusing on who God says you are?</i>
READ THE BIBLE	<i>Are you reading God's Word?</i>	FORGIVE YOURSELF	<i>Are you still holding on to guilt and shame?</i>
GO TO CHURCH	<i>Is church part of your weekly schedule?</i>	TRUST IN GOD	<i>Is church part of your weekly schedule?</i>
SURRENDER	<i>Have you given God every part of your life?</i>	LIVE WITH PURPOSE	<i>How can you be intentional in everything you do?</i>
REST UP	<i>How can you get more rest?</i>	SHARE YOUR FAITH	<i>How can you inspire people to live for Jesus?</i>
BE POSITIVE	<i>Are your thoughts and words uplifting?</i>	GIVE	<i>How can you be a blessing to others?</i>
UNPLUG	<i>What distractions are keeping you from more important things?</i>	INVEST IN YOUR FAMILY	<i>How can you build up your family?</i>
GET HEALTHY	<i>What healthy habits can you add to your life?</i>	MANAGE YOUR MONEY	<i>How can you make smarter financial decisions?</i>
BREAK ADDICTIONS	<i>What steps can you take to overcome the addictions that are holding you back?</i>	WORSHIP	<i>Are you honoring God with your life?</i>
FORGIVE	<i>Is there someone you need to forgive?</i>	EXPECT THE EXTRA-ORDINARY	<i>Are you putting limits on what God can do?</i>
CHOOSE THE RIGHT FRIENDS	<i>Are the people around you inspiring you to grow closer to God?</i>		

Fasting Q&A

WHAT CAN CHILDREN FAST?

I've found the best way to show your children the power of fasting is to lead by example. If they want to participate in fasting or if you want to have a family fast consider giving up desserts. Or soft drinks. Or one item of food that would be a sacrifice to each of you. Now if they want to do without broccoli and they don't even like broccoli - giving it up wouldn't be a sacrifice for them. Just lead by example and they will understand. In addition to giving up an item of food, you could also give up television as a family and spend that time reading and discussing Bible stories.

WHAT IF I HAVE A MEDICAL CONDITION?

Consult your doctor before starting any fast. Decide together what is possible. If your health condition prohibits you from fasting food, try fasting something else that would be a sacrifice or distraction for you and replace that time concentrating on prayer and Bible study.

WHAT IF I START AND CAN'T FINISH MY FAST...HAVE I FASTED FOR NOTHING?

Seeking God through prayer and fasting is never wasted time. When you make the effort, God takes notice. Just determine within your heart that you will make an even better effort next time. Or maybe you need to try finishing up with a partial fast.

IF I FORGOT AND ATE SOMETHING. DO I NEED TO START OVER AGAIN?

No, think of fasting as a marathon, rather than a sprint. Don't give up! If you fall down, get up and keep trying. Conquering "king stomach" is difficult. But you'll make it.

WHAT TYPE OF FAST ARE YOU GOING ON? DO I HAVE TO DO THE SAME FAST?

Fasting is a private and personal discipline. Consider the types of fasts outlined in this little book and select one that works for you. You don't have to go on the same type of fast as someone else to see God's hand at work. Just do your best.

DO I HAVE TO FAST FOOD?

Fasting food is the traditional type of fast that is outlined in Scripture. However, if you are unable to fast food for health reasons, feel free to give up something else that might have control in your life or be preventing you from experiencing spiritual growth. Replace that time with prayer and study of God's word.

DO I CONTINUE TO EXERCISE WHILE FASTING?

Moderate exercise is good. But it is best to always consult a doctor about fasting and exercise. If you are on a complete fast, you may not have the energy needed to maintain a high level of exercise.

CAN MY SPOUSE AND I BE INTIMATE DURING FASTING?

There is a scriptural reference for abstaining from sex during times of fasting in 1 Corinthians 7:2-5 and especially verse 5. Here is the breakdown: v.3- the husband is to "render" to his wife the affection (sexual relations) due her and likewise the wife also to her husband. v.4- The husband does not have authority over his body and neither does the wife, but rather the marriage partner has the authority over the partner. v.5- So do not deprive one another (of sexual relations) EXCEPT WITH CONSENT, for a time ... that you may give yourselves to fasting prayer. So the answer is yes, scripture allows this and even provides for this depriving or going without for the purpose of fasting and prayer, BUT this is only to be done by mutual consent. Both have to be on board to fast from sexual relations...for fasting is to be honorable before the Lord.

Share with us!

Is this prayer guide encouraging you in your walk with Christ? Share your experiences and stories with us on social media! Tag @VictoryChurchPA on Instagram & Facebook or scan the QR code to fill out a form to share your story!



**SCAN TO
SHARE
YOUR
STORY**