

I. Biblical Indications

- A. Foundational/Basic - The theme of fasting is focused upon over fifty times in scripture and is seen throughout all of scripture as something that God's people understand and normally participate in.
1. Food - Without exception, the subject of fasting in the scriptures is some form of voluntary abstinence from food. There are cases where other comforts were also refused during a fast, but it was always in addition to abstinence from food.
 2. Short Term/Long Term - The scriptures most commonly speak of fasting as a response to a certain season rather than a planned calendar event. It's also of note that fasting was many times done in an open ended manner until there was a response from God. However, we do see some recurring lengths of fasting in scripture.
 - a. One, three, seven, ten, twenty-one and forty days—All of these fasts were either total or partial abstinence from food.
 3. Lifestyle - What we want to keep in mind is that biblical fasting is rooted in a voluntary desire of the heart, and fasting done out of a religious spirit results in no spiritual fruit. Fasting is expected to be a normal part of a believer's life and not a matter of "if" but "when" you find yourself or your community led to fast for an extended period of time.
 - a. When it comes to outward actions or works of the believer we must bear in mind that the difference between legalism and voluntary love cannot be discerned outwardly. Jesus looks upon the internal motivation of our spiritual disciplines and receives love and worship from us even when we find ourselves operating purely out of self discipline and feel nothing. It's all about your motivation. With this in mind a scheduled calendar fast is biblical and should be understood in the same way as a spontaneous fast when the motivation is right. (Lk. 18:10-14)
 4. Exclusively connected to Prayer - The fasting of the scriptures is always seen as a discipline that positions us for a season of focused prayer both in time and intensity. Prayerless fasting is not biblical fasting.

- B. Intimacy focused fasting - The motivation for this fast is simply to position yourself (draw near, or seek) in a more focused way to receive revelation from Him and grow in love. This mode of fasting and prayer is in general more of a voluntary spiritual discipline that is built into your everyday life. (Mat. 9:15)
 - 1. Motivation - Transformation through Intimacy; Bridegroom Longing.
- C. Breakthrough focused fasting - The motivation for this fast is the desire for God to bring breakthrough or victory in response to a crisis or unique intercessory focus. These fasts are common in the life of the believer but generally longer in length or until a breakthrough or victory is seen or felt. (Dan. 10:2-3, 12)
 - 1. Motivation - Spirit given or desired burden; personal or corporate physical or spiritual crisis.

II. Created Dynamics

- A. Voluntary Weakness/Humility - God created us in such a way that our physical body and soul is strengthened or weakened through nourishment. He designed us in His wisdom so that we can choose to be weak and humble ourselves before Him by abstaining from food. It is the humble, weak, and broken whom He draws near to, and through fasting we place ourselves in a humble and weak posture. (Ps. 51:15-717; Is. 57:15, 66:1-2)
 - 1. To fast is to humble yourself before God - (1 Kings 21:27-29; Ps. 69:10, Dan. 10:2-3, 10; Is. 58:9; Ezra 8:21)
- B. Heightens sensitivity - We are a three-part being made up of a spirit, soul (mind, will, and emotions), and a body. Though these parts are spoken of as distinct, they are deeply connected; what happens to one part affects the others. When it comes to the subject of fasting, it is both biblical and experiential that food intake affects our soul and spirit. (Lev. 16:29; Num. 29:7; Acts. 13:2-3)

III. Guidelines

- A. There has been a resurgence of fasting in recent decades, as God calls His people to regular fasting as part of a normal Christian lifestyle. We must prepare ourselves adequately so that the fast can honor God and fulfill its purpose. The following is a general overview of biblical precedent and guidelines for wise fasting to help and encourage you.

- B. Fasting Is Always Voluntary - Though we are inviting you to join us on our corporate fasting days, fasting should never be forced or made compulsory. We do promote and encourage it as a biblically and historically proven means of positioning yourself to encounter Jesus in the context of commitment to prayer and to the Word (Joel 2:15).
1. The level at which a person engages in fasting (particularly food) should be determined with regard to any physical limitations. Those with a known or suspected physical disability or illness, or those with any history of an eating disorder, should never fast, except in consultation with, and under the supervision of a qualified doctor. Pregnant or nursing mothers should not completely fast food as it could negatively affect the health and development of their baby and their own personal health.
 2. Minors/Children - Children under sixteen are discouraged from a total fasting of food and should not engage in fasting without express parental consent and oversight.
- C. Informing others - Jesus taught us clearly that we were not to boast in our fasting or intentionally draw attention to ourselves when fasting, so sometimes it feels wrong to tell people we're fasting when they offer us food or invite us out to eat. Jesus instructs us to confront the self righteous spirit that seeks to appear holy before others. In other words, it's not wrong to politely inform people of your fasting when you're offered food or a dining invitation. It's not wrong to give details of why and how you're fasting if someone asks you. It's actually loving and helpful to communicate about your fast when it comes up. (Mt. 6:16-18)
- D. Helpful Tips -
1. **Drink plenty of water. Drinking at least half of your body weight in ounces of water per day is a must.** (For example, if you weigh 140 pounds, then you would aim for 70 oz. of water per day.)
 2. Expect some physical discomforts because of the detoxification process, especially on the second day and third day. You may have fleeting hunger pains or dizziness. Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches, but it is a part of the detoxification process. Physical annoyances may also include weariness, tiredness, nausea, and sleepiness.

3. It is wise to abstain from strong stimulants such as caffeinated and sugary drinks during a fast, including the artificial sweeteners found in diet drinks. Also, avoid soy protein drinks, which have been known to cause health problems during a fast.
4. Fast and pray in order to humble yourself and purify your worship. In fasting we are not trying to get something from God, but seeking to realign our hearts' affections with His. In fasting we can more readily say, "We love you, Lord, more than anything in the world."
5. Have a clear target as your prayer focus. Take time to pray and read the Word. This may seem obvious, but busyness and distractions will keep you from devotions.
6. When you break your commitment of fasting don't quit or give up; simply hit delete and keep going.

IV. Types of Fasting

- A. Types of Fasting - There are an endless variety of methods and types of fasting but here is a list of fasts that are common.
 1. Daniel Fast – Eat only vegetables and water.
 2. Juice Fast - Fruit or vegetable juice fast. Drink raw fruit juices such as apple, grape and pineapple, which are excellent sources of necessary natural sugar to stabilize blood sugar and keep energy levels up. Orange and grapefruit juices are also good, but these are not recommended for arthritis or allergy sufferers. Monitor juice acidity carefully.
 3. Water only Fast – Drink at least eight glasses per day. Do not do more than seven days without supervision.
 4. One Meal Per Day – Eat a very well balanced meal once per day.
 5. Daylight Fast – Fast from Sunrise to Sunset