

## WHAT IS A FAST?

To 'fast' is to choose to go without something important and regularly enjoyed, for a specific amount of time to shift our thoughts from us to focus on God. When Christians fast, they become closer in relationship with God and cooperate more with His plan.

## WHY FAST?

The very first temptation known to mankind was Food - Genesis 3:6. It is important to make sure we do not make food our master but to make God our master.

- Fasting was an expected practice in the Old and New Testaments. Jesus fasted and expected His followers to fast. (Matthew 6:16)

## HOW DO I BEGIN? WHAT CAN I DO TO PREPARE FOR MY FAST?

Before beginning a fast, think it through. Write down a plan so that you do not waiver or start justifying your appetite during the fast. Make a verbal commitment to the Lord, and start your fast with a committed heart. Decide what type of fast you will do and for how long. Prayerfully make this decision upon God's leading.

### PREPARE YOUR HEART

- Expect to experience spiritual breakthrough.
- Ask God to reveal hidden sin/s; confess them and ask God's forgiveness.
- Be prepared for a spiritual attack from satan.

### PREPARE YOUR BODY

- Consult with your doctor if you have any medical conditions or take medications.
- Cut down on food or consider a vegetarian diet a week before beginning the fast.
- Increase water intake.

## HOW DO I END THE FAST?

- Introduce small amounts of food gradually if fasting from food.
- Gradually reincorporate activities back into your schedule; & if led by God, decrease time spent going forward.
- Avoid eating a large meal to break your fast.
- Start with fruit or salad and gradually add in more solid food.

## TYPES OF FASTS

A **partial fast** refers to omitting a specific meal from your diet or refraining from certain types of foods. This is described in the book of Daniel where for three weeks, Daniel, who was a prophet during a time when Israel lived in exile, abstained only from "delicacies" like meat and wine (Daniel 10:3).

Traditionally, a **regular fast** means refraining from eating all food. However, fasting is a private discipline. It is not something that is meant to be unattainable. Decide what is feasible for you to do and make the effort. Do what you can and put it in God's hands and just do your best.

## WHAT CAN CHILDREN/MINORS FAST?

The best way to show your children and teenagers 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
- Soft Drinks
- One item of food that would be a sacrifice to each of you
- Television as a family and spend that time reading and discussing Bible stories instead

Now if they want to do without broccoli and they do not even like broccoli - giving it up would not be a sacrifice for them. Just lead by example and they will understand.

## 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.
- The level at which a person engages in fasting (particularly food) should be determined according to age, and regarding 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 fast food or drink as it could negatively affect the health and development of their baby and their own personal health.

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

Seeking God through prayer and fasting is never a waste of time. When you make the effort, God takes notice. Just determine within your heart that you will make an even better effort next time.

## I FORGOT AND ATE SOMETHING: DO I NEED TO START AGAIN?

NO, think of fasting as a marathon, rather than a sprint. Do not give up! If you fall, get up and keep trying. Conquering "king stomach" is difficult, but you will 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 publication and select one that works for you. You do not 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? WHAT ABOUT TV, SPORTS, SOCIAL MEDIA, VIDEO GAMES, PHONE, ETC.?

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.

## CAN I 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.

## WHAT IF I HAVE A MANUAL LABOR JOB?

If you have a job that requires you to expend a lot of physical energy, you may want to consider a partial fast that allows you to receive enough nutrition to perform your job.

# FASTING TIPS

- Start small. Fast from a physical desire first or from sunup to sundown.
- Try different types of fasting. Instead of food, consider giving up coffee, soda or going without TV for a week.
- Drink plenty of water (if fast includes water or liquids).
- Use a prayer guide for focus and direction.
- Plan for what to do when not eating. You may choose to replace breakfast, lunch, and dinner time with focused bible study and prayer.
- Review your schedule in advance. For example, you may not wish to fast during a business trip or during a time of extreme stress.
- Keep in mind that you may not be able to focus as well without food and your thoughts (and prayers) may be all over the place.
- Consider your interaction with others. Let them know that you will be fasting and choose to attend without eating or join them but abstain. If you are married and your fast includes sexual abstaining, discuss this, in advance with your spouse.
- Each time you feel your stomach growl, or want to engage in an activity, use that as a prompt to pray.
- Get plenty of rest.

## FASTING CALENDAR

### SUNDAY | GOD IS GOOD

*"O, taste and see that the Lord is good" Ps. 34:8a*

The psalmist invites us to go beyond just believing that God is good, but to also come and experience His goodness. God is good because it is His makeup. His goodness is not determined or controlled by circumstances. He is good ALL the time because His nature is good all the time. We can trust in and depend on the constant goodness of God!

### MONDAY | GOD IS FAITHFUL

*"Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands." - Deut 7:9*

God is dependable in all His interactions and dealings with us as His people. He can be relied upon and never takes back a promise He makes. He fulfills every promise in His Word and keeps His promise from generation to generation.

### TUESDAY | GOD IS UNCHANGING

*"I the LORD do not change" Malachi 3:6a*

God's character never changes. He always remains the same. He cannot change. Situations in our lives may change, but God remains the same. When everything around us is uncertain, we can remain steadfast in Him who remains unchanging.

### WEDNESDAY | GOD IS LOVING

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is [a]born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 1 John 4:7-8*

Everything God does is motivated by His love for us. He demonstrated His love towards us by sending His son to die for us while we were separated from Him. His loving kindness is what continues to draw us closer to Him. His love is everlasting-it knows no beginning or end.

### THURSDAY | GOD IS GRACIOUS

*The Lord is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness. Psalms 145:8*

God gives us what we do not deserve or earn. God gives us unmerited (unearned favor) because of His loving kindness towards us.

### FRIDAY | GOD IS WISE

*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! Romans 11:33*

God is consistently and perfectly wise. A. W. Tozer wrote this about the wisdom of God: "Wisdom, among other things, is the ability to devise perfect ends and to achieve those ends by the most perfect means. It sees the end from the beginning, so there can be no need to guess or conjecture. Wisdom sees everything in focus, each in proper relation to all, and is thus able to work toward predestined goals with flawless precision."

