

## Abiding In Fasting

### What is Biblical fasting?

Throughout the Bible it refers to refraining from food for spiritual purposes. (not a hunger strike or for health or dieting purposes)

In Scripture, the normal means of fasting involves abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, but not from water. Commonly for 24 hours.

There are also “partial fasts” (Daniel’s fast where he refrains from the delicacies of meat and wine) as well as “absolute” fasts, abstaining from both food and water (**Esther 4:16, Acts 9:9**)

In most cases, it is a private matter between the person and God. The Old Testament law required one public fast, on the Day of Atonement. Special, corporate fasts, were also called in cases of group or national emergency.

### As followers of Jesus, should we fast?

Jesus both taught and modeled fasting. After being anointed by the Holy Spirit, He was led into the wilderness to fast and pray for 40 days (**Matthew 4:2**). During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave specific instructions on how to fast (**Matthew 6:16-18**).

The apostles fasted (**Acts 13:2; 14:23**)

There are no Biblical laws that require fasting; we are not under **obligation** to fast, but we have the **opportunity** to fast.

### What is the purpose of fasting?

Let’s begin by what it is NOT:

It’s NOT an opportunity to show how spiritual you are. Jesus warned in the Sermon on the Mount against fasting with the purpose of being “noticed by men.” (Others or even yourself) One

of the main purposed of fasting is for humility and repentance; don’t turn it into an opportunity to be prideful. Easy to do!

It’s NOT a way of getting God to like you more, or to win God’s favor. God is no more pleased with when you fast. Nothing can change the way God sees you!

### OK, so why should we fast?

First and foremost, it is an opportunity to commune with God, to abide in Him and to fix our eyes upon HIM.

Forsaking of present things (food, but other things as well) to know Him more fully.

God questioned the people in Zechariah’s day, “When you fasted...was it actually for me that you fasted?” (**Zechariah 7:5**)

### **Humility and Repentance**

David in **Psalms 69:10**: “...I wept and humbled my soul with fasting....”

Fast helps create a humble posture of the soul.  
**(Explain by way of analogy in worship)**

Abstaining from food reminds me of my humanity, my weakness, and my neediness.

**Once again:** Fasting doesn’t align God’s heart to mine; it aligns my heart to God’s. Fasting is a way of checking our hearts: How much do I want YOU God? Am I willing to give up something in order to seek you more fully?

John the Baptist: “He must increase, I must decrease.” My needs are not as important as God Himself.

### **Knowing God’s Will**

My experience is that I hear Him more clearly. Fasting heightens my awareness of His presence and His voice.

This is why fasting is great when you want to know God's will on a matter.

Begins with a humble posture: "My will be done; not yours."  
And, as you draw near through fasting, you hear His voice more clearly. **(Med School Decision)**

### **Intensifies prayer**

That's what I think fasting is at heart. It's an intensification of prayer. It's a physical exclamation point at the end of the sentence, "We hunger for you to come in power." It's a cry with your body, "I really mean it, Lord! This much, I hunger for you."  
-John Piper

Does not guarantee anything. First and foremost, we seek God and not His answers to our prayers; He will reveal His will in His timing.

### **Fasting Reveals the Things that Control or Consume Us**

I fast from things that are becoming "attachments," idols, or distractions.

Are you turning to "things" to be "the god of comfort," the "god of peace," the "god of strength," your source of joy?  
Often these are good things and blessings from God. But they can also be distractions and can take the wrong place in our lives.

Not bad things, necessarily: Food, wine, beer, coffee, caffeine, FB, Video Games, HULU, Netflix, buying clothes, etc. Good things, often things we use to celebrate, which we are commanded to do.

What is getting in the way of loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind?

Heart and soul: What do you seek after more than God, depend on in place of God? **(coffee, food, caffeine)**  
Mind: What are preoccupied with or distracted by? **(Pinkbike, FB, Insta, Pinterest)**

Paul:  
All things are lawful...but not all things are profitable.  
I will be mastered by nothing.

Fasting from these good things makes the Giver the focus and not the gifts.

### **ABOUT ABIDING WITH GOD: WHAT GETS IN THE WAY?**

### **Increases Spiritual Discipline**

-Learning to say "no" to your desires increases spiritual discipline. Disciplining your mind, will, body leads to increased spiritual discipline.

When you fast what you are learning is that I CAN say no to this desire. The desire (i.e. hunger) will go away. EVEN A DESIRE FOR FOOD, which is something I need can be said NO to. SO certainly, I can say NO to sexual desire and temptation.... Good and bad varieties.

I sense God's power, His presence, His love.

### **Old Skool? Why we need fasting more than ever:**

We are a generation of people who live most of our lives in an effort to be comfortable, to avoid pain, and to be happy. Even as Christians, we do this. This may be why you became a Christian. We often do all that we can do to remove pain and suffering, and pursue comfort. But when this is thwarted (in small ways or big ways) we get angry, disappointed...at our circumstances, at other people, and even God. We don't think pain, suffering, discomfort, and being denied good things is normal.

But, Scripture teaches the opposite. Pain, hardship, suffering, and denial is (unfortunately) part of this world. It is to be expected. It is promised, in fact. But, it has an end, God has the victory. And, it has a purpose.

-Fasting reminds us that self-denial, suffering, and giving up your rights is good, and has purpose. Not having our needs met, is not only OK, but it has purpose. It is part of His plan.

-Fasting points us to the Cross: The Good news of the Gospel is rooted in this concept: Sacrifice, self-denial, and suffering has a purpose.

### **So what should I do to start?**

Check in with Jesus and make sure your motivations are good. Am I doing this for YOU and my relationship with You?

Like most things in life, walk before you run. Start by skipping one meal. Then, try a couple meals the next time. Increase to a day and then several days.

If you are going to go more than a few days, check in with Jesus...and your doctor.

Keep in mind that you can fast from specific foods, like caffeine, soda, alcohol, etc.

And, keep in mind that you can fast from things other than food.

Give it a try within the next week or so!