

HOW do |
FAST
and pray?

HOW DO I FAST AND PRAY?

PRAYER & FASTING: AN INTRODUCTION

When you think about prayer and fasting, what thoughts come to mind?

- *Extreme; fanatical; over the top; not for me...*

These perceptions arise when we have an inadequate understanding of prayer & fasting. Essentially, prayer & fasting is a response of God's people when facing challenges. It is saying to God that you are willing to humble yourself before Him and seek His supernatural intervention.

WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is seeking God with all your heart. It is saying: "I'm serious about what God is calling me to do and I'm willing to sacrifice for this. I'm willing to go without food." Fasting is not something you decide on lightly. In a sense, fasting is not something you choose. Rather, it's something that God calls you to do.

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR PRAYER & FASTING

Christians are often confused about the purpose and relevance of prayer & fasting. The Bible, however, has much to say about it. There are many Old and New Testament examples of prayer and fasting. For example:

- *Moses prayed & fasted (see Exodus 34:28)*
- *Nehemiah fasted (see Nehemiah 1:4 and 9:1-3)*
- *Joel called a fast (see Joel 2:12)*
- *Ezra fasted (see Ezra 8:21, 23)*
- *Esther fasted (see Esther 4:16)*
- *Anna fasted (see Luke 2:37)*
- *Church leaders fasted (see Acts 13:2 and 14:23)*
- *Jesus fasted (see Luke 4:1-2)*

1. BIBLICAL FASTING

- Biblical fasting is the voluntary act of abstaining from food for a spiritual purpose.
- It is a process of humbling ourselves before God and expressing our dependence on Him. We see that fasting and prayer go hand-in-hand throughout the Bible.

2. REASONS FOR PRAYER & FASTING

2.1 WE PRAY & FAST FOR GOD'S PROTECTION AND PROVISION

- Fasting and Prayer is asking God to protect us and provide for us.
- Ezra 8:21: "I proclaimed a fast for all of us to humble ourselves before our God as we travelled." (See also Ezra 8:23 and 31.)

2.2 WE PRAY & FAST FOR GOD'S INTERVENTION IN OUR LIVES

- In 2 Chronicles 20:1-30 three nations come to attack Judah to destroy them. King Jehoshaphat, the King of Judah, proclaims a fast for the nation and asks God to intervene. God hears their cry and delivers them. 2 Chronicles 20:15: "Don't be afraid, don't be discouraged for the battle is not yours, but God's."

2.3 WE PRAY & FAST WHEN WE FACE CHALLENGES AND OPPOSITION

- When faced with the challenge of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem,
- Nehemiah turned to God in prayer & fasting (Nehemiah 1:4). Esther called the people to fast and pray when faced with opposition from Haman (Esther 4:16).

2.4 WE PRAY & FAST FOR GOD'S ANOINTING ON HIS LEADERS

- Paul and Barnabas fasted and prayed for the leaders of the churches they planted.
- Acts 14:23: "Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."
- Leaders need God's blessing, anointing, and power to lead the church.

2.5 WE PRAY & FAST FOR SPECIAL INSIGHT AND WISDOM FROM GOD

- Daniel fasted and prayed for 21 days seeking God for revelation and understanding.
- Daniel 10:1-3 "In the third year of the reign of King Cyrus of Persia, Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar) had another vision. He understood that the vision concerned events certain to happen in the future—times of war and great hardship. When this vision came to me, I, Daniel, had been in mourning for three whole weeks. All that time I had eaten no rich food. No meat or wine crossed my lips, and I used no fragrant lotions until those three weeks had passed."

2.6 WE PRAY & FAST TO ASK GOD TO HEAL OUR NATION

- Moses fasted and prayed for mercy for the nation.
- Deut 9:18-19: "Then, as before, I threw myself down before the Lord for forty days and nights. I ate no bread and drank no water because of the great sin you had committed by doing what the Lord hated, provoking him to anger. I feared that the furious anger of the Lord, which turned him against you, would drive him to destroy you. But again he listened to me."

3. TYPES OF FASTS IN THE BIBLE

Fasts were either corporate (together as a group) or personal:

3.1 EXAMPLES OF CORPORATE FASTS:

- 1 Samuel 7:5-6 - "Samuel said gather all Israel... [and they fasted]."
- Ezra 8:21-23 - "Then I proclaimed a fast...So we all fasted and sought our God."
- Joel 2:15-16 - "Sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly...gather the people."

3.2 EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL FASTS:

- Daniel 9:3 - "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer, with fasting."
- Luke 2:37 - "And Anna served God with fasting and prayers night and day."

4. TYPES OF FASTS

Your personal fast should present a level of challenge, but it is very important to know your body, your options, and most importantly, to seek God in prayer and follow that the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

4.1 COMPLETE FAST

In this type of fast, you drink only liquids, typically water with light juices as an option.

4.2 SELECTIVE FAST

This type of fast involves removing certain elements from your diet. One example of a selective fast is the Daniel Fast, during which you remove meat, sweets, and bread from your diet and consume water and juice for fluids and vegetables for food.

4.3 PARTIAL FAST

This fast is sometimes called the “Jewish Fast” and involves abstaining from eating any type of food in the morning and afternoon. This can either correlate to specific times of the day, such as 6:00 am to 3:00 pm, or from sunup to sundown.

4.4 SOUL FAST

This fast is a great option if you do not have much experience fasting food, have health issues that prevent you from fasting food, or if you wish to refocus certain areas of your life that are out of balance. For example, you might choose to stop using social media or watching television for the duration of the fast and then carefully bring that element back into your life in healthy doses at the conclusion of the fast.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A FAST

Here are some basic thoughts to consider when you enter in a fast:

START WITH A CLEAR GOAL

Be specific about the reason you are fasting. Consider the following:

- Do you need direction, breakthrough eg. in family or finance?
- Do you need guidance?
- Are you seeking a deeper walk with God?
- Do you need God's intervention in a situation?
- How long will you fast?
- How much time will you commit to daily prayer?

PREPARE SPIRITUALLY FOR THE FAST

- Confess your sins to God (1 John 1:9)
- Ask God to reveal areas of weakness
- Forgive all who have offended you (Mark 11:25 and Luke 11:4)
- Ask forgiveness of others you've offended or hurt
- Surrender your life fully (Romans 12: 1-2)

DECIDE ON THE TYPE OF FAST

- Absolute Fast: no food, only water and liquids
- Partial Fast: when you abstain from certain foods i.e. sweets, meat, etc.
- The length of your fast could be from one meal, one day or as many days you feel God is speaking to you about. Some fast for 3 days, 7 days, 21 days, or 40 days

SOME USEFUL GUIDELINES WHILE YOU FAST

For maximum spiritual benefit, set aside time to be alone with the Lord. Listen for His leading. The more time you spend with Him, the more meaningful your fast will be.

WHAT TO DO DURING A FAST

- Focus your heart and mind by establishing the reasons why you're praying and fasting. Take some time to write these down.
- Set aside more time to pray and read God's word
- Pray through the prayer points
- Drink lots of water

WHAT TO EXPECT WHILE YOU FAST

- Your body will eliminate toxins
- You will have headaches and hunger pains
- You will be tempted more than ever (Luke 4)

MORNING

- Invite the Holy Spirit to work in you to will and to do His good pleasure
- according to Philippians 2:13
- Begin your day in praise and worship
- Read and meditate on God's Word
- Use the daily devotional provided

NOON

- Return to prayer and God's Word
- Take a short prayer walk

EVENING

- Get alone for an unhurried time of seeking His face
- If others are fasting with you, meet together for prayer
- Avoid television or any other distraction that may dampen your spiritual focus

**GOD WILL HONOUR YOUR COMMITMENT TO SEEK HIM THROUGH PRAYER & FASTING.
SEE YOUR FAST AS A COMMITMENT TO SEEK BREAK-THROUGH.
GOD REWARDS GIVING, PRAYING AND FASTING! EXPECT A MIRACLE!**

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