



Fasting with a Purpose

A practice of prayer, dependence, and deeper communion with God

What Is Fasting?

Fasting is voluntarily abstaining from food—or something else that has a meaningful place in our lives—for a set time in order to feast on God. It is a way of eliminating noise and distractions so we can focus more completely on God. As we fast, we become more aware of our dependence on Him, intensify our prayers, and make space to hear His voice more clearly.

Fasting and prayer go hand in hand. Just as the body needs physical food for growth and development, prayer needs fasting for the same reason—fasting fuels a prayer life. The physical experience of hunger can become an embodied prayer: each time we feel the desire for what we have given up, we turn our attention toward God.

Jesus modeled fasting, and He assumed His followers would practice it. In Matthew 6, He says, “When you fast,” not “if you fast.” Fasting is not a spiritual requirement or a way to earn God's favor; it is a discipline that helps us draw near to Him.

Why Do We Fast?

Fasting, in and of itself, has no spiritual value. Simply choosing not to eat does not bring us closer to God. But when we fast with the right motive—to glorify God and draw closer to Him—it can be a powerful way to seek His presence, direction, wisdom, forgiveness, healing, protection, or help.

Fasting is not a way to get God to give us what we want. Instead, we take something that has meaning to us and surrender it to God in exchange for more of His presence, goodness, perspective, insight, and direction. We fast with the hope that God will change our perspective, shape our hearts, and form us to become more like Jesus.

Fasting exposes what actually runs us and loosens appetite's grip. It is a body-level rehearsal of the truth that we do not live by bread alone. It also teaches us to flex our “no muscle.” Saying no to food, social media, shopping, streaming services, our phones, or other distractions for a season can strengthen our ability to say no to other temptations and things that pull us away from God.

Most importantly, fasting is an opportunity to practice relying on the Holy Spirit rather than our natural energies and abilities. We learn to rely on Jesus' care for us rather than seeking false comfort from the things of this world.

Fast with a Purpose

Before you begin, consider why you are fasting. What are you seeking from God? Maybe you want to hear Him more clearly, ask forgiveness, seek healing for yourself or someone you love, surrender a concern, receive wisdom or direction, or simply become more aware of His presence.

Keep that purpose in mind throughout your fast. Every time you feel hungry or desire what you have given up, use it as a reminder to pray. Keep Scripture nearby—especially the Psalms—and allow God's Word to shape what you are asking of Him.

A Few Practical Tips

Start small. If fasting is new to you, begin with a short or partial fast. You might fast for one meal, fast from sundown to sundown, or limit yourself to juices, abstain from meat, or eliminate sugar and junk foods.

Fast from more than food. If you are physically unable to fast from food, or if another kind of fast would better help you focus on God, consider stepping away from something you regularly “feed”—such as social media, shopping, television, streaming services, or your phone.

Drink plenty of water. If you are fasting from food, take care not to become dehydrated.

Give yourself grace. Fasting is a discipline we develop for the sake of connection with God, not a legalistic checkbox. If you cannot complete the fast, celebrate that you began the adventure. The goal is not simply to make it through the day, but to draw closer to God.

Let Your Fast Lead to Action

Read Isaiah 58 before you begin. Scripture reminds us that true fasting should move beyond our own spiritual growth and lead us toward kindness, generosity, justice, and serving others. At its best, fasting changes not only what we do for a day, but how we live in the days and weeks that follow.

So fast with a purpose—not simply to go without, but to make room for God to change your heart, deepen your dependence on Him, and lead you to do good in the world around you.

A PRACTICE OF COMMUNITY

Fasting is one way we practice dependence on God together—learning to make room for Him, to listen for His voice, and to let His Spirit shape how we live and love others.

“When you fast, don’t make it obvious... And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”

Matthew 6:16–18 (NLT)