

Fasting: What It Is, Why We Practice It, and How We Do It

In Ron Dunn's book *Don't Just Stand There, Pray Something* he tells us that the devil discovered a long time ago that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. He goes on to say that in the Bible we can see a **"pronounced relationship between a person's spiritual status and his physical appetite"** (pp. 154-155).

Dunn goes on to provide several examples to support his statement. People like Eve, Jacob and Esau, and the Israelites in the wilderness, give examples of those whose physical appetites robbed them of spiritual blessings. And then Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Jesus, and the church in Acts provide examples of those whose practice of fasting released spiritual blessing in their lives. With Scripture proof to support him, Dunn then gives this definition of fasting:

Fasting is the voluntary abstinence of satisfaction from certain physical appetites for spiritual reasons.

We are spiritual beings housed in physical bodies. One day we'll be separated from our earth suits and receive new bodies that are not as contrary to our spiritual well-being. But for now, our spiritual selves are knit together with our physical selves. This connectivity can work for us or against us. If, through discipline and desire, we choose to "whip our bodies into shape" we can cooperate with the Spirit of God to give our spiritual selves authority to rule over our physical selves. But if, by laziness and lack of desire, we neglect the discipline it takes to rule over our physical selves, our never-satisfied physical appetites will quench the Spirit of God and stifle our spiritual well-being.

(You might want to re-read that paragraph.) Here's my definition of fasting:

Fasting is a way to jump start the development of discipline that allows you to connect with God by disconnecting with the world.

For a designated time, abstain from the things of this world that give you the most physical satisfaction. Replace these things with an eagerness to hear the voice of God through Bible study and prayer.

When those hunger pains start shouting, say "NO!" to their demands and "YES!" to the divine invitation from God to live (for a bit) unfettered to this world. Fasting is incredibly powerful, and God promises to reward us when we practice this spiritual discipline. (Matthew 6:18)

When you fast together for a specific time with others, you are participating in the invitation Joel declared when he wrote,

"Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the Lord your God and cry out to the Lord." Joel 1:14.

A Practical Guide to Prayer and Fasting

Planning for the Fast

Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." Joshua 3:5 (ESV)

Pray—Spend time reading the Bible before the fast. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance in your prayers. Reflect on how God has answered your prayers in the past year, and present to Him your goals for this next year.

Commit—Pray about the kind of fast you will participate in and commit to it ahead of time. Do not decide day-by-day. Ask God for discipline (and grace).

Act—If you plan to fast from solid food, start eating smaller portions a few days before the fast. Avoid food high in sugar and fat. Plan to limit physical and social activities during the fast. Ask someone to be your prayer partner and support throughout the fast.

Note: Consult a physician, especially if you are pregnant, nursing, or taking medication. If your situation does not allow you to do a full fast, determine what will work best for you.

Declare your fast

Decide how you will practice the fast and commit to it now.

Fasting options:

- Water only
- Liquids only
- One meal only or intermittent fasting
- Vegetables and water only
- Other (consider giving up something that you enjoy such as caffeine, sugar, social media, television and other forms of online entertainment)

A liquid fast that I have had great success with (for multiple days) is to drink a protein shake in the morning followed by vegetable juices for lunch and dinner. Include plenty of water and herbal tea throughout the day. With this fast you can continue light exercise.

While fasting

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word, that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4

Focus—Set aside time to reflect on your daily devotions. Keep a journal and be ready to respond to God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Pray—Consider joining at least one prayer meeting with others. Choose 2 prayer partners and create a "cord of 3 strands" or host a prayer meeting with your small group.

Replenish—During mealtimes, read the Bible and pray instead of eating. Drink plenty of water and rest as much as you can. Be ready for temporary bouts of physical weakness and mental annoyances like impatience and irritability.

Breaking the Fast

“Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’” Isaiah 58:9 (ESV)

Eat—Reintroduce solid food gradually. Your body will need time to adjust to a normal diet. Start with fruits, juices, yogurt, then salad, and add more vegetables. Eat small portions throughout the day.

Pray—Don’t stop praying when the fast is over. Consider fasting on a routine basis (a day a week or a day a month) throughout the year. Trust God’s faithfulness and timing. Know that during your fast, heaven’s gates are opening on your behalf. Be confident that the God who hears you when you pray is the God who answers your prayers.

Online Resources:

[Fasting, the Feast that Frees by Jack Hayford Ministries](#)

[What is Biblical Fasting and How Does it Work? Campus Crusade Ministries](#)

[What Christians Need to Know About Fasting and Prayer by Bible study Tools](#)