



# FASTING

*"We don't change from our experience; we change when we reflect on our experience."*

- Trevor Hudson

## *what is it?*

Fasting is the practice of depriving ourselves of something we normally consume or regularly use to sustain our daily lives. Historically, this was predominantly food, but it has also included other things people use to bring enjoyment or positive feelings into their lives.

In more recent years, fasting has included not only limiting or stopping certain forms of consumption, but also creating space to add new practices people sense God inviting them into. For instance, not eating dinner might give you time for prayer, conversation with family, or a walk in nature. If you choose to fast from social media, you might decide to read a book or begin journaling. Fasting is always a personal choice in response to what someone senses God leading them to do and their desire to grow in relationship with Him.

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## *why do we do it?*

While there are medical reasons people fast, the biblical idea of fasting focuses on something far more important than our bodies. It is a way we intentionally place ourselves in a vulnerable and physically weakened state so that we look more intently and dependently to Jesus. Fasting "resets" the soul and renews us from the inside out, enabling us to celebrate the goodness and mercy of God and preparing our hearts for the good things He desires to bring into our lives.

We don't fast simply because it's a good idea or because Christians throughout history have done it. Fasting is a practice Jesus Himself modeled, taught His disciples, and assumed they would continue.

Notice: Jesus didn't say "*if you fast*" but "**when you fast.**" – Matthew 6:16–18

# TYPES

Your personal fast should present a level of challenge – that’s what makes it impactful. But it is very important to know your body, understand your options, and, most importantly, seek God in prayer and follow the Spirit’s leading. Fasting can be a meaningful expression of faith at any time of year, but we specifically encourage fasting during Lent. The timing of your fast is not as important as the strength of your focus on God as you fast.

## **COMPLETE FAST**

This fast involves drinking only liquids, typically water, with light juices as an option.

## **SELECTIVE FAST**

This fast involves removing certain elements from your diet. A common example is the Daniel Fast, during which you remove meat, sweets, or bread and consume water, juice, fruits, and vegetables.

## **PARTIAL FAST**

Sometimes called the Jewish Fast, this involves abstaining from food in the morning and afternoon. This may correlate to specific times (e.g., 6:00 AM to 3:00 PM) or from sunup to sundown.

## **SOUL FAST**

This fast is common for those who are new to fasting, have health limitations, or want to refocus areas of life that feel out of balance. For example, someone might abstain from social media or television for the duration of the fast and then reintroduce it thoughtfully afterward.

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## **RESOURCES**

### **Practicing the Way’s 4 Week Video-Based Study on Fasting**

[www.practicingtheway.org/fasting](http://www.practicingtheway.org/fasting)

### **Desiring God’s “Take A Break from the Chaos”**

[www.desiringgod.org/articles/take-a-break-from-the-chaos](http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/take-a-break-from-the-chaos)

### **Redeemer’s A Day of Silence**

<https://redeemercitytocity.com/articles-stories/a-day-of-silence>

### **Ruthe Haley Barton’s Book:**

*“An Invitation to Solitude and Silence”*

# TIPS

Adapted from “Practicing the Way”

## **Start Small**

Begin where you are, not where you think you “should” be. If a full day is too much, start with one meal. Small beginnings help you stay consistent and grow over time.

## **If You Fast From Food, Drink More**

Stay hydrated with plenty of water (unless you are doing a total fast with no food or water).

## **A Word About Caffeine**

If you normally drink coffee, you may want to continue to avoid caffeine withdrawal headaches. Drink it black if possible, and if you can gradually move to decaf you want to remove the affects of caffeine.

## **Try to Slow Down**

Give as much time as you can to prayer and reflection. Avoid unnecessary busyness. Take a walk, sit in a park, or pause throughout your day to be present to God.

## **Resist the Urge to Judge Your Experience**

Release thoughts like “I liked it”; “I disliked it” or “I felt close to God; “I didn’t feel close to God.” Just let the experience be what it is and offer it to God in love.

## **You Get Out What You Put In**

The more fully you give yourself to this Practice, the more life-changing it will be. The more you just dabble with it and the more shortcuts you take, the less transformation you will experience..

## **Remember the J-Curve**

Learning something new often means getting worse before getting better. Expect fasting to feel difficult at first. Stay with it, it will get easier!

## **Give Yourself Grace**

Struggling or failing is normal. Don’t beat yourself up. When you get distracted, simply return your attention to God. He loves you and delights in your desire to seek Him. God loves you! He’s excited that you are seeking to honor Him, focus on Him and receive from Him as you fast!

## **There Is No Formation Without Repetition**

Spiritual formation is slow, deep, cumulative work. Transformation takes time – but it is worth the effort.