



# FASTING

**“When Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted for forty days and forty nights.”** Matthew 4:1-2a

“

More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us...we cover up what is inside us with food and other good things, but in fasting these things surface. If pride controls us, it will be revealed almost immediately.

Richard Foster

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**For those who long for intimacy with God, desire to hear his voice and feel his presence, know his will in a certain area, and be with him in a unique way, perhaps fasting is the Spiritual Practice that suits these desires.**

Dating all the way back to ancient Biblical times, fasting has been considered a practice that is necessary to deepen one's relationship with God and build his or her faith. The Bible refers to fasting over fifty times within both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word, *tsom*, is used which means "to abstain from food" and in the New Testament, the Greek word, *nēsteuō* is used, meaning "to go without food." So, in both the Old and New Testaments, fasting is referring to the same notion of abstaining from food for a certain amount of time and for a specific purpose.

In order to properly understand what fasting is, it is necessary to first understand what it is not. Fasting is not a resisted diet used to lose weight, it is not a way to manipulate God or to twist his arm into doing what you want him to do, it is not a means to prove to God your absolute seriousness and deep devotion to him, and it is not done to impress God or others.

So, what is fasting then? Fasting is a willingness to abstain from food for a certain period of time with the purpose of engaging with God in a certain way or responding to life's grievous moments. Fasting is a whole-body practice, where you starve your flesh and feed your spirit, surrendering an appetite, as you seek the Lord.

Fasting shows us what we want to be in control of in our lives. For example, capacities such as pride, anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, and fear may come to the surface. When you fast, you are starving your flesh and feeding on the Holy Spirit because you are, in a sense, feeding on the Spirit of God instead of food and bringing your body and flesh back under God's control.

Fasting is a way to engage your entire person, not just your mind and heart, in prayer. Fasting helps to foster an internal intimacy and quiet space in which God's voice has more room. As you engage in prayer and fasting, you acknowledge that it is not some sort of hunger strike, but a way of expressing your hunger for him to move in your life. Five ways to engage in prayer coupled with fasting are prayers of repentance, prayers of grief, crying out in a crisis, asking God to change his mind about a situation, and knowing God's mind in a certain situation.

There is not one specific type of way you can fast, but looking to Scripture can be a helpful guideline. Put simply, fasting is an act of being with God and choosing to walk with him as life presents its grievous sacred moments.

## PRAYER & PRACTICE

### About 10 minutes:

Ask the Lord...

- *“Lord, how do I feel about fasting? Do I have fears or resistance towards it? Does it excite me?”*
- *“Lord, is there a particular situation in my life where I long to hear from you or need to talk with you about?”*
- *Is there something grievous?*
- *Is there something in my life I need to confess and repent from?*
- *Is there an area in my life where I really need to see change?*
- *Is there a situation in my life that I really need to hear God speak into?*

### About 10 minutes:

Open your calendar and pick a day in this next week or month to fast.

Ask the Lord...

How Long: *“Lord, how long should I fast? Until dinner?”*

When: *“Which day in the upcoming week, or so, will work for me to fast?”*

Who: *“Is there someone else, or a group of people, my community, who can fast with me?”*

### About 10 minutes:

Consider these basic guidelines to fasting...

- **Choose a day to fast**
- **Choose the timeframe you will fast for**
- **Be sure to drink plenty of water**

As you feel hungry throughout the day, use that as a prompt to pray. Share your feelings with the Lord, ask him to help you, and seek to hear his response.

When you would normally be eating a meal, spend time with the Lord. Open yourself to him and his presence with you. In the most honest way possible, share your heart with the Lord, perhaps pray a Psalm that your heart aligns with, and spend time being still and listening.

End you fast by enjoying a meal of your choice.