



Fasting Tips

WHAT IS FASTING?

Most commonly, fasting is the practice of abstaining from food, or a certain type of food, for a set amount of time. If fasting from food is not medically possible, you can also fast from something else, such as social media. Fasts can be different lengths of time. A recommended starting place is to fast one meal, or two, or perhaps sundown-sundown, once a week. Importantly, fasting shouldn't just be about what you're not doing, but about what you're adding, such as more time in prayer.

WHAT IS THE SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND OF FASTING?

Prayer and fasting are often linked in both the Old and New Testament. David mentioned praying and fasting for his enemies (Psalm 35:12-14), the prophet Anna spent her days fasting and praying in the temple waiting for the Messiah (Luke 2:36-38), and Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted to ask for guidance in appointing elders over the 1st century church (Acts 14:23). Jesus also fasted for 40 days in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13), and gave specific instructions to his followers about how to act during a fast (Matthew 6:16-18). Regular fasting has always been a practice of the historic Christian church.

WHY ADD FASTING TO PRAYER?

Pete Greig writes, "The discipline of fasting can focus our prayers in the way that a magnifying glass can focus sunlight to start a fire." Deliberately choosing to weaken ourselves by fasting from food can make us more open to receiving strength from God. It also helps us to place ourselves in a humble posture before the Lord, acknowledging with our minds and our bodies that, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

PRAY AND PREPARE

Father God, I rejoice in you because you are a God who hears my prayers. You desire me to come to you in prayer, and I know that even now, Jesus is praying on my behalf at your right hand. Holy Spirit, help me to build a habit of prayer, and perhaps fasting, into my life. I come seeking more of you. I want more of you. In Jesus' name I pray - Amen.

HELPFUL PRAYER & FASTING HINTS

Start slowly and build prayer and fasting into your daily rhythms. Begin by praying for a few minutes each day, or each time you get in the car. Try the practice of fasting for one

meal, one day a week. You could even fast from one type of food, such as meat or sugar. Then, work your way up from there.

Think about prayer as a conversation with God. Spend time listening, as well as talking. You may find it helpful to journal your prayers, to help you focus.

Fasting is a way to help focus our prayers. Come up with a prayer phrase to use while fasting when you feel hungry such as, "God, more than I want food, I want _____." Fill in the blank with what you're fasting for, such as more of God's presence, or a specific prayer request.

Even if you miss a day of prayer, or are unable to keep your fast, keep going! Perseverance is built by just trying again. We aren't aiming for perfection...just consistency!

FURTHER SCRIPTURE READING

Ezra 8 - Read an Old Testament account of how Ezra proclaimed a time of fasting and prayer when leading people back to Jerusalem after the exile.

Matthew 6:5-18 - Read Jesus' instructions about prayer and fasting. Notice how He says "when" you pray and "when" you fast, not "if."

FURTHER RESOURCES

Articles:

- [An Index of Thirty Prayer Tools](#)
- [Critical Difference Between Fasting & Dieting](#)
- [5 Ways to Get Beyond Our Distaste for Fasting](#)
- [Your Personal Guide to Fasting](#)

Books:

Our favorite voice on prayer is Pete Greig! We highly recommend his books.

- [How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People](#)
- [How to Hear God: A Simple Guide for Normal People](#)
- [God On Mute: Engaging the Silence of Unanswered Prayer](#)

Video:

- [Seven Minute Seminary: Why We Pray](#)