

Fasting 101

A Brief Overview of Biblical Fasting

The purpose of fasting is to lead us into deeper intimacy with, and dependence upon, the Lord as we seek His will for our life. Fasting is surrendering the flesh to be renewed in the Spirit. Fasting allows the believer to be filled with God's holy and sustaining Word so they can be fueled to do the will of God.

When we fast unto the Lord, our focus is not to be on the legalism of sacrificing our physical food; instead, when we come to the Lord in the spirit of fasting, we are in essence separating ourselves from the distractions of this temporal world to allow God the opportunity to speak to us. Fasting is about inquiry and preparation. When we fast we become completely dependent upon the Lord for all our needs, even our most basic necessity, food, so that He can teach us to depend on Him and in turn receive the direction, strength, and guidance we need to accomplish the work He is calling us to do in this world.

When we fast we are consecrating ourselves to God. It is a step of obedience and an act of worship. Repentance plays a primary role in the purification process as the Lord washes us with His life-giving water through the Word (reference Ephesians 5:26); cleansing us from areas of unconfessed sin and unforgiveness that have been hindering our prayer life. Each time we submit to Him with prayer and fasting we grow in our ability to discern His voice more clearly and respond more readily and freely.

Biblical Examples of Fasting:

When the men and women of the Bible sought the Lord with fasting and prayer they did so knowing they were powerless apart from God's Word being activated in their lives. When confronted with impossible and overwhelming circumstances fasting provided them the opportunity to shut out the opposing voices and become still before the Lord so they could discern His voice (reference 2 Chronicles 20:3-22). Fasting opens up the doorway to receive the necessary confirmation, encouragement, and confidence they needed to be the vessel God would use to accomplish His will.

Moses – He fasted 40 days with no food or water, and returned to the mountain for another 40 days after the disobedience of the Israelites (Exodus 34:28) – His obedience led to the giving of the Law.

Elijah – He fasted for 40 days (1 Kings 19:8) – He was called to anoint a new generation of leaders after confronting the idolatry of the nation and calling the people to chose whom they would serve.

Nehemiah – He was so overcome by the destruction of his homeland that he could only respond with fasting and mourning (Nehemiah 1:3-4) – the Lord prepared him to make his request of the king to go and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Esther – She, her maids, and the nation of Israel fasted 3 days with no food or water (Esther 4:16). She was given boldness and courage to go before the king and save her people from annihilation and her people were prepared to defend themselves.

Daniel – He and his 3 friends fasted for 10 days on vegetables and water (Daniel 1:12) and were found to be ten times better in every matter of wisdom and understanding. Later, he fasted for 21 days with no choice food, meat, wine or lotions (Daniel 10:2-3) and his prayers helped overcome resistance of spiritual forces and he was given a prophetic vision.

Jesus – He fasted 40 days without food before beginning His earthly ministry (Matthew 4:2; Luke 4:2) and rebuked the devil with the Word of God and ultimately overcame the power of sin and death by accomplishing the greatest work in all human history by laying down His life and shedding His blood for the salvation of mankind! Praise God!

Types of Fasts:

The Normal Fast – No solid food is consumed; you may partake of liquids such as water, clear broths and juices. Jesus fasting for 40 days on water only is an example of a normal fast (Matthew 4:2).

Note: For the first few days of your fast you will have normal hunger pains and food cravings, but after about 3 days your body will begin to adjust to this new routine. Do not give into temptation, but feast more fully on the Word as your spiritual nourishment to sustain you where your physical food cannot. As you continue your fast for an extended period your body will become weak as it begins to eliminate toxins and wastes. This happens around week 1 and 2. It is important to adjust your schedule and get the rest your body needs as it is processing wastes and beginning to shut down certain functions in your body. This is a good time to press in to the Lord and rest in Him and begin to focus more fully on your new routine of spending time with the Lord during those normal meal times. As you continue into weeks 4 through 6 you will begin to experience a new found strength as your body has adjusted, eliminated wastes, and your mind becomes more clear and your hearing more in tune to the voice of God. It is a supernatural process that the Lord takes us through if we are willing to trust Him to lead us and sustain us in a way we have never experienced before. *“I can do everything through Him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).*

The Absolute Fast – (also called the Complete Fast) – In this fast no food or water is taken for a specified period of time. This type of fast is rare or limited for 1 to 3 days because the body cannot go without water beyond 3 days. Examples of this type of fast are found in Elijah (1 Kings 19:8); Ezra (Ezra 10:6); Esther (Esther 4:16) and Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:9). Moses completed two 40 day absolute fasts – this was a supernatural fast only accomplished through the power of God; few are called to such a holy task.

The Partial Fast – This fast emphasizes restricting one’s diet by eliminating certain foods (such as no sweets, no fast foods, no meat, etc.), or restricting or eliminating certain meals for a part of a day or week on a rotational basis (i.e. only eating 1 meal a day). Examples of this type of fast are found in Elijah when fed by ravens and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:6; 15); and Daniel who ate only vegetables and drank water (Daniel 1:15; 10:3). This fast may seem the simplest at first, but it requires no less discipline than the others and can be a stepping stone to undertaking a Normal Fast.

Before you begin your fast it is important to pray and ask the Lord to reveal to you the type of fast and the duration of the fast He is calling you to do (for extended fasts be sure He has called you first as it will require His power to guide you through). Trumpet and Torch Ministries recommends the partial or Daniel-type fast for normal, healthy people (vegetables and water, or whole grain and organic foods – with an emphasis on eliminating processed foods and caffeine to partake of a more wholesome organic diet that will become a lifestyle change). It is a good idea to begin eliminating caffeine and processed sugars a few days before beginning your fast. When you are ready to end your fast it is important to let your body adjust slowly to returning to a normal eating schedule by taking in only broths to begin and adding one food at a time – you should return to a normal eating schedule within a week (hopefully by the end of your fast you’ve successfully eliminated those unhealthy choices you’ve been making over the years and are committed to maintaining a more healthy lifestyle – both physically and spiritually!)

True Fasting

The type of fast the Lord calls all believers to, as outlined in the Book of Isaiah, Chapter 58, is a call to obedience and action. Fasting is not about proving to yourself or to anyone else that you can accomplish such a spiritual feat. Fasting is about our worship and devotion to God. If done with the proper motivation fasting can be very beneficial to the body, mind and spirit. Most medical professionals would agree that fasting helps to restore the body to a more natural and healthy state.

This ministry encourages believers to focus more on “feasting” on the Word of God as you begin to surrender your busy schedule to spending more time with the Lord. While you may be skipping physical meals during your fast it is vital that you don’t miss any spiritual meals as you learn to dine with the Lord in prayer and feast upon His Word three times a day. Your physical and fleshly appetite for the artificial and unhealthy substitutes of the world will begin to be replaced with a growing hunger for the more satisfying and fulfilling things of God.

All believers can answer the call to fast and everyone can eliminate unnecessary foods and pleasures that are keeping them from spending more intimate time with the Lord in His Word and prayer. If fear of not eating is preventing you from even taking this step of faith, this ministry recommends that you use the EAT at the Table of the King devotional and come to the Lord with an offering of your time and allow Him to do the necessary cutting and eliminating as you trust Him to fill you with His Word each day and each meal. You will find as you spend this time with Him each day that He will give you the

strength and desire to sacrifice yourself more fully as time goes by. ***“To obey is better than sacrifice”*** (1 Samuel 15:22). He is looking for you to trust Him and His desire is not to harm you but to give you a future and a hope (reference Jeremiah 29:11-13). He wouldn’t lead us where He hasn’t been Himself and He knows the benefits far outweigh the painful process that it takes to get us to that finish line!

It is recommended that you keep a daily journal of your journey with the Lord. Begin by submitting your questions, concerns and requests to the Lord and wait upon Him to reveal His will and purpose for your life as you take this step of obedience. Be willing to address those areas of sin and unforgiveness that are hindering your prayers and preventing you from fully hearing the voice of God.

Why Fast for 40 days?

Throughout Scripture we find that forty days is God’s divine period of time to accomplish His redemptive work in the world. We find examples of this with Noah and the flood (Genesis 7:4), Moses and the Law (Deuteronomy 9:11), Elijah and the restoration (1 Kings 19:8; Malachi 4:4-6; Mark 9:2); Jonah and the revival of Nineveh (Jonah 3:1-10), and Jesus and salvation (Matthew 4:2). The Lord can accomplish in 40 days what can often take a lifetime by human standards. If He can transform nations in this time frame consider what He can do with your heart. He desires whole-hearted devotion from His followers. When we answer His call to fast He is giving each of us an opportunity to be proactive in this spiritual war that we are all participants in, whether we like it or not. We have a divine responsibility to respond to His call and allow Him to do the necessary work to cut out of our lives those fleshly and unhealthy things that are keeping us from being fully His. When we submit to a period of 40 days of fasting and prayer we allow Him the necessary time and attention to do an extraordinary work *in* our lives to prepare us for what He purposes to do *through* our lives to reach and bless the world with His forgiveness and salvation. Fasting puts us in a position to receive His power, presence, and provision to become the vessel He will use to accomplish His kingdom’s work. May we not let our fears of the unknown be the thing that stops us from experiencing the wonders He has in store for us (Jeremiah 33:3). He is standing at the door and knocking waiting for us to come in and eat with Him (Revelation 3:20). Submit your fears, your questions, and your concerns to the One Who holds your life and future in His all-sufficient, all-powerful, and capable hands – He won’t let you down; on the contrary, He wants to bless you in ways you have never known!

***“My grace is sufficient for you,
For My power is made perfect in weakness.”
(2 Corinthians 12:8)***

How To Get Started:

1. Pray. Each journey will be unique to each individual – don’t measure any part of your journey with another – God has something special just for you that He wants to do in and through your life. Submit your fears to the Lord and pray for direction before

beginning your journey. **Ask Him to show you specifically the time frame and the type of fast He is calling you to do.** Throughout Scripture the duration of a fast aligned with the time frame necessary for the servant to be used of God (consider Esther fasting for 3 days and the three days of banquets before the request was granted (Esther 4:16; 5:4; 5:8; 7:1-4) or Daniel and his 3 friends who fasted for 10 days and were found to be 10 times better in knowledge and understanding in the whole kingdom (Daniel 1:12, 15, 20), and who later fasted for 21 days and was told that the archangel Michael was able to overcome the demonic force in the Persian realm after 21 days (Daniel 10:2-3; 13)). The Lord has a specific purpose for the fast He is calling you to – recording the specifics and then being obedient to His call is vital for what He desires to accomplish in and through your life.

2. Eat. Set aside worldly distractions to sit at the table of the King of the universe and spend intimate time with the Lord in prayer as He fills you and washes you and with water through His life-giving Word (Ephesians 5:26-27). The Word of God and Prayer are the two most important elements to a successful fasting journey. Without a daily diet of His Word you are simply dieting! A believer who is too busy to spend time in the Word or prayer is of no threat to Satan and of no use to the Kingdom of God. The Lord is looking for men and women who are willing to set aside temporal worldly pursuits and give themselves fully to the work of prayer so His power can be unleashed in the world (reference Ezekiel 22:30). *“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it”* (John 14:12-14). A daily diet of the Word of God will provide the nourishment and insight necessary to add fuel to our prayers!

3. Believe God for one meal at a time and one day at a time. When your stomach begins to growl, consider it a signal from God to press in more fully and dine more heartily on His filling and sustaining Word. Allow the Lord to do the necessary stripping and cleansing as His “living and active” Word begins to take root in your life (Hebrews 4:12). Repentance is an important part of this journey – the Lord is jealous for you to be fully devoted and dependent upon Him and no other – we have forsaken our first Love and must return to Him with wholehearted devotion – He is jealous for us! (Exodus 34:14; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Revelation 2:4-5;).

4. Rejoice and give thanks to the Lord for the work He is doing in and through your life and that He has personally called you to such an intimate place for such a time as this. He delights in your willingness and responsiveness to desire to spend time with Him as much as He longs to spend time with you! (Psalm 100; Luke 10:39-42).

Please visit www.trumpetandtorch.org for further resources and information on fasting and prayer and to participate in any one of our 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, and 40 day journeys. Simply click on any one of the many journeys under the “How To Fast” button and print out the devotional and begin your journey. May you be blessed beyond measure!

*“My food,” said Jesus, ‘Is to do the will of Him Who sent Me and to finish His work.’
(John 4:34)*