

A Guide to Fasting

“Fasting is an expression of our dependence on the Lord as our ‘First Portion’ and ultimately the One on whom we depend for all things. Our hunger cries out to the Lord, ‘Come! Change me! Fill me! Enlarge my capacity for joy in you even as you shrink the capacity of my stomach for the world.’”

--John Piper

A Few Reasons to Fast:

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)

Detox

We fast... to purify our passions. Our physical bodies were created by the Lord with good and natural appetites, but we are easily led to sin by our appetites (passions). Fasting is one exercise for keeping our cravings pure.

Desire

We fast... to cultivate godly hunger and appetites.

Direction

We fast... to listen to the voice of the Lord. We spend our time praying when we would normally be eating so that we may hear and attend to the desires of the Lord more clearly. ([Acts 13:2](#) “While they were worshiping and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke...”)

Dependence

To open our eyes to God’s activity. Fasting brings us to God when we are our emptiest, and feel in our gut our utter dependence on Him. We get our motives and strategies out of the way.

Desperation

We fast... to humble ourselves before our Maker. As we deny our most basic pleasures in fasting, the Holy Spirit exposes and subdues the root of pride in us. Fasting communicates urgency as we seek the Lord.

What to Do

- Determine what to fast: Food is most common, but some may choose, for dietary, health or personal reasons, to fast another daily “need” during the fasting period. Just choose something that still serves one or all of the purposes listed above. Fasting is a purposeful deprivation.
- Determine how long to fast: We recommend at least a 24 hour fast (at least two meals), but of course you’re free to do it differently.
- Determine how to use your time: Being hungry is not the point. Seeking the Lord is. Plan in advance how you will spend meal times and other moments throughout your day—pray, read Scripture (maybe read a Psalm back to the Lord as a prayer), journal, etc. You may also want to prepare topics of discussion with God in advance (i.e. “My marriage”). Whatever you can do to put everything else aside that day, the more fruitful your fast will be.
- If you are fasting from food entirely, drink plenty of water.
- Set some time aside throughout the day to pray (during a fast, meal times are great for this).