



Fasting Guide

***Important Note:** *Fasting requires precautions. If you have any health concerns, please consult your physician prior to beginning your fast, especially if you are taking any medications, have a chronic condition, or are pregnant or nursing a baby. If you have a history of struggling with an eating disorder please refrain from observing any type of food fast.*

Welcome to the FSJ Alliance Church Fasting Guide!

Fasting can be an overwhelming concept, especially if it's not something you ever practiced before. In this guide, we hope to help you understand what fasting is, why we practice it, and how to prepare and engage with fasting as a spiritual discipline. Hopefully after reading this guide, you will have a better understand and enough information to get started on your own fasting practice. So let's get started!

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.
2 Chronicles 7:14

What Is Fasting

Fasting is a Biblical practice that we see modelled throughout scripture, but primarily by Jesus and the early church. Biblical fasting, by definition, the practice of choosing to refrain from something, usually food, in order to focus on God. Basically, it's choosing to not eat or fill your time with something specific with the intent of saying "I want Jesus more than I want anything else."

Jesus spoke in numerous passages about the practice of fasting, (ie. Matthew 6:16-18, Matthew 9:14-17), and He typically uses the phrase when you fast, not if you fast. So this is something He expects His followers to practice. We also see how Jesus modelled fasting in Luke 4:1-4 which preceded beginning His earthly ministry.

In his book *Fasting: Opening the Door to a Deeper, More Intimate, More Powerful Relationship With God*, pastor Jentezen Franklin says, "If Jesus could have accomplished all He came to do without fasting, why would He fast? The Son of God fasted because He knew there were supernatural things that could only be released that way. How much more should fasting be a common practice in our lives?"(1)

To understand more of the why we should fast, we need look no further than King David in Psalm 42.

*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?*

David is crying out for more of the Lord just as the deer longs for water, and that is exactly what fasting brings; the perspective of how much we want a deeper and more intimate relationship with the Lord. As followers of Christ, one way we do that is through the spiritual disciple of fasting. It's literally taking away something that is important to us and surrendering it saying, "I want Jesus more than I want...." The primary goal of fasting is drawing nearer to God.

(1) Franklin, Jentezen, *Fasting: Opening the Door to a Deeper, More intimate, More Powerful Relationship With God*, (Lake Mary, FL, Charisma House, 2008) page 14.

Why Practice Fasting

In the Biblical examples of fasting, there are different types of fasts modelled. Jesus typically observed a water fast, while we know Daniel observed two different types of fasts. In Daniel 1 we see him observe a vegetables and water fast, and in Daniel 10 it states he ate no rich (or choice) foods, and no meat or wine.

Daniel's two fasts, or a combination of them, is often referred to as the Daniel Fast. Other types of fasts include a specific food fast, juice fast, or water fast. There is a section toward the end of this guide that gives more specific information on the different types of fasts.

While Biblical fasting typically refers to refraining from a certain food, there are other options for fasting. Sometimes refraining from a habit that has begun to be a driving factor in your life, like some form of a digital fast, like social media or TV watching, could be beneficial to observe.

Why would someone consider a fast like this? While fasting should not be done to specifically "kick a bad habit", a fast can put those things that are good in moderation back into their right place in our hearts if we can say "I want Jesus more than I want to be on social media or watch TV" and practice this through a time of fasting. Or it can help put things that are out of control, back in the place they rightfully belong in our lives.

How To Practice Fasting

*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.
Matthew 7:7*

So, if you want to dive in and begin fasting, I'm guessing your question is how and where do you begin?

First, choose the type of fast you will practice. Will it be something with food or do you feel God inviting you to give up some habit or something you reach for comfort or soothing in your life? Choosing what type of fast you will practice does not mean breaking a bad habit. The best way to choose which fast to practice is to seek God in prayer and invite the Holy Spirit to show you which fast is best for you at this time.

Once you have chosen what your fast will be, the next thing is to set the length of your fast. If you are joining in a corporate fast, like we occasionally observe here at FSJAC, it's not hard to determine your fast length. If fasting on your own, we encourage you to start small, maybe start with one or two days and invite a friend to join you.

So what do you do during the fast other than refrain from something? That's a great and very important question, and that's where prayer comes in. During a time of fasting, it's typically done with a specific prayer request or question you are seeking to hear from the Lord. If you are participating in a corporate fast, you may be given a list of prayer requests and things we are seeking the Lord to speak to us as a body of believers.

It is also helpful to set aside some specific time to seek the Lord and sit in His presence. Begin by reading a psalm or listening to a worship song, then lift your requests and petitions to Him. After that, quiet your heart and inner thoughts and focus on who He is and what He wants to say to you. It's helpful to have something to write with for when He reveals something to your heart. Write down whatever comes to mind without filtering it or changing it. There's time to reflect on that later. If you don't understand something, ask Him to show you more.

When fasting, the overarching thing we are saying is that we want Jesus more than we want that piece of chocolate, or that click on social media, or that cheeseburger. Again, all those are good things in moderation, but we should want Jesus more and choosing to practice the spiritual discipline of fasting displays that. Each time you are hungry or pulled to click the remote control to turn on a movie, those serve as your reminder to seek Him in prayer and take your requests to Him.

You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. – Psalm 16:11

Some additional notes about the different food fast types:

Specific Food Fast: This is a great option if you have specific dietary needs or medical conditions that make it not a healthy option to fast from a broader amount of food. Some options for food that you can fast from are sweets, red meat, processed food, or caffeine.

Daniel Fast: The Daniel fast is a great model to follow, but is open to many different options. The Daniel fast is a partial fast that can either be done with only water and vegetables or by cutting out any processed food and refined sugars. It's very helpful to determine and even write down what you are going to eat before your fast begins. This will keep you from struggling to feel overwhelmed in your moments of hunger.

Juice or Liquids Fast: This option requires a bit of prep to do it well. Prepping fruit juices, vegetable or bone broth, or smoothies might require some advanced planning on your part. This type of fast might also be something you do for a portion of your fasting time, and is an easy substitute during one or two meals as an option.

Water Fast: While this fast is typically what we see Jesus and the New Testament church practicing, we do advise you to take some extreme precautions before choosing this option. It is very important to consider how much energy you need to perform tasks and care for your family. Also, consulting your physician and limiting the length of your water fast to one or two days is recommended.

Total Fast (Strongly Discouraged): This type of fast is typically found in the Old Covenant we see observed in the Old Testament and is for mourning, deep grief, for example modelled by David in 2 Samuel 12 as he prayed for God to save the child he had with Bathsheba.