



FASTING GUIDE

T H E C H U R C H O F E L E V E N 2 2

WHAT IS FASTING?

FASTING IS



- an individual choice to abstain from food, drink, and/or other fleshly gratifying things for a period of time in order to seek God.
- “an opportunity to lay down an appetite – an appetite for food, media, entertainment, etc. Fasting clears us out and opens us up to intentionally seek God’s will and grace in a way that goes beyond normal habits of worship and prayer.”¹
- a way to turn down the noise of the world so that we can better hear the voice of God; fasting helps us let go of the things of the world and grab hold of the things of Jesus.

FASTING IS NOT



- a burden. “Fasting is not about fulfilling a requirement but receiving a reward; in other words, it’s not about what you’re having to let go of, but about what you are preparing to take hold of.”²
- an instant answer. “Fasting is not a magical guarantee that God would answer just because we fast. We cannot manipulate God into doing our will by self-denial through fasting. When people do not live as God desires they should be prepared for fasting to accomplish nothing (Isaiah 58:3-7). Fasting does not make anyone pious or holy and does not earn points with God (Matthew 6:16; Luke 18:9-4).”³

¹ Adele Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2015).

² Dave Clayton, *Revival Starts Here: A Short Conversation on Prayer, Fasting, and Revival for Beginners Like Me* (HIM, 2018).

³ Calhoun, p246.

WHY SHOULD I FAST?

Fasting reminds us that we are not simply physical beings but spiritual beings. "Thus, we willingly set aside a little comfort so that we can listen and attend to the voice and nourishment of God alone."⁴

Some reasons why it's important to fast:⁵

1. **A deeper friendship with God (John 6:27):** Fasting leads us to develop a deeper, more intimate friendship with God. God is never a means to an end; He is THE end.
2. **Renewed hunger for heavenly things:** As we empty our stomachs physically, we often become more aware of the emptiness in our souls. As we begin to pay attention to the hunger pangs, the Lord often awakens us to the true hunger pangs of our hearts.
3. **Soul training for self-denial (Mark 8:34):** Fasting is not about being miserable for the sake of God but about making space for more of God. Self-denial is a natural response of our heart when we begin to believe that only Jesus knows what is truly best for us in this life and in the next.
4. **Intimacy, security, and strength (Luke 4:1-14):** The Scriptures surface a clear connection between intimacy with God, security in our identity, and the strength needed to live holy lives in the face of temptation.
5. **Clarity in prayer (Daniel 10 & Isaiah 58):** A potential breakthrough often comes by way of answered prayer. In seasons of prayer and fasting, you can experience levels of refreshment and clarity.
6. **Humility for revival (2 Chronicles 7:14):** Humility is a magnet for the presence of God and fasting has a way of bringing us low.
7. **Freedom from demonic strongholds (Mark 9:9):** Many people may begin experiencing freedom from demonic strongholds in the context of prayer and fasting.

WHEN SHOULD I FAST?

When in need of revival, change, deliverance in times of drought or desert, darkness, confusion; need for clarity/direction, divine intervention, breakthrough, healing (of any kind), desire for closeness and intimacy with God.⁶

WHAT SHOULD I FAST FROM?

It is often most stretching to your faith and intimacy with the Lord to fast from something you typically cling to tightly. Fasting is an excellent way to identify idols in your life or where you turn to comfort rather than turning to Jesus.

Some common things to fast from:

- **Food:** Processed Sugar, Meat, Fast food, Coffee or Soda, Alcoholic beverages
- **Entertainment:** Podcasts, Music, Sports, Video games, Television, Social media
- **Social Activities:** Shopping, Dating

HOW DO I FAST?

The following are some ways of fasting ⁷

1. **Major Fast:** Abstaining from food or drink for **twenty-four consecutive hours or more** (Matt. 4:2, Acts 9:9, Esther 4:15-16). Check with your doctor as this type of fasting requires a certain level of physical health.
2. **Minor Fast:** Abstaining from food for **a certain period of time** – eating only at a set time of the day (i.e., 6am-3pm or sunup to sundown). Most people drink liquids during the day and have one small meal after sundown each evening.
3. **Partial Fast:** Giving up only **certain foods** during the course of your fast out of devotion to God for a period of time. An example of this is the Daniel Fast (from Daniel 1) where you abstain from eating meat, sugar and processed foods.
4. **Soul Fast:** Fasting from things **other than food**, like social media, television, shopping, certain entertainment activities, physical intimacy with a spouse (in line with 1 Corinthians 7:5).

A DAY OF FASTING

By abstaining from food throughout the day you can incorporate additional activities to draw you closer to the Lord. Below are a few suggestions:



MORNING

The time you spend with the Lord first thing sets the tone for the entire day.

- Begin your day in praise and worship, listen to music or read the Psalms
- Focus on reading and meditating on one book of the Bible
- Pray and invite the Holy Spirit to examine and search your heart and life



MIDDAY

Use your lunchtime to check in with God and realign your will with His.

- Read and meditate on Scripture
- Taking a short prayer walk
- Meet up with others who are fasting to pray, read Scripture and worship together.



EVENING

End your day in unhurried time with God.

- Avoid or limit outside distractions such as television, internet, or social media
- Spend time physically on your knees in prayer alone in a closed room
- Reflect on your fasting experience, writing your thoughts in a journal.

HELPFUL REFLECTION QUESTIONS WHEN FASTING:

1. What sin is the Holy Spirit bringing to light? What sins do you need to confess to Him?
2. Who else do you need to confess your sin(s) to? (James 5:16)
3. Who do you need to forgive? Who do you need to go and reconcile with? (Matthew 5:23-24)
4. When you feel empty or restless, what do you do to try to fill the emptiness? What does this tell you about your heart?
5. What feelings arise in you when you spend time in prayer instead of eating, watching TV, etc.?
6. What thoughts or worldly cares interrupt your prayer, your sleep?
7. What is the Holy Spirit revealing to you about your temptations? What is He asking you to give up or let go?
8. What idols is the Lord revealing to you? Are you willing to surrender and repent from them?
9. What do you fear the most? What are your anxious thoughts? Do you need to confess them and cast them upon Jesus? (1 Peter 5:6-7)
10. Where do you operate from an entitlement mentality? How can you wean yourself from this way of life?
11. What changes or breakthroughs do you hope to experience as a result of fasting?
12. Are you seeking God's will for your life? If so, what is it?
13. Do you know what your calling/purpose is?
14. How are you using your time, talent and resources for the Kingdom of God?



TOPICAL SCRIPTURES TO READ WHEN FASTING

- **Burdens:** Nehemiah 1:1-2:1-9; Lamentations 3:1-66; Matthew 11:28-30
- **Crisis/Need:** 1 Kings 17:2-16; Luke 4: 24-27; 6:38; Proverbs 11:25; Acts 20:35; Matthew 7:7-12; Philippians 4:16-19; Ecclesiastes 11:1-6; Psalm 50:14-15
- **Deliverance:** 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Romans 7:14-25; Matthew 17:14-21; 13:31-32; Mark 9:14-29
- **Future Spouse:** Genesis 24:1-67
- **Guidance:** Ezra 8:21-34; Proverbs 16:9; Romans 4:20-21; 1 John 2:20; John 16:13; Hebrews 4:12
- **Healing:** Exodus 15:26; Deut. 32:29; Psalm 103:1-3; Exodus 23:25; Luke 8:43-48; 2 Chronicles 16:12-13; Isaiah 58:1-11; 1 Samuel 1:3-20; James 5:16; Matthew 9:1-6; 2 Samuel 12:1-23; James 5:13-15
- **Intimacy:** Matthew 9:15; 6:16-18; Revelation 3:15-22; James 4:8; Psalm 42:1-2; 139:23-24; Luke 2:36-38
- **Justice:** Isaiah 58; James 5:1-6; 1 John 3:17; 4:20; Luke 10:25-37
- **Marriage:** Isaiah 58:1-11; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5; Matthew 9:14-17; Genesis 22:1-12
- **Ministry/Calling:** Acts 13:1-5; 14:21-23
- **Praise/Thanksgiving:** Psalms 34, 118, 100:4, 105:1-3
- **Protection:** James 4:1-10; 2 Chronicles 20:1-30; 1 Samuel 17:1-54; 2 Kings 6: 8-23; Esther.
- **Purity/Holiness:** Genesis 39:1-23
- **Revival:** Joel 1:1-2:32; James 4:5-10; Jonah 3:1-10
- **Spiritual Warfare:** Luke 4:1-13; Deut. : 1-3; Habakkuk 3:17-19; Philippians 4:12-13
- **Suffering:** John 16:33; Job, James 5:11; John 11:1; Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 10:5; 12:7-10; 1 Peter 5:10-11; James 5:13-15