

The fasting portion of these 40 days is intended to be a completely personal fast that is directed by the Holy Spirit to each person. Some people will be directed by the Holy Spirit to fast from television, a hobby, favorite foods, social media, or their morning Starbucks. Others may give up meat, adhere to the Daniel Fast, or do a total fast on specified days or for a period of time. The important part is that whatever you give to the Lord should be something that reflects David's heart and attitude as in 1 Chronicles 21:24 -

“But King David said to Ornan, “No, but I will surely buy it for the full price; for I will not take what is yours for the Lord or offer a burnt offering which costs me nothing.”

You have to fast from something that matters in your life, something that you enjoy, something that will cost you something.

The prayer focuses are to be corporate and intentional among everyone in our fellowship. While we each will pray in our own way and at our own pace, we are praying in unity.

Important Steps:

1. You will receive a text message each morning at 8 a.m. with that day's prayer focus. Begin each day of your prayer time by going to the Word of God and reading the Scriptures associated with that day's prayer focus.
2. Take a few minutes each day before you pray, to look over the prayer points and make a few notes to personalize each point as the Holy Spirit reveals things to your heart.
3. Pray with passion, energy and faith – expecting God to show up!
4. Know that the enemy will try to distract, discourage, and completely mess up your prayer times, your attitude, and your atmosphere. You have to recognize this as a spiritual attack. So I encourage you to intentionally set aside designated time for prayer – turn your television and phone off – take authority over all distractions and demonic attacks, no matter what form they take: anger, unfocused mind, frustration, illness, etc.
5. If you completely miss a day of prayer, do not get discouraged or walk in condemnation – just get right back on track. Every single day of this 40 Day journey will be filled with its own unique challenges and victories!



Our Firm Foundation for Fasting and Prayer

Fasting is not an easy or popular subject to talk about. So many of us live for food. We can't wait for our next meal, we are planning the next meal or snack while we are eating the current one, the numerous grocery stores and fast food restaurants have anything we could desire. We love our food! It's no wonder Christians tend to shut down mentally and resist when they realize they will have to set aside their cravings and satisfaction for a period of time.

So Many Questions

When I've talked with someone about fasting, they always seem to ask me the same questions:

- What is fasting all about?
- Why should we fast?
- Isn't that an outdated Old Testament thing?
- What's the purpose? Surely God doesn't want his people to suffer and be denied anything.
- How in the world do you fast?
- What if I mess up, won't God be mad? Wouldn't it be better not to try it and chance making God angry with me?
- Are you serious? I can't fast, it's too hard!
- Does God really notice or care if I do without food when there are so many more important things for him to worry about?

What Is Fasting?

Christian fasting is a love offering to God. It is the intentional setting aside of food to focus your time on God for spiritual purposes. When combined with focused prayer, it is an excellent example of living by faith and not by sight or our feelings. Fasting requires us to put God first with an intentional giving up in the physical for spiritual purposes. Fasting is the "next level" of Christianity that is above and beyond just surviving.

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." (1 Corinthians 13:11 KJV)



Fasting is about recognizing God is deserving of our undivided time and attention. It's a direct representation of denying the flesh of what our body needs because our spirit needs God more. It's about saying "Lord, I want you today more than I want this food." And God will reach out and meet you. He will never reject your love offering.

In Hebrew and Greek, fasting means "to cover" and "to abstain". Fasting is mentioned throughout the entire Bible, so it is not an outdated, Old Testament discipline that no longer applies. Every Christian is expected to fast according to Jesus (notice he says **when** you fast, not **if** you fast in the following verse).

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.” Matthew 16:6 NIV



When John the Baptist’s disciples came to Jesus and asked him why they fasted when the disciples didn’t bother, Jesus was pretty clear.

“Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

“No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. ¹⁷ Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine

into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” Matthew 9:15-17 NIV

We can see from this verse that our bridegroom (Jesus) is away so we are to fast until he comes back for his bride (his church). The reason for fasting is so that through spending our time focusing on God he can grow us and prepare us for whatever he has ahead for us. God isn’t mean or cruel. He would never give us too much at once knowing we couldn’t contain his gifts. Jesus is showing one of his heavenly principles; growth is a process and takes effort not resistance. It’s a process to shrink cloth to accommodate the old garment, it’s a process of preparing wineskins for wine, and it’s a process of submitting ourselves to God so that he can grow us and use us for his Kingdom.

What Fasting Is Not

A fast is not punishment. We do without food for a short period of time to gain something spiritual; that’s a blessing. God does not demand that we fast. Fasting releases blessings and God isn’t going to force any of us to step forward and accept any of his blessings.

Fasting is not about making our lives harder or our hunger pains excruciating so God will feel obligated to bless us. That’s manipulation and God doesn’t work that way. He blesses whom he chooses when he chooses. Besides, it’s really not possible to manipulate our all-knowing, all-seeing God so why grieve the Holy Spirit by trying? Do we really think God doesn’t know what we are up to? He isn’t a genie in a bottle, and we need to remember never to confuse the two.

Fasting is not a way to diet. Yes, we might lose a pound or two but that is a pleasant side effect, not our purpose. Our purpose is to spend time worshipping at the throne, drawing closer to our Savior. We might see blessings in the physical, but the spiritual blessings will far outweigh any physical blessings.

“Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” James 4:8 NIV

Fasting is not something to share with everyone else. It is as individual as your prayers and is between you and God. We should use discernment and share with those closest to us who might be affected by our fast (your spouse or someone you regularly meet with for a meal but cannot due to your fast) but we should not be sharing about our fast as a way to gain sympathy and attention or so others will see how holy we are. Remember Matthew 6:16.

What Happens When We Fast?

Fasting is twofold; spiritual and physical. Both are electrified when we fast and neither remain unmoved and unchanged.

Daniel fasted and prayed. He couldn't see that the situation had changed one way or the other. For days he fasted, prayed, and believed. Finally, the angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel to tell him that from the first moment he began to pray that God answered him but there was a spiritual war taking place causing a delay in seeing God's answer. (Daniel 10). This shows us what happens in the spiritual world but also that we are to hold fast to the promises of God and allow him the time to do what he needs to do in each situation.

Fasting breaks and releases our tightest band of bondage...the bondage of unbelief. If we don't believe that God truly loves us how can we believe that he wants to bless us, heal us, comfort us, or grow us? If we don't believe him and his promises, how can we trust and believe in praying for others? In the gospels, Jesus tells us that the apostles could not cast out the demons because of their unbelief. He says that this kind (he is referring to unbelief) is not cast out except by prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:21, Mark 9:28-29)

Then we see in Ephesians that we are in constant spiritual battles. God says we are not fighting against people but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world. Fasting builds our faith and “in every battle, you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan.” (Ephesians 6:10-18)

During a fast, we don't lean on our own understanding. We pray and read God's Word. We study to show ourselves approved, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. God wants this one-on-one time with us, and he won't leave us hanging. He will open our eyes, ears, and heart to His understanding and knowledge. He wants to bless us this way.

A Love Offering for The One Who Is Worthy

When we think of how much God has done for us, the idea of fasting for a meal or even a few meals to spend time with our Savior isn't pointless or too hard. It is as Daniel said, “We do not ask because we deserve help, but because you are so merciful.” Daniel 9:18