

Fasting and Feasting



Overview

Fasting is refraining from food for a spiritual purpose. Fasting involves letting go of something in the physical realm to take hold of new things in the spiritual realm. Skipping meals or abstaining from certain foods for a period of time is a common practice in Disciple Making Movements around the world. It is not uncommon for individuals or large groups to fast regularly, one day a week, and occasionally multiple days at different times of the year.

Jesus expected that His followers would practice this spiritual discipline and taught about how and when they would fast. For Christians, fasting is not just a ritual or for show, but for the purpose of drawing closer to God (Matthew 6:16-18, 9:14-15). Disciple makers fast and pray for God's "will to be done on earth as it is in heaven," for Him "to send more workers into His harvest field," and for eyes to "look at the fields" (Matthew 6:10, Luke 10:2, John 4:35).

Getting Started

1. Select what you plan to give up. This could be food or anything from electronics or media to worry or gossip. Consider what would help you draw closer to God. Hunger, for example, can help humble us before God.
2. Determine how long you wish to fast. Start slowly if you are new to fasting. Perhaps give up one or two meals or avoid the media for two days at most. It may take some time to learn how to fast effectively. Giving up a meal is simple in principle, but learning how to use fasting to help remove barriers between you and God takes practice.
3. Plan when and how you will pray during your fast. Use the time to pray that you would have normally spent doing whatever you have chosen to fast from. Pray when you would normally be preparing and eating a meal, for example. Also, use your hunger or urge to do whatever you are abstaining from as a reminder to pray throughout the day. (Some people call it *feasting* instead of *fasting* as they enjoy more time in the presence of God throughout the day.)

4. When you fast, spend time in worship and adoration, read Scripture, bring your requests before God, and be sure to listen to whatever God wants to express to you during your fast. Ask for clarity to align your life according to His plan and purpose.
5. The enemy will try to keep you from focusing on God and seek to discourage you during your fast. Fasting does not always bring about a “mountain top encounter,” so don’t become discouraged or put too much emphasis on the experience. The results may not be obvious at the time, and some results may not fully come until later. But the time you spend in fasting and prayer will not be in vain, for God sees your heart’s desire.

Other Options

Combine fasting with other prayer tools such as “Day Alone With God.”

Invite others to join you on a particular day each week or for an extended period of time.

Additional reasons that God’s people fasted:

- For protection and deliverance in the face of a crisis (2 Chronicles 20:2-3, Nehemiah 1:4)
- For renewal in seeking God and turning back to Him (2 Chronicles 7:14, Joel 2:12)
- To seek guidance and understanding (Daniel 9:3-22)
- To worship God and prepare for ministry (Exodus 34:28, Luke 4:2, Acts 13:2-3)
- To heal and deliver from evil spirits (Mark 9:29)

Going Deeper

As you grow in the habit of fasting, you can begin to extend your time of abstaining. Many people find greater benefits to longer fasts. When fasting from food you can either go longer before eating or skip one or two meals a day over a number of days. There may be health or medication issues that should be considered when planning a prolonged fast from food. You may need to adjust your fasting plan according to your own health needs. Care should also be taken when ending a longer fast. Beginning with liquids, slowly introduce food.