

Fasting

Simply put, fasting is temporarily denying our bodies of food in order to increase our awareness of what we need even more. We set aside our dependence on food - or some other good thing - to declare our deeper need for God and his Word, increase our time in prayer, and to reinforce in both our physical and spiritual body that he is better than the thing we're giving up (Matthew 4:4). Jesus cautioned his disciples not to fast like the hypocrites who do it for attention or personal gain (Matthew 6:16). If you fast for any reason other than obedience to God, even fasting can become an idol or unhealthy pursuit.

Fasting creates more time to pray, it causes spiritual breakthrough and renewal, sharpens our focus, sets our hearts on eternal things, stirs repentance, cleanses us of self-reliance, and brings freedom. Fasting positions us to hear from God as we declare that he alone is our source. We hunger more for God and his purposes. Be sure, though, that fasting itself is not the change-agent, as we can fast with poor motives... it's the lifestyle and heart-change of obediently submitting to the Spirit that moves the heart of God. It is not a religious box to be checked; it is a necessary spiritual discipline for those learning to follow Jesus.

Maybe you can do water only for several days, if fasting is already a rhythm of your life. Maybe it could be one meal a day or fasting snacks and desserts. Or maybe due to health or other concerns (see below) you can fast something other than food. We can all fast something!

What should I fast?

In the Bible we see Jesus modeling a water-only fast and so the goal would be to fast food in some way, as mentioned above. But if you find yourself with any health or medical concerns, pregnant/nursing, taking certain meds, or wrestling with an eating disorder, consult a professional first - or consider a different type of fast.

A food-related option is called a "Daniel Fast" and is modeled after Daniel in the Old Testament who ate only vegetables and whole grains, no "choice" foods (sugar, rich, processed, etc) as a way to set himself apart for God. There are many websites to further explain the Daniel Fast and give you meal/food ideas.

You can also fast social media, a hobby, shopping, TV, something that consumes your time, etc. The main point is to deny yourself something that you have become dependent on, in order to increase dependency on God and devote more time to prayer.

Fasting is not about weight loss! We must be careful not to allow the current trend of fasting and intermittent fasting to dilute the spiritual discipline of fasting. While we certainly experience the physical benefits of fasting, it is a spiritual decision for eternal purposes. We recently read a quote that says, "A diet may change the way you look, but a fast will change the way you see!" Our desire is that God will change the way we see, that our hearts will be focused on him, and that we will hear him more clearly.

Whole books have been written on the topic of fasting; there is more that could be said or explained. But for now, please know that we encourage you to fast in some way. If you have questions or concerns, we'd love to hear from you and take time talking with you personally. We want to equip you to begin or continue to prioritize spiritual disciplines in your life.

We are filled with anticipation at the great things we know God will do, both individually and collectively, as we dedicate this time to him.

