



## **January 10<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> Fast Guide**

**Fasting is voluntarily refraining from food— or any other regularly enjoyed, good gift from God —for a spiritual purpose.**

### **WHY WE FAST**

The Bible is filled with more than 70 references to fasting. Moses, Elijah, Esther, Ezra, Job, David, Daniel, Peter, Paul, and even Jesus fasted. The early church continued engaging in fasting even after Jesus's ascension (Acts 13:2; Acts 14:23). When Jesus talked about fasting in the New Testament, he did not talk about "if" we fast, but "when" we fast (Matthew 6:16; Matthew 9:15). So it's clear that fasting is something that God wants us to do.

For the past 5 years, WFA has begun each new year with a 21-day period of prayer and fasting. We believe that each new year represents a new opportunity to trust, follow, love, and enjoy God more. We dedicate the new year to God and ask that he would work in us for his eternal purposes throughout the upcoming year.

Fasting helps reorient us toward spiritual and eternal things (like God's purposes for our lives), rather than merely physical and temporary things (like food).

We fast in this life because we believe in the life to come. We don't have to get it all here and now, because we have a promise that we will have it all in the coming age. We fast from what we can see and taste, because we have tasted and seen the goodness of the invisible and infinite God — and are desperately hungry for more of him.

*David Mathis (from [Fasting for Beginners](#))*

### **TYPES OF FASTING**

#### **1. A Full Fast**

Typically, a full fast means refraining from eating any solid food.

<sup>2</sup> And after fasting forty days and forty nights, [Jesus] was hungry.

*Matthew 4:2*

Note that this passage does not say that Jesus was thirsty, so we assume that he still drank water and/or other liquids. It is NOT recommended that you refrain from drinking at least water during a fast, because it can be very dangerous to do so!

## **2. A Partial Fast**

There are many different ways to participate in a partial fast. You could fast from only certain foods (such as desserts) or you could fast for only certain periods of time (such as during the daylight hours).

<sup>2</sup> In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. <sup>3</sup> I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.

*Daniel 10:2-3*

## **3. A Daniel Fast**

A Daniel fast is a specific type of partial fast based on the fast of Daneil, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 1.

<sup>12</sup> Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink.

*Daniel 1:12*

Typically, a Daniel fast involves refraining from all food and drink except for water and juice, fresh (cooked or uncooked) fruits and vegetables, rice, beans, nuts, and seeds.

## **4. A Fast From Something Other Than Food**

Although fasting often involves food, it does not have to. Fasting can be refraining from any earthly thing that you desire, regularly do, and that is good. (Fasting from something sinful does not count—you shouldn't be doing that anyway!)

Some examples include fasting from TV or social media, sports, naps, etc.

# **TIPS FOR FASTING**

## **1. Make a plan and stick to it.**

Before you begin your fast, resolve specifically what you will fast and how long you will fast from it. Having a specific plan from the beginning will make it easier to successfully complete your fast.

**2. Fasting is primarily about your relationship with God. It is not meant to make you look “super-spiritual” in the eyes of others.**

<sup>16</sup> “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

*Matthew 6:16-18*

**3. Plan what you’ll do instead of doing whatever you are fasting from.**

Fasting isn’t merely an act of self-deprivation, but a spiritual discipline for seeking more of God’s fullness. Which means we should have a plan for what positive pursuit to undertake in the time it normally takes to eat. We spend a good portion of our day with food in front of us. One significant part of fasting is the time it creates for prayer and meditation on God’s word or some act of love for others.

Before diving headlong into a fast, craft a simple plan. Connect it to your purpose for the fast. Each fast should have a specific spiritual purpose. Identify what that is and design a focus to replace the time you would have spent eating. Without a purpose and plan, it’s not Christian fasting; it’s just going hungry.

*David Mathis (from [Fasting for Beginners](#))*

**4. Transpose your physical hunger into hunger for God.**

Fasting is not easy. When you start to feel hungry, don’t dwell on how hungry you are, what you wish you could eat, and how difficult fasting is. Instead, let every hunger pang remind you of your need for God. Immediately pray and ask him to direct your heart toward him instead of dwelling on your temporary physical hunger. Ask God to give you strength and discipline. Reiterate to yourself that God is more important to you than anything else.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

*Matthew 5:6*

<sup>34</sup> They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” <sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger,

*John 6:34-35a*

**5. Pick one or two specific needs to pray about during your fast.**

Be intentional and consistent about what you are praying about throughout your fast. You could pray about expanded opportunities to serve others, the salvation of a friend or family member,

specific health needs, wisdom for upcoming decisions, your career, an addiction you need to shed, etc.

For example, when Nehemiah in the Old Testament heard that Jerusalem's walls were still demolished, he specifically fasted and prayed that God would restore Jerusalem's walls and that he would have wisdom and success in getting this done.

<sup>3</sup> And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire." <sup>4</sup> As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

*Nehemiah 1:3-4*

## ENJOYING GOD THROUGH FASTING

Food is not only necessary for life; it is also delightful. We not only have a duty to regularly eat; we also often enjoy eating. Our hunger for food comes not only from our need for sustenance; it also comes from our desire to taste delicious flavors.

As we join together in fasting, let us pray that our physical hunger for food (or whatever else you choose to fast) would stir up an even greater hunger for God. Let us remember that God is not only necessary for eternal life; he is also eternally delightful. Let us recognize that we not only have a duty to regularly worship God; we also should genuinely enjoy worshipping him. Let us realize that our hunger for God comes not only from our need for his help; it also comes from our desire to taste and see that he is good.

<sup>8</sup> Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!... <sup>10</sup> Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing

*Psalms 34:8a,10b*

## OTHER RESOURCES ON FASTING

There is a reading plan on the YouVersion Bible app called "21 Day Fast." We will be going through this reading plan as a church throughout our fast on January 10-31, 2017.

[YouVersion : 21-Day Fast Reading Plan](#)

[Desiring God : Fasting for Beginners](#)

[Jentezen Franklin : Fasting Basics](#)

[Cru : Guide to Fasting](#)