

# Fasting

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*Should Christians still fast today?*

*What is fasting, and why should I consider it?*

Fasting is a spiritual practice that is rooted in both the Old and New Testament. It is also practiced by Muslims and Jews, and other faiths. In The Bible, it is primarily fasting from food for the purpose of prayer and dedication to God. We could also consider fasting from technology or other forms, but fasting from food is the best and most consistent way to practice this discipline. If one wanted to reduce technology or entertainment, that could be done in addition to fasting from food, or simply a separate kind of dedication to God.

Most fasts are one day, from morning to evening. (see Judges 20:26, 1 Samuel 7:6, 1 Kings 21:9, 2 Chronicles 20:3, Jeremiah 36:6,9) Other fasts include Mordecai's 3-day fast in Esther 4:16, the 7-day fast at King Saul's death (1 Samuel 31:13), Daniel's three-week fast, (Daniel 9:3, 10:3, 10:12) and Moses' 40-day fast on Mount Sinai.

Like many things, fasting was abused by some people of God in the Old Testament. It became something that people did as a performance for others, rather than true humility before God. It was also practiced like a superstition to get the outcome they wanted, rather than practicing it by faith. God wanted consecrated hearts that were married to justice and compassionate action, not people who were trying to gain the approval of other people. (Jeremiah 14:12 and Isaiah 58:1-10)

For Christians, our best model is Jesus and His Apostles. Jesus himself fasted for 40 days in the wilderness before his public ministry began. (Matthew 4:2 and Luke 4:2) He also taught, "When you fast" (Matthew 6:16-18) setting an expectation that fasting would be a part of our normal life with God. However, Jesus taught against performative fasting. What he wants is our hearts, not a performance for others. He called out hypocrites as those who did something to look outwardly holy, but had no change in their relationship with God. He also called out those who performed holy actions, but didn't lift their finger to help the poor or show mercy to others. He also told his critics that his disciples didn't fast while he was around because the bridegroom was with them. Because Jesus was the Messiah literally in their midst, he didn't want his disciples to mourn. However, he did leave the door open for his followers to fast after he left them.

I would encourage you to pray about, and try a 24-hour fast. I would suggest eating a normal dinner the evening before, and then skipping breakfast and lunch on your fasting day.

You would then eat a normal dinner on the day of your fast. For example, if Wednesday was your fasting day, you would eat Tuesday's evening dinner and resume eating 24 hours later for Wednesday's dinner, skipping breakfast and lunch on Wednesday. Many spiritual practices are better lived than read about. As you try it, see what you experience and can learn from this practice that Old and New Testament saints practiced. Just like any new activity, don't expect a lightning bolt revelation on your first try. Keep trying it, refining how you do it, and why you are doing it. A vital component is your motivation for fasting. We don't fast to earn extra points from our Heavenly Father. If you are a follower of Jesus, you have already received forgiveness from your sins, The Holy Spirit, and grace upon grace. You are already loved, already secure, already a child of God. We certainly don't fast so other people think we are more holy or mature. We can, however, fast for these reasons that follow.

**For Christians, we can fast to remember how dependent we are on God.** This helps us to more fully embrace the teaching in Matthew 5:3 where Jesus promises the "*poor in spirit*" will inherit the kingdom of heaven. Physical hunger weakens us quickly. It reminds us that we are dependent on God for every breath, every heartbeat, every relationship, every action, every promise from God. Humility is one of the most important attitudes of Jesus and for followers of Jesus. Fasting is a great way to break down pride and self-reliance.

**A second reason to consider fasting is that deepens our prayer life.** Fasting itself is a form of prayer, and when we fast, read the Word of God and pray, we are connecting our body, mind and soul in dedication to God. Fasting will open up new ways to experience God's wisdom, God's strength to sustain us, and gratitude to God that we didn't properly acknowledge before—such as the simple meals we enjoy each day. Rather than focusing on what we are giving up in our food, spend your focus on God himself. Talk to him, listen to him, be silent before him. Consider using the time you prepare and eat your meals to be re-directed to God in meditating on Scripture and time in prayer.

**Fasting also helps us to remember the poor.** In the New Testament after the time of Jesus, the Apostles of Jesus were reminded to never forget the poor with their prayers and their actions. (Galatians 2:10) In the western world in 2025, we often fail to appreciate the many blessings we enjoy every day. Access to clean water, a change of clothes, medicine, and supermarkets are privileges most people in the world have never known throughout history. When we fast, we can remember our persecuted Christian brothers and sisters who don't enjoy the same freedom we often take for granted. When we fast, we remember the economically poor around the world—and even across the street. Instead of expecting more and more, we practice the discipline of voluntarily skipping a meal or two to better appreciate those who have less.

**Fasting reveals blind spots in our spiritual lives.** Richard Foster, in *Celebration of Discipline* wrote: *“More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us... We cover up what is inside us with food and other good things.”* We are probably aware of how social media and entertainment are forms of escapism when we face pressure. It is easier to watch a movie than deal with insecurity or fear. It is easier to scroll through Instagram than deal with the bitterness from an unreconciled relationship. However, we also use food and drink to escape the refining work of The Holy Spirit. All growth requires a certain amount of confronting the uncomfortable, and all the food in our fridges and pantries, combined with take-out and UberEats delivery makes it so easy for us to hide from what is truly bothering us. We easily mask our problems with food, instead of practicing the raw honesty of prayer and lament we see in the Psalms. As Foster says, fasting can reveal some blind spots that we paper over with desserts, soft drinks, and second helpings of our favourite comfort food.

There are other reasons why I believe it would be a good idea for followers of Jesus to practice fasting today, but those are the most compelling to me. To round out the discussion, it is important that we don't let fasting carry us to some wrong beliefs.

**Fasting does not mean that food and the body are bad.** Instead, food is a gift from God to nourish the body that has been uniquely fashioned in our mother's womb. Christianity stands alone as it heralds the importance of the body as we see in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, as well as all the time Jesus devoted to healing physical ailments. Our physical bodies are essential to worship God and carry out the mission of God. Jesus often celebrated God's goodness with banquets of food, and we should do the same.

**Fasting does not mean that I can expect God to be a genie for me.** As previously touched on, fasting is our choice to dedicate ourselves to God. We don't control God, but merely position ourselves humbly before him. We believe that God rewards those who diligently seek him, (Hebrews 11:6) but we need leave room for God's timing. We should pray with boldness, we should pray persistently and with faith, but we leave all the results to him. (1 Corinthians 3:6)

**Fasting isn't for everyone.** If you have struggled with eating disorders, are a child or teenager, or have some medical challenges, fasting may be harmful to you. It is always wise to consult your physician to see if it is safe for you. You can use another spiritual practice, or invent your own as a unique dedication to God in place of fasting from food.

*How are you feeling after reading through this? Are you excited to try fasting, or deepen your experience with fasting? Or, are you feeling resistance? If you are sensing resistance, why is it there?* It would be worth reflecting on these questions as you consider the role fasting could play in your life with God today.

While fasting isn't my favourite activity, it has become very sacred and important to me. It has made me more aware of the spiritual realm, more humble before God, and allowed me to experience some deep breakthroughs in my relationship with God. There have been some vital decisions in my life that were made after a season of fasting. In those specific seasons, I emerged with new clarity, and confidence that I wouldn't have had without fasting. I pray that these words have helped you understand more about this practice, and will inspire you to try it for yourself. When you do, please let me know how it is going, and what you gained from your experience. I'd be very encouraged to hear from your journey!

Pursuing Jesus with you,  
Pastor Chris

**Ps.** Here are some recommended books on fasting and spiritual disciplines.

*Fasting* by Jentezen Franklin

*Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster

*The Spirit of the Disciplines* by Dallas Willard

*Practicing the Way* by John Mark Comer