

The Weapon of Fasting

What is fasting?

Fasting is the voluntarily giving up of the normal and enjoyable things of life in order to use that time and energy to seek the Lord, worship Him, or petition Him. This most often refers to going without food, but not always. We can fast from other things as well.

Fasting is to be a normal part of the life of a disciple of Christ:

And they said to Him, “Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink?” And He said to them, “Can you make the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.” (Luke 5:33-35)

And when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, of a sad face. For they disfigure their faces so that they may appear to men to fast. Truly I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to fast, but to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly. (Matt. 6:16-18)

Fasting is one of the three master keys Jesus reveals in the Sermon on the Mount which help us to experience His victory over the enemies of our soul, of which you have three.

(Matt. 6) (They are not the boss, the bank, and your battleaxe.) Jesus does not *ask us* to do these things, but He *assumes* we will do them.

- When you give... overcoming the power of the world
- When you pray... overcoming the power of the devil
- When you fast... overcoming the power of the flesh

Different Types of Fasts in the Scripture

1. **The partial fast:** in which a person only abstains from enjoyable foods. In the case of a “Daniel fast,” the prophet had no “desserts,” meat, or alcohol for three weeks.
(Dan. 10:2-3)
2. **The normal fast:** going without solid food, usually with water only, although some take juice.
3. **The complete fast:** going not only without food but without liquids as well.
Sometimes referred to as an Esther fast. (See Esth. 4) This fast is exceedingly dangerous and Esther performed it for only three days. Severe dehydration can result.
4. **Corporate fasting:** there are numerous examples in the Scripture of God’s people fasting in order to seek Him together. Some people get nervous discussing a public

fast because Jesus emphasized private fasting but of course we do see public fasts in Scripture.

What are some reasons why should we fast?

1. God tells us that He will be found by us when we seek Him with the whole heart.
(Jer. 29:13) Fasting is a way to express our wholeheartedness before Him. When we fast, we are saying to God that we desire Him and His favor even more than our physical nourishment.
2. Fasting is a way to keep the body under subjection and get control over the desires of the flesh.
3. When we fast we receive the benefits of the Father's reward (Matt. 6:16-18).

Some quick practical guidelines

1. **Check your motives:** is there a right motive for your fast? What are your objectives? To lose weight? Are you determined to minister to the Lord above all else? (Acts 13)
2. **Health:** use wisdom, especially with longer fasts, and consult a physician. People who should not fast include nursing or expectant mothers, and diabetics.

3. **How do I start?** Wind down; give up caffeine ahead of time. Eat lightly – don't fatten up! Crawl before you walk. Start with a Daniel fast; next, fast until dinner, gradually working your way up to a full day before attempting more ambitious fasts. Avoid heroics, please!
4. **What happens during?** Note particular temptations which arise and resist them with the Word. Replace your meal times with the Word, prayer, and ministering to the Lord. Get plenty of rest. Remember that you must drink plenty of water!
5. **How do I end a fast?** Just as you eased into it, ease out of it. A longer fast is best broken with some fresh fruit or vegetable juices, diluted if necessary – and nothing too acidic. After a day or so, have the fruit itself; then introduce fresh salads without dressings. You must work your way up to fish and meat. Eat slowly and chew thoroughly. Stop as soon as you feel full. Again, rest as much as possible.

Eight Ways to Bring the Power of Fasting into your Life and into the Church

1. For general ministry preparation (biblical and historical examples)
2. For Divine protection

"I proclaimed a fast...that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a straight way for ourselves, our children, and all our goods." (Ezra 8:21; see also vv. 23,31)

3. For Divine intervention (to intensify intercession)

And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. (2 Chron. 20:3); see also: see Esther 4.

4. To repent and humble yourself before God (numerous examples): see Joel 2.

5. To seek the Lord and worship Him:

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, "Separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (Acts 13:1-2)

6. Commissioning for ministry and service: Acts 14:23

7. For spiritual power:

However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. (Matt. 17:21)

8. For guidance and revelation: see Daniel chs. 9, 10

Start Fasting!

The early Church did 2 days a week – what can you do? Try one day, or part to start!