

Fasting & Prayer

The word **FAST** comes from a Hebrew word meaning to **cover or shut the mouth**. In addition to abstaining from eating food, it also implies a special silence, a holy silence. In the Bible, fasting is almost always connected with prayer and worship. It is a powerful spiritual discipline because God rewards those who earnestly seek him (Heb. 11:6). O. Hallesby wrote, “Fasting helps to give us that inner sense of spiritual penetration by means of which we can discern clearly that for which the Spirit of prayer would have us pray in exceptionally difficult circumstances.”

TYPES OF FASTS:

- Normal Fast No food or beverages except water or juice
- Absolute Fast No food or beverages at all, not even water
- Partial Fast No foods and/or beverages of certain categories

SPIRITUAL BENEFITS OF FASTING:

- Reduction of the power of self (*self-centered desires, needs, longings, dreams, and plans*) so the Holy Spirit can do a more intense work in us
- Increased harmony with God’s purposes, thoughts, and passions
- Increased spiritual receptivity
- Revelation of our own true spiritual condition
- Increased inner calm and self-control (*fasting is like fertilizer for growing the fruit of the Spirit*)
- Increased strength to resist temptation as we subject our body to our spirit
- Increased fear of God and decreased fear of people
- Guidance, power, grace, renewed spiritual vision, and many other blessings from the Lord

WHAT EVERY FAST SHOULD INCLUDE:

- Determination above all else to minister to the Lord
- An attitude of humility before the Lord
- Thanksgiving, praise, worship, confession of sins, prayer for yourself and others
- Scripture reading
- Separation as much as possible from normal activities and influences of the world – *Run in such a way that you may win (1 Cor 9:24): avoid watching TV, reading newspapers/magazines, doing non-critical tasks, having unnecessary conversations...*

HELPS FOR FASTING:

- To start, consecrate yourself to the Lord, ask for His help, and put on your spiritual armor (Eph 6:10-18)
- Be attentive and responsive to the prompting of the Lord:
 - ✓ If the Holy Spirit convicts of a sin: repent and ask forgiveness, learn what the Word says about it
 - ✓ If a Scripture comes to mind: read it, meditate on it, ask the Lord how He wants you to respond
 - ✓ If a person comes to mind: ask the Lord to guide you in prayer and subsequent action
- If you’ve never fasted before, start with a short fast (*a day or less*) - learn to “walk” before you “run”
- If the Lord did not give you specific Scriptures to focus on, draw nearer to Jesus through His teachings or His suffering and death
- If you inadvertently break the fast, ask the Lord to forgive, then continue fasting; remember you are seeking God and not trying to break some record!
- Don’t tell others you are fasting unless it is absolutely necessary, this can rob you of God’s blessings from the fast and lead to spiritual pride
- Read a good book about fasting (*Transforming Power of Fasting and Prayer by Bill Bright, Prayer and Fasting by Kingsley Fletcher, Fasting for Spiritual Breakthroughs by Elmer Towns, Shaping History Through Prayer and Fasting by Derek Prince*)

Purposes & Principles of Fasting

Isaiah 58: 6-11 (NIV)

This chart was inspired by a teaching on fasting by Rich Callahan, pastor of Maranatha Christian Church

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-- when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and He will say: Here am I.

FAST	TYPE	PURPOSE	PRINCIPLES
Disciples' Fast (Matt 17:14-21)	Unspecified	To loose the chains of injustice, or KJV: break the bands of wickedness (seeking faith for deliverance)	Fasting increases faith in God and breaks the power of the enemy's strongholds
Ezra Fast (Ezra 8:21-23)	Unspecified	To untie the cords of the yoke, or KJV: undo heavy burdens (seeking God's solution to problems)	Corporate fast: complete reliance on God for courage and deliverance from fear and danger
Samuel Fast (1 Samuel 7:3-13)	1 Day	To set the oppressed free (seeking deliverance from besetting sin)	Corporate fast: sincere repentance for, and confession of, the sins of the nation
Elijah Fast (1 Kings 19:1-8)	40 Days Normal Fast	To break every yoke (seeking to conquer mental, emotional, or spiritual strongholds)	Elijah was set free from the power of Jezebel's witchcraft which ensnared him after he valiantly destroyed 450 prophets of Baal
Widow's Fast (1 Kings 17:1-16)	Portion of last meal	To share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter (seeking God's material provision)	The widow's act of generosity in a desperate situation opens the door for God's miraculous provision until the drought ended
Paul's Fast (Acts 9:1-19)	3 Days Absolute Fast	Your light will break forth like the dawn (seeking God's anointing)	God dramatically transforms Paul and empowers him for a difficult ministry by the Holy Spirit
Daniel Fast (Daniel 1:8-17)	10+ Days Partial Fast	Your healing will quickly appear (seeking God's healing touch)	Results in a dramatic increase of health, knowledge, and wisdom
John the Baptist Fast (Luke 1:13-17)	Partial Fast for extended time	Your righteousness will go before you (preparing for ministry)	The Nazirite Vow (Judges 13:4-5) illustrates ongoing consecration to God (also Samson and Paul)
Esther Fast (Esther 4:12-5:2)	3 Days Absolute Fast	The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard (seeking God's protection)	Corporate fast illustrates complete dependence on God to work in a life-threatening situation

Joel 2:12-17 **Requirements for effective fasting** humility, remorse, repentance, personal sacrifices...
 Joel 2:18-32 **Results and blessings of fasting** both immediate and long-term

A Prayer for Beginning a Fast

I Weave A Silence

I weave a silence unto my lips. I weave a silence in my mind. I weave a silence within my heart. I weave a silence in my life.
I close my eyes to all attractions. I close my ears to all distractions. I close my heart to all temptations.
I weave a silence in my life. (By Kirk & Deby Dearman © 1993 Discovery House Music)

Heavenly Father, I consecrate myself to You for this time of fasting and prayer. I want the Holy Spirit to do a deep work in me as well as through me, so with Your help, I am “weaving a silence” today to make more room for You. I will be still and know that You are God (Ps 46:10).

I weave a silence unto my lips. Enable me to keep this fast hidden from others so I will not succumb to spiritual pride or lose the reward You have for me (Matt 6:18). Help me ‘shut my mouth’ not only to food, but also to unnecessary conversations with others. Empower me to be quick to listen to You, and slow to speak to others (James 1:19).

I weave a silence in my mind. Help me slow down my thoughts and block out the clutter. Help me switch my gears from being a ‘Human Doing’ in the world to being a ‘Human Being’ in Your presence today. Help me be more receptive to Your voice. Grant me patience to wait upon You. As I read Your Word, give me ears to hear what Your Spirit is saying. Lead me in the selection of passages to read. Reveal the fullness of Your truth as I meditate upon it.

I weave a silence within my heart. I want my heart to feel what You are feeling, and to be in harmony with You. Enable me to sense the heartbeat of Your desires and passions. Help me put self-centeredness aside and yield myself more fully to Your will. Please lead me step by step to accomplish all that You desire in this time of fasting and prayer.

I weave a silence in my life. I lay my own agendas, ambitions, desires, needs, longings, plans, and dreams at Your feet and release them to You. May all striving within me be stopped. Enable me to spend considerable time in reverent and passionate prayer today. Sensitize my heart to grasp the wonder of who You are so I can worship You in spirit and truth.

I close my eyes to all attractions. Enable me to regard everything else as worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing You more (Phil 3:8). Lord, I’m so used to being busy that I feel very uncomfortable waiting before You. Help me resist watching TV today, even my favorite Christian programs. Help me resist reading newspapers or magazines or any book except the Bible.

I close my ears to all distractions. Lord, I’m so used to the constant noise and distractions in my life that I feel very uncomfortable without them. Today I want to be a Mary, not a Martha. Give me the grace I need to relax in silence and focus on You so I won’t be distracted by everything around me. Enable me to turn off my radio and CD player and cell phone, and not answer my telephone. Help me resist doing any non-essential activity. If I start doing anything that is not critically important, alert me immediately and remind me that I can save it for another day.

I close my heart to all temptations. Speak Your peace into my heart so I can experience a deep inner calm and self-control. My spirit is willing, but my body is weak (Mark 14:38). Help me watch and pray so that I will not fall into temptation. Give me increased strength to subject my body to my spirit and resist temptation.

Please do a thorough work in me during this fast. Open my heart to your guidance, power, and grace. Renew my spiritual vision. Increase my desire to please You, and decrease my need to seek approval from others. Reveal my own true spiritual condition to me, and empower me to change what needs to be changed. Break the grip of the world, the flesh, and the devil in my life. Enable me to be very attentive and responsive to You today. If the Holy Spirit convicts me of a sin, help me learn what the Word says about it, repent, ask forgiveness, and make amends. If a Scripture comes to mind, help me understand it and discover how You want me to respond. Enable me to pray effectively for others through the leading and anointing of Your Spirit. When someone specific comes to mind, guide me in prayer and subsequent action. Be glorified through this fast, in the name of Jesus. Amen!

A Prayer to Put on the Armor of God

Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the devil. (Eph 6:10-11 NLT)

Lord, You call me to warfare, and You have equipped me with Your mighty power. Today I call forth the warrior in me and declare, 'I am strong in the Lord!' (Joel 3:9-10). You have already disarmed evil powers and authorities. You made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross (Col 2:15). You are with me to help me and to fight my battles (2 Chron 32:8). I now put on all of Your armor so I can enforce what Jesus has already won.

I put on **the breastplate of righteousness** to protect my heart. Thank You that Jesus is my righteousness, my holiness, and my redemption (1 Cor 1:30). I enter Your presence by the blood of Jesus, and I draw near to You with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith (Heb 10:19-22). You made Jesus to be sin for me, so that in Him I become right with You (2 Cor 5:21). I confess that I have sinned by... I receive Your forgiveness, for if we confess our sins, You are faithful and just to forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). I now release my guilt, because Jesus' life was an acceptable guilt offering for me (Isa 53:10).

I put on **the belt of truth** to protect my innermost being. Holy Spirit, guide me into all truth (John 16:13). Sanctify me by the truth (John 17:17). Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me (Ps 43:3). When the enemy deceives me, help me recognize his lies. Teach me Your way, and I will walk in Your truth (Ps 86:11). Help me remember and obey the teachings of Jesus, so the Truth will set me free (John 8:31-32). Enable me to speak the truth in love, so I can be more like Christ in every way (Eph 4:14-15).

I put on **the helmet of salvation** to protect my mind. Father, thank You for blessing me with every spiritual blessing in Christ. You loved me and chose me to be holy, without fault in Your eyes. You adopted me as Your child. I am redeemed through the blood of Jesus, and my sins are forgiven. I praise You for the wonderful kindness You lavish upon me because I belong to You (Eph 1:3-8). Help me agree with Your thoughts, for You have given me the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16).

I put on **the Gospel of peace** to prepare me to pray more effectively for others (Eph 6:15). I will not retreat, in Jesus' name. The spiritual land on which my feet walk in prayer will be my inheritance forever, because I will follow the LORD my God wholeheartedly (Josh 14:9). You have raised me up with Christ and seated me with Him in the heavenly realms (Eph 2:6). The God of peace will soon crush Satan under my feet, because the grace of my Lord Jesus is with me (Rom 16:20).

I firmly grasp **the shield of faith** to stop the fiery arrows aimed at me by Satan (Eph 6:16). I will not let go when the enemy assaults me with doubt or discouragement. Father God, it is impossible for You to lie (Heb 6:18). You are who You say You are. You can do what You say You can do (Mark 10:27). I am who You say I am. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil 4:3). Your word is living and active in me (1 Thess 2:13). I will believe You no matter what, for through faith I am shielded by Your power (1 Peter 1:5).

I firmly grasp **the sword of the Spirit, the word of God**, and I will not let go (Eph 6:16). Father, help me to stay alert and persist in prayer. Help me pray at all times in the power of Your Spirit. I will attack the enemy like Jesus did with Your word declaring, 'It is written...' (Matt 4:4) Your promises have been thoroughly tested (Ps 119:140). Not one of Your good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled (Josh 21:45). All Your promises are 'Yes' in Christ. So through Him I will say 'Amen!' for Your glory (2 Cor 1:20).

I am fully protected with Your armor and Your presence. **Both hands are fully equipped** with mighty weapons to resist the enemy (2 Cor 6:7). With these weapons I will break down every proud argument that keeps me from all You have for me. I will conquer every thought so I can be obedient and loyal to Jesus today (2 Cor 10:4-5). **With Your power, I will stand firm** against all strategies and tricks of the devil (Eph 6:11).

I am now ready and willing for this day of battle, Lord (Ps 110:3). I will not be fainthearted, or afraid, or give way to panic before the enemy (Deut 20:3). Instead, I will overcome the enemy by the blood of the Lamb and my words of testimony. I will not love my life so much as to shrink from death (Rev 12:11). You are giving me victory through my Lord Jesus, so I will serve You today, knowing that my labor is not in vain (1 Cor 15:57-58). Amen!