

Fasting

The definition of fasting is very simple, a voluntary withdrawing from food and or drink, or other fleshly appetite, for a specified period of time. Jesus was a man who practiced fasting on several occasions. He fasted because he knew there were supernatural possibilities that could only be released that way. I believe that before the Lord returns, perilous times will come and supernatural strength will be needed. The book of Acts in the Bible records the early church fasting together in groups for special needs. When they were appointing elders in the church they would fast collectively for God's guidance.

In Matthew chapter 6 at the sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks first about prayer and fasting. I believe Jesus was teaching us then that prayer and fasting should be a normal part of our life. The church is missing the greatest breakthrough because we are not practicing the spiritual disciplines Christ instructed. I often wonder what blessings we are missing, what miracles we have missed, and what bondage is not being broken simply because we do not follow the Lord's example of fasting. Jesus fasted because He knew that it released the anointing that He needed to do the supernatural.

According to Christ, it is our duty to fast. In Matthew chapter 6, Jesus tells us that He delights in reward, and when we fast and pray as we should, He rewards us openly. We should not fast to impress people or be seen by man. God has an open reward for those who fast with the right motive. When you make a decision to fast even just for a day, God sees the desire of your heart and He will give you the grace to endure and see the supernatural breakthrough you need.

I am calling all who call 'Mountain West Church' their spiritual family, to make fasting a regular part of their life. I believe God has some great things in store for us, but we have to get our hearts ready to receive them, and we do that through prayer and fasting. Our greatest victories will not be won in public, but in private. When Jesus prayed and fasted, it was usually a private thing. But out of those private times came enormous outpourings of public demonstration of God's power. We only have one life to give, so let's give Him all of it.

Preparation For A Fast

The first thing we must do when we are preparing to go on a fast is confess any and all un-repented sins. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and expose any weaknesses we may have in our life. As we ask the Lord to forgive us, we also must forgive any who have offended us in Word or deed. We must make restitution where possible.

Mark 11:25 NKJV

“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”

The second thing we have to do when we are preparing to start a fast is to approach the fast with an attitude of positive faith. This has a great deal to do with whether the fast is successful or not. It is God’s will for us to fast in accordance with His Word. We do not need a special revelation or to hear a voice from Heaven telling us to fast; the Word of God clearly indicates that it is the will of God. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and we should be concerned with how we treat that temple.

The Bible tells us that God does not dwell in a temple made with hands (Acts 7:48). We can build beautiful structures on earth for Him to dwell in, but God will not dwell in them. God has chosen to dwell in the body of His believers. Therefore we should take care of our bodies and strive to keep them in the best possible condition. They should be healthy and strong and able to do the things God wants us to do.

Christ has no body on the earth except our bodies. There are some who cannot fast due to health problems. God understands this, but I still believe they can practice some form of consecration and grow spiritually through their sacrifice.

The third thing we must do when preparing for a fast is to examine the motive behind what we are doing. I know God will reward us if we seek Him with pure motives and in a scriptural manner.

Matthew 6:17-18 NKJV

But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

If we fast in the right way and with the right motives, God will reward us openly. Keep in mind that if we do not fast we are depriving ourselves of the reward. God cannot give us the reward if we do not meet the conditions.

The last thing we must do is to start the fast with a clear goal in mind. The first question to ask should be, “Why am I fasting?” Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you, and make time to pray and read your Bible daily. This is your spiritual food during the fast. Decide how long you will fast, use wisdom and plan your day in advance to be prepared for the temptation to break the fast. Focus on keeping a clean vessel. For example, refrain from

a critical spirit, spreading negative words about or to anyone else, and limit the time you watch television. Keep in mind that these things will distract you. Replace the time you normally spend watching television with prayer and Bible study. The Holy Spirit will use that time to do a supernatural work in your life.

When you start a fast, your body detoxifies itself, eliminating toxins from your system. This can cause mild headaches and irritability during withdrawal from things like caffeine and sugars. Hunger pains are to be expected. Try to limit your activity as much as possible and exercise moderately. Take time to rest your body as needed, and expect miraculous results from your fast.

During the fast, spend time listening to praise and worship music. This particular style of music tends to focus on our relationship with God. Of course it is also necessary to examine our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationship with others. Get away from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mind set on seeking the face of God.

Purpose Of A Fast

Fasting is a way that we seek God by denying our physical needs in order to focus on our spiritual needs. That's why it is essential that prayer go along with your times of fasting. If you don't spend time in prayer and meditation, then you are simply dieting. When we fast, we are saying to the Lord that we are serious. The Bible tells us to 'break up fallow ground.' That means we are to plow the soil of our souls and we do that through fasting. Without exception, all of us get a 'crust' on our spirit from time to time, but if we break up the fallow ground in our souls the Lord promises to come and "*shower righteousness on us.*" (**Hosea 10:12b**)

Through fasting we are reminded of our humanity. To come to God feeling a sense of helplessness is NOT a handicap, but a head start. It casts us upon God, completely relying on Him for our source of strength. It makes us dependent on the Lord and His Spirit.

Fasting humbles us. There is a self denial involved with fasting. We deny the physical appetites of our body for a time, in order to humble ourselves before God, who has all the answers for our lives. David said, "*I humble my soul with fasting*" (**Psalm 35:13 NAS**). Keep in mind that humility is not an emotion, but a deliberate choice. God told us to humble ourselves. When we humble ourselves, God exalts us. (**1 Peter 5:6**)

Fasting is a sign of desire. We are saying that God and His will are more important than our own. We have a passion for the things of God that supersedes everything else. We are not trying to twist God's arm, but we are genuinely displaying an earnestness to know God's direction and will for our future.

“A white-tailed deer drinks from the creek; I want to drink God, deep draughts of God. I’m thirsty for God alive. I wonder, “Will I ever make it – arrive and drink in God’s presence?” (Psalm 42:1-2 The Message)

Fasting is a way to get close to God. The word of the Lord tells us to “*draw close to God...He will draw close to you.*” (**James 4:8** NAS)

“Only insofar as you eat and drink flesh and blood, the flesh and blood of the Son of Man, do you have life within you. The one who brings a hearty appetite to this eating and drinking has eternal life and will be fit and ready for the Final Day. My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. By eating my flesh and drinking my blood you enter into me and I into you. In the same way that the fully alive Father sent me here and I live because of him, so the one who makes a meal of me lives because of me. This is the Bread from heaven. Your ancestors ate bread, and later died. Whoever eats this bread will live always.” (John 6:53-59 The Message).

While fasting, we will understand God’s Word more clearly. When we fast and read His Word, He gives us a deeper understanding of the scripture.

A very important purpose for fasting is to find the will of God for our lives. Ezra fasted to determine the will of God.

Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. (Ezra 8:21 NKJV)

Fasting is like defragmenting a computer. It is a necessary process. Defragmenting the computer enhances performance. Fasting provides a similar effect to the spiritual life of a believer. Isaiah 58 quotes God’s promises to those who fast the right way. We find nine promises when we truly fast:

We fast to be freed from addictions. **Isaiah 58:6a**

We fast to solve problems. **Isaiah 58:6b**

We fast for revival and greater soul winning. **Isaiah 58:6c**

We fast to conquer mental and emotional problems. **Isaiah 58:6c**

We fast to be healed. **Isaiah 58:8a**

We fast for a more righteous life and influential testimony. **Isaiah 58:8a**

We fast for the glory of the Lord to protect us. **Isaiah 58:8b**

We fast to pray and intercede for others. **1 Samuel 12:8**

Types of Fasts

A Supernatural Fast

A Supernatural fast is the type of fast where you do not eat or drink anything. For example, Moses did not eat anything or drink anything for 40 days and nights. You should not attempt this fast unless you have been directed by the Holy Spirit to do so. If you have any health problems, you should consult your doctor before attempting this fast. **(Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9, 15-18; I Kings 19:8)**

A Daniel Fast

In this fast you omit certain foods for a while, but not others. During this fast you do not eat meat, dairy, bread and sweets. You only eat fruits, vegetables and nuts and drink only water.

(Daniel 1:12, 10:3; Matthew 3:4, Luke 1:15)

A 3-Day Fast

This can be any type of fast: Supernatural fast, Daniel fast or give up one item of food. Paul did this fast right after his conversion.

A Partial Fast

This fast is from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. or from sun-up to sundown. A partial fast can also be any type of fast.

The type of fast you choose is between you and God. He will honor your best sacrifice. You may want to use a combination of fasts.

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus implied that all of His followers should fast **(Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14,15)** For Him it was a matter of when believers would fast, not if they would do it. Before you fast, decide the following up front:

How long you will fast - one meal, one day, a week, several weeks, forty days
(Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts.)

The type of fast God wants you to undertake (such as water only, or water and juices; what kinds of juices you will drink and how often)

What physical or social activities you will restrict

How much time each day you will devote to prayer and God's Word

Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

Scripture references for fasting:

Matthew 6:16-18

Matthew 9:14-15

Luke 18:9-14

Relation to prayer and reading of the Word:

1 Samuel 1:6-8, 17-18

Nehemiah 1:4

Daniel 9:3, 20

Luke 2:37

Acts 10:30

Acts 13:2

1 Corinthians 7:5

Corporate Fasting:

1 Samuel 7:5-6

2 Chronicles 20:34

Ezra 8:21-23

Nehemiah 9:1-3

Joel 2:15-16

Jonah 3:5-10

Acts 27:33-37

(REMEMBER) That it is the attitude of a heart sincerely seeking Him to which God responds with a blessing (Isaiah 58; Jeremiah 14:12; 1 Corinthians 8:8). May God greatly bless you as you fast.

Do's and Don'ts of a Fast

1. Do check with the Holy Spirit – and your doctor – before beginning as major fast. With any type of fast from eating, monitor changes in your medical condition. Don't jeopardize your health.
2. Do try to get all your house hold necessities accomplished. Get the shopping done; get the laundry done, whatever. If you have family member to feed, feed them. We need to give ourselves time for prayer, and the time that we would normally spend eating should be dedicated to prayer.
3. Do ask the Holy Spirit to anoint you and give you a personal revelation of God: "I want to know Jesus more. Come and bring holiness to me. Make the Word of God come alive to me." As Job said, "*My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.*" (**Job 42:5** NIV)
4. Do ask the Lord to illuminate His Word and give you a greater understanding of who He is. **Proverbs 29:18** KJV warns, "*Where there is no vision, the people perish.*"
5. Do ask God to renew the hearts of His people. The church needs to be renewed – without racism, hatred, bitterness, envy and strife. Love must reign supreme in all that we do and say. We are to be people filled with hope and grace.

6. Do remember that God is more concerned with your spiritual life than with your physical life. Abstaining from food, in and of itself, is no big deal to God. However, from what you have learned here, along with a humble heart, a broken and repentant spirit does touch the heart of God.
7. Don't go around telling people you are fasting. Avoid making it just another religious ritual. That would indicate pride, and remember we are to be humble when we fast. The reason you are fasting is what is important.
8. Don't try a love fast without first attempting a one day fast. The next time, you can try a two day fast and go a little longer after that.
9. Don't do business as usual when fasting. Just skipping meals doesn't impress God. Fasting does not produce merit or make us appear better in God's sight. However, it can express self-denial. Remember that it is **to** and **for** God that we are fasting.
10. Don't continue in all of your worldly entertainment, business and preoccupations with no thought of God. All you will do is starve yourself. And what are you gaining? This doesn't mean that you cease your normal life altogether. Instead, focus your thoughts on God, with extended periods of time on your knees, crying out to Him.
11. Don't ever fast for selfish reasons. Fasting is to help you recognize your total dependence on God. You receive God's blessings and power based totally on what Jesus had done for you, not on anything you could ever do.

Spiritual Benefits of a Fast

Fasting makes our heart more attentive to God. It's amazing how much time we have on our hands if we are not eating, preparing and cleaning up after meals, watching TV, or engaged in other fleshly endeavors. Fasting demonstrates to God our seriousness. Most of us live to eat; few eat to live. Our stomach has been "in charge" since the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 2:8-9; 15-17 NKJV

The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

With one meal Adam and Eve went from enjoying the presence of God in the cool garden, to fearfully hiding from His presence among the trees of the garden. They literally ate themselves out of house and home. Their stomachs were temporarily

satisfied, but by eating the fruit of good and evil, they ate themselves out of the plan, protection, and provision of Almighty God. Dethroning “King Stomach” is no easy task, but it is a very rewarding one. Once you make the decision to fast, the spiritual results will begin to be very evident. You will feel grief over sin and have a burden for the sinner. Through times of fasting, God will renew your mind and strengthen your inner man. It will intensify your prayer time, and crucify the flesh. Your times of worship will be more focused and purposeful.

Health Tips for a Fast

1. Drink a lot of fluids while fasting. You should drink at least ten 8 ounce glasses of fluid per day, preferable water. However, if you drink fruit juices, drink the kind with no sugar added.
2. Don't drink anything with caffeine while fasting. If you are a caffeine drinker you may have some headaches when fasting.
3. Fasting can be a very beneficial to your health. It has been said that a 10 day fast every year could prevent many diseases. Fasting is a great way of cleansing the body of impurities and toxins.
4. Two days before beginning a fast, eat only raw foods, preferable organically grown.
5. Eat only organic food two days after the fast.
6. Get plenty of rest; in fact, take time to rest.
7. Exercise is permissible during a fast, but don't overdo it.

After a Fast

When breaking a fast, always begin with a light meal, even if you have fasted for only a short period of time. Stay away from greasy foods. It is best to begin with something light on the stomach; soup, crackers, etc. moving on to pasta and fresh fruit. Also keep in mind, the longer the fast, the more gradually you must break the fast. After only a few days of fasting, the stomach will contract. It is not wise to eat too much, so take it slowly and eat small portions. Most often after a fast, you will feel full sooner than you would have before you fasted.

We don't fast to get God to set His heart toward us. God has already set His heart toward us, and that is evident in the fact that He sent His Son to take our place. Fasting is to get our hearts to a place where God can do a renewing work in us. Whenever we embrace the disciplines of the Spirit, we realize that God loves us as fallen and sinful people, and that He loves us in our weakness because of Jesus Christ. Gratitude for that love awakens in us a passion to wholly surrender to the Lord in every area of our lives. And when we choose to express that gratitude through fasting, God chooses to reward us.

In **Psalm 81:10**, the Lord says, “*Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.*” Fasting is our expression of an open mouth that says to God, “We want more of You!” It awakens that

spirit within us with which we cry out, "Abba Father. I want to be utterly devoted to you, my Lord. No other gods, no other love."

Example of a Daily Fasting Schedule

For maximum spiritual benefit, you should set aside ample time to be alone with the Lord. Listen for His leading. The more time you spend with Him, the more meaningful your fast will be.

Morning

Begin your day in praise and worship

Read and meditate on God's Word, preferably on your knees

Invite the Holy Spirit to work in you to will and to do His good pleasure according to **Philippians 2:13**.

Invite God to use you. Ask Him to show you how to influence your world, your family, your church, your community, your country, and beyond.

Pray for His vision for your life and empowerment to do His will.

Noon

Return to prayer and God's Word

Take a short prayer walk

Spend time in intercessory prayer for your community's and nation's leaders, for the world's un-reached millions, for your family or special needs

Evening

Get alone for an unhurried time of "seeking His face."

If others are fasting with you, meet together for prayer.

Avoid television or any other distraction that may dampen your spiritual focus

When possible, begin and end each day on your knees with your spouse for a brief time of praise and thanksgiving to God. Longer periods of time with our Lord in prayer and study of His Word are often better spent alone.

Expect Results

If you sincerely humble yourself before the Lord, repent, pray, and seek God's face; if you consistently meditate on His Word, you will experience a heightened awareness of His presence (**John 14:21**). The Lord will give you fresh, new spiritual insights. Your confidence and faith in God will be strengthened. You will feel mentally, spiritually, and physically refreshed. You will see answers to your prayers.

A single fast, however, is not a spiritual cure-all. Just as we need fresh infillings of the Holy Spirit daily, we also need new times of fasting before God. A 24-hour fast each week has been greatly rewarding to many Christians.

It takes time to build your spiritual fasting muscles. If you fail to make it through your first fast, do not be discouraged. You may have tried to fast too long the first time out, or you may need to strengthen your understanding and resolve, just try again as the Holy Spirit leads you. God will honor you for your faithfulness.

I encourage you to join me in fasting and prayer again and again until we truly experience revival in our homes, our church, our nation, and around the world.