



Fasting from Food

Guidelines

- Don't fast when you are sick, traveling, pregnant or nursing. People with diabetes, gout, liver disease, kidney disease, ulcers, hypoglycemia, cancer and blood diseases should not fast.
- Don't fast if you are in a hurry and are fasting for immediate results regarding some decision. Fasting is not magic. Listen for a nudging from God to fast.
- Stay hydrated. Always drink plenty of water and fluids. If you are new to fasting, begin by fasting for one meal. Spend the time with God that you would normally be eating.
- Work up to longer fasts. Don't attempt prolonged fasts without guidance. Check with your doctor before attempting long periods of fasting.
- If you decide to fast regularly, give your body time to adjust to new rhythms of eating. You may feel more tired on days you fast. Adjust your responsibilities appropriately. (Expect your tongue to feel coated, and expect to have bad breath.)
- Begin a fast after supper. Fast until supper the next day. This way you miss two, rather than three, meals.
- Don't break your fast with a huge meal. Eat small portions of food. The longer the fast, the more you need to break the fast gently.

What to Do in the Time Set Apart for Fasting

- Bring your Bible and a glass of water during your fast.
- Relax and breathe deeply. Place yourself in the presence of God. Offer yourself and your time to God by repeating Samuel's words "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." Or simply say, "Here I am."
- Spend some time worshiping God for his faithfulness. Thank him for where he has come through for you. Psalm 103:1-5 also provides a starting point for praise.
- Bring your desires to God. Ask him if this desire is in line with his will and his word for you and the church. Be still and listen. Offer your desires and prayers to God.

Reflection Questions

When you feel empty or restless, what do you do to try to fill the emptiness?

What does this tell you about your heart?

What is your attitude toward fasting or self-denial?

In what ways do you currently deny yourself ?

When has self-denial brought you something good?

What has the experience of fasting been like for you?

Where do you operate from an entitlement mentality? How can you wean yourself from this way of life?

Spiritual Exercises

- To deepen your understanding of how Jesus denied himself and embraced suffering and death for you, practice some sort of fasting (during Lent).
- When the fasting is difficult, share your thoughts and feelings with Jesus. What does Jesus say to you?
- Tell Jesus what it means to you to share and fellowship with him in his sufferings. Fast one meal a week. Spend your mealtime in prayer. When you feel hungry, sit with Jesus in the wilderness and feed on the bread of heaven.
- Talk to Jesus about what his self-denial means to you. For a period of one week, fast from media, sports, shopping, reading or use of the computer. Dedicate the time you now have to God. What feelings arise in you? What thoughts interrupt your prayer?
- During Lent, particularly focus on Jesus and his temptation in the wilderness. Enter the story in your imagination. What do you and Jesus talk about? How are you tempted to indulge yourself? How does it help you to talk to Jesus about this?
- Make two lists: one of needs, the other of wants. Ask God to show you where to fast from some of your wants. Offer to God the time you spend hankering after your wants.
- Abstain from purchasing morning coffee or daily sodas or evening videos. Offer the money or time to God.
- When facing a trial, decide on a fast that gives you time to seek God's strength in your journey.

The above is taken from the Spiritual Disciplines Handbook

Please note: The Spiritual Exercises are a specific example for Lent. However, the thoughts and ideas can be used during any season of prayer and fasting.