

What is fasting?

Would you agree that the pinnacle of our Christian walk in to grow a deeper, fuller, and more passionate relationship with God? As Christians, we grow closer to the Lord as we block out the everyday noise of the world and lean in closer to the voice of the Father. We block out these daily distractions by doing as Jesus called each of us to do in Luke 9:23: “And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”By taking up our cross daily, we are putting down the heavy things of this world that act as distractions, picking up what God has actually called us to bear, and following where He leads. The act of dying to yourself and picking up your cross to follow Jesus is sometimes easier said than done. It can be easy to fall into the trap of distraction as we go from day to day. Whether it’s work, school, kids, stress, social media, finances, relational challenges, or unexpected dilemmas or delays that pop up throughout the day – it can all become so overwhelming and completely time and thought consuming. With every distraction, it can be easy to slip into “autopilot” in our relationship with God. However, we were never meant to have a passive, neutral relationship with God.

Every now and then in our walk with Christ, we can greatly benefit from hitting the pause button on our day to day routine and hitting the refresh button in our spiritual lives. The best way to reset and refresh our spiritual lives and relationship with God is to set aside a designated time to intentionally seek the Lord through fasting and prayer. Fasting is not a “get-fit-for-the-New-Year-quick” crash diet; it is an integral spiritual discipline that is meant to help us as believers take our focus off of something for a period of time (food, social media, TV, etc.), and focus our time, attention, and hearts fully on Jesus. By fasting, we are setting aside distractions, even necessities, such as food, in order to stir up a deeper hunger for the Lord. Some signs that it might be time to intentionally fast and pray are: when you find yourself heavy with a burden, stuck in a particular pattern of sin, when you are being oppressed by the enemy, when you are seeking an answer or direction from God, or even when you just need a spiritual refreshing. Fasting often reveals the raw state of our hearts. The purpose of fasting is not to lose something, but to gain something; a deeper, more intimate relationship with God.

Fasting can be done in various ways. The most common way people fast is by fasting food. Fasting from food can be done in different ways. The first type of fast is called a dry fast. This type of fast consists of no food or beverages for a period of time. With a dry fast, it is important to consult a doctor before beginning, as it could present or worsen certain health issues. Water fasts are when a person only consumes water, no food or other drinks, for a period of time. A partial fast is when someone refrains from eating a particular food or food group. Liquid fasts are when solid food is not consumed, just liquids.

Fasting is not just limited to food. It can also be done by abstaining from TV, social media, extra spending, music, or whatever else the Lord places on your heart to set aside for a designated amount of time. Ultimately, it is important to seek the Lord about what particular kind of fast He is leading you to choose.

How to fast

Pray. Be in faith as you prayerfully and thoughtfully step into this season of fasting. Fasting is more than simply going without something. It is supplementing the absence of something that feeds your flesh with prayer in order to feed your spirit.

Commit to a type of fast. Do not decide on a day-to-day basis. Commit before the fast, and be determined. Fasting options include:

- o Water only
- o Liquid only
- o One meal only
- o Traditional fast
(sun-up to sun-down, Monday through Friday)
- o Other kinds of fasts
(e.g. no TV, no social media, no discretionary spending)

Prepare your body gradually for the fast. Start eating smaller portions and meals made of raw fruits and vegetables two days before you begin. Avoid food that is high in sugar and fat.

Plan Your Calendar. Limit physical and social activities during the fast, conserve energy, and spend more time in prayer and reading the Bible. If you wish to pair this guide with a Bible reading plan, consider The Whole Story reading plan on the YouVersion Bible app.

Consult a physician if you need to. If your situation does not allow you to fast food, determine an alternative that will work best for you. Such circumstances include pregnancy, a physically demanding profession, and medical conditions.

Ask friends and family to be your prayer partner throughout the fast. Consider doing the fast within the benefits of community rather than in solitude.