



# Basic Information on Fasting

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## Definition

*Biblical fasting is abstaining from all or some types of food for spiritual purposes. It is an act of worship, which focuses on God. It brings results that glorify God -- both in the person who fasts and others for whom we fast and pray.*

## Why Fast?

Jesus expected his followers to fast (Matthew 6:16-18). “*When you fast, not if you fast.*”

God has chosen fasts to accomplish his greater purposes (Isaiah 58)

- To loosen the bonds of wickedness
- To undo heavy burdens
- To set the oppressed free
- To break every yoke
- To give bread to the hungry and provide the poor with housing
- To allow people’s light to break forth like the morning
- To cause health to return speedily
- To cause righteousness to go before you
- To cause the “glory of the Lord” to be your rear guard

## Nine Types of Fasting for Nine Different Purposes

### 1. The Disciple’s Fast

*Purpose:* To free ourselves and others from addictions to sin

*Key Verse:* “This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Matt. 17:21)

### 2. The Ezra Fast

*Purpose:* To solve problems, to invite the Holy Spirit to lift loads and to overcome barriers to walking joyfully with the Lord.

*Key Verse:* “So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer” (Ezra 8:23)

### 3. The Samuel Fast

*Purpose:* To let the oppressed (physically and spiritually) go free, for revival and soulwinning, to bring people out of darkness into the light.

*Key Verse:* “So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured it out before the Lord. And they fasted that day, and said there, ‘We have sinned against the Lord’” (I Sam. 7:6)

### 4. The Elijah Fast

*Purpose:* To conquer mental and emotional problems that would control our lives.

*Key Verse:* “He himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness . . . He arose and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights” (I Kings 19:4, 8)

### 5. The Widow’s Fast

*Purpose:* To meet the humanitarian needs of others, to share our food, to care for the poor.

*Key Verse:* “The jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah” (I Kings 17:16)

### 6. The Saint Paul Fast

*Purpose:* To bring clearer perspective and insight as we make crucial decisions.

*Key Verse:* “And he (Paul) was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank” (Acts 9:9)

### 7. The Daniel Fast

*Purpose:* To bring healing or a healthier life

*Key Verse:* “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank” (Daniel 1:8)

### 8. The John The Baptist Fast

*Purpose:* To assure that our testimonies and influence for Jesus will be enhanced

*Key Verse:* “He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink” (Luke 1:15)

## 9. The Esther Fast

*Purpose:* To protect us from the evil one

*Key Verse:* “Fast for me . . . [and] my maids and I will fast . . . [and] I will go to the king . . . [and] she found favour in his sight” (Esther 4:16; 5:2)

### Four Ways to Fast

1. The **normal fast** is going without food for a definite period of time during which you only ingest liquids (water and/or juice). The duration can be 1 day, 3 days, 1 week, 1 month or 40 days. Extreme care should be taken with longer fasts, which should only be attempted after medical advice from your physician.
2. The **absolute fast** allows no food or water at all, and should be quite short. Moses fasted absolutely for 40 days, but this would kill anyone without supernatural intervention. Be sure to test the spirit that tries to talk you into a 40-day fast, even if it includes liquids and talk with your physician.
3. The **partial fast** is one that omits certain foods or is on a schedule that includes limited eating. It may consist of one meal a day. Eating only fresh vegetables for several days is also a good partial fast. Elijah, John the Baptist and Daniel used this type of fast. People with hypoglycaemia and other physical conditions might consider this type of fast.
4. The **rotational fast** consists of eating or omitting certain families of foods for designated periods. For example, grains may be eaten only every fourth day. The various food families are rotated so that some food is available each day.

## Benefits of Fasting

### 1. Healing and Rest

One of the main benefits of a night’s sleep includes rest for our digestive system. Just as the seventh day of Creation was designed as a day of rest, so the very cells of our body need rest from food. Our bodies are designed to respond to sickness by fever and fasting. Rest, fever and fasting are parts of God’s design to fight infection. Cells have built in ways to clear waste, but they can become overloaded. Fasting helps to unclog our system and eliminate toxins.

### 2. Improved Physiology

Fasting helps promote blood sugar control by reducing insulin resistance, can promote heart health by improving blood pressure, triglycerides, and cholesterol levels, and aids weight loss by limiting calorie intake and boosting metabolism. Some medical studies have shown fasting to increase growth hormone secretion, delay aging and extend longevity in animals, and suggest it may aid in cancer prevention and increasing the effectiveness of chemotherapy.

### 3. Mental Health

Some mental benefits of fasting include a calming affect, the ability to focus on priorities, and a generalized improvement in mental functioning. Extended fasts have the added affect of heightening the other senses to outside stimuli. Symptoms of many other mental illnesses such as hyperactivity, dyslexia, schizophrenia and depression have sometimes cleared during short fasts.

**WARNING:** Fasting should not be self-administered as a remedy for any medical condition without consultation with a physician. If you are diabetestic, suffer with low blood sugar, are an older adult, are underweight, or have any other underlying health problem, you should not fast unless under the strict supervision of your physician.

## Resource Books

If you would like more detailed information and teaching on the subject of fasting, here are some good books for you to purchase. They should be available online through Amazon or Indigo.:

The Essential Guide to Fasting: What it Is, How to Do it, and Why it Matters *Elmer T. Towns, 2016*

A Hunger for God: Desiring God Through Fasting and Prayer *John Piper, David Platt, Francis Chan 2013*

Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough *Elmer T. Towns, 1996*

Fasting: A Neglected Discipline *David R. Smith 1992*

God's Chosen Fast *Arthur Wallis 1980*

7 Successful Steps to Successful Fasting & Prayer *Bill Bright, Out-of-print, but may be available on Amazon*