

February 2022

# Fasting



Awaken

# WHAT IS FASTING?

FASTING IS AN ACT OF THE WILL TO REFRAIN FROM SOMETHING FOR A SPECIFIC TIME, TYPICALLY FOOD AND/OR DRINK.

Many religions and cultures have some sort of practice of fasting and certain forms of it are some of the most popular, current trends in health today.

In the Christian tradition, fasting has historically consisted of a voluntary participation in abstaining from something rather normal (most often food) for the sake of spiritual health, whether it be individuals or communities. At its root, Christian fasting is a spiritual practice that aids in cultivating a longing for, and experience of, God's presence.

## WHY SHOULD I FAST?

// To follow Jesus' commands and example. (Matthew 6:16; Matthew 4:1-11)

// To war against our fleshly desires for sin. (Romans 13:14)

// To cultivate a hunger for God and tune our senses to reality.

(Psalm 34:8; Ephesians 5:14)

// As both an act of resistance against the world that is and an expression of faith in the world to come at Christ's return. (Matthew 9:14-15)

We are fasting together in a desire for renewal in our church, revival in our city and awakening across Middle Tennessee. We long for the church to experience more of Christ and for those outside our walls to become more open to Him and his ways.

## WHAT FASTING IS NOT.

// Fasting is not bending God's will towards ours. It's a practice to aid in bending our wills toward His. Motivation is critical.

// Fasting is not a weight loss program. While there may be health benefits to it, it's a practice to aid in seeking God. Again, motivation is critical.

// Fasting is not easy. Expect temptation, distraction and an unusual sense of either doubt, discouragement or fear. The enemies of God want nothing more than to stop people from seeking the LORD wholeheartedly.



# HOW DO I START A FAST?

## SPECIFIC PREPARE SPIRITUALLY & PHYSICALLY

1 | Pray: Ask God for guidance on how to fast and ask Him what He wants to do in you and through you while you fast.

2 | Ease in, Ease out: Your body needs time to adjust to not eating when you begin a fast and time to adjust to eating again when you complete a fast. Take 1-2 to slowly begin eating less when you start fasting and 1-2 days on the end to introduce food again.

## MAKE A PLAN

1 | Pick a Fast. Examples of fasts include:

// Food Fasts - this is the most common fast historically.

1 | Juice Fast - A juice fast is simply consuming vegetable and fruit juices and water instead of solid food.

2 | Daniel Fast - This fast consists solely of fruits and vegetables and gets its name from the Book of Daniel, where the title character fasted for 10 days.

3 | Length - Will you fast a meal? A day? A week? The whole month? Determine up front. Clear is kind, even to yourself.

// If fasting food is not an option\*, some alternative options include:

1 | Words. Consider not speaking for an allotted time. This has been a fairly common practice in church history finding its roots in Jesus' silence before Pilate.

2 | Screens. A digital fast unplugs the noise in order to create space to hear God's voice.

3 | Social Media. Though this is not a necessity (like food), social media can cause unhealthy issues regarding identity and the way we spend our time. A fast creates space for identity to be re-rooted in Christ alone with our time reapportioned to live that out.

2 | Decide when.

// After you select your fast, decide when and for how long you will fast. Use the "Awaken calendar" to help plan.

3 | Decide what you'll do instead of eating.

// Imagine what those times are going to be like, so that, intentionality can fill those times. The key is, what is going to aid in seeking God and his presence? Some ideas include:

1 | Drink juice with family.

2 | Spend time reading the Word and praying.

3 | Write a letter to one of the people you are praying for.

4 | Visit with one of the people you are praying for.



## CONSIDER OTHERS

### 1 | Meal time.

// How is this going to affect your normal routine? How can you set others up for success who may be doing something different than you?

// If you have young kids, consider, how you will communicate to them what you are doing?

### 2 | More Generally.

// Consider keeping your fast between you, God and perhaps a handful of people who can encourage you along the way. Jesus once told regular fasters who made sure everyone knew they did it, that their reward was the praise others gave them. What a tragedy that would be!

// How might you use the money you would normally spend on food to bless someone else?

## PAY ATTENTION

### 1 | What's going on inside you?

// When you take food away, it tends to uncover what else you are going to for comfort, hope, identity, etc. This kind of awareness is where real, internal change can take place.

### 2 | What's going on around you?

// Once a fast takes root, spiritual acuity increases. To be able to join him in his work each day, it's important to pay attention to where he is at work in the lives of others, in the city and in the world.

### 3 | What sticks with you.

// Whether it be a Scripture, a conversation, something you saw or a thought that just won't go away, consider why that is. And perhaps if God is nudging you to do something about it.

*\*Cross Point strongly encourages any one who calls CP their church home to fast at a minimum on Tuesdays throughout February.*

We recognize that some are not able to fast from food due to health reasons. Fasting from food while pregnant or nursing also is not recommended. If you would still like to participate, talk to your doctor or consider fasting from something other than food. If you are a pregnant or nursing mother, your priority is the health and the development of the baby God has entrusted you with. Make that your guideline and go from there.

We also understand that whilst Fasting is a spiritual discipline, many have a painful history with food & eating. If you have an active eating disorder or have historically struggled with such a condition; we similarly recommend that you avoid this type of fasting. Such disorders can take the good of this spiritual discipline and distort it. The last thing we'd want is for you to believe that by not fasting food you are falling short, are sinful or unworthy. Also, there are other things beyond food that you could choose to set aside if you'd like to join with the church in fasting. As we've listed above in section two, there are many healthy alternatives, beyond food, that can bring about the same spiritual transformation.



# FINAL FASTING TIPS

## HERE ARE SOME OTHER IDEAS THAT CAN HELP MAKE YOUR FASTING EXPERIENCE MORE PLEASANT & HELPFUL:

- 1 | Drink lots of water.
- 2 | As you select your type of fast, make a fasting calendar that fits your plan. Determine what each day and week will look like.
- 3 | Keep your fridge and pantry stocked with the items you need. Being unprepared to fast sets you up to give into temptation. Choose well when selecting products, stick to raw food as much as you can, and limit artificial ingredients.
- 4 | Make it a priority to attend church during your twenty-one-day fast. Being around other believers will encourage you to keep on going when fasting gets difficult.
- 5 | If you mess up, don't get discouraged. Just get right back on track and keep going. God's mercies "are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23). He wants you to finish, and He will give you the grace and strength to do it.

### REWARDS:

Hold your experience loosely, but hold onto God and his promises tightly.

Watch self-righteousness like a hawk.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/fasting-for-beginners>  
<https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/biblical-fasting.html>  
<https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/personal-guide-to-fasting.8.html>  
<https://groupleaders.org/curriculum-feed/connect-with-god-fasting>

