



Annual Corporate Fast Begins January 1st

You determine the length of your fast. The following information will help you decide:

Chances are, you are among the massive majority of Christians who rarely or never fast. It's not because we haven't read our Bibles or sat under faithful preaching or heard about the power of fasting, or even that we don't genuinely want to do it. We just never actually get around to putting down the fork.

Part of it may be that we live in a society in which food is so abundant that we eat not only when we don't need to, but sometimes even when we don't want to. We eat to share a meal with others, to build or grow relationships (good reasons), or just as a distraction from responsibility.

And of course, there are our own cravings and aches for comfort that keep us from the discomfort of fasting.

Not So Fast

Fasting is voluntarily going without food — or any other regularly enjoyed, good gift from God — for the sake of some spiritual purpose. It is markedly counter-cultural in our consumerist society, like abstaining from sex until marriage.

If we are to learn the lost art of fasting and enjoy its fruit, it will not come with our ear to the ground of society, but with Bibles open. Then, the concern will not be whether we fast, but when. Jesus assumes his followers will fast, and even promises it will happen. He doesn't say "if," but "*when you fast*" (Matthew 6:16). And he doesn't say his followers might fast, but "*they will*" (Matthew 9:15).

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like abstaining from sex until marriage."***

We fast in this life because we believe in the life to come. We don't have to get it all here and now, because we have a promise that we will have it all in the coming age. We fast from what we can see and taste, because we have tasted and seen the goodness of the invisible and infinite God — and are desperately hungry for more of him.

Radical, Temporary Measure

Fasting is for this world, for stretching our hearts to get fresh air beyond the pain and trouble around us. And it is for the battle against the sin and weakness inside us. We express our discontent with our sinful selves and our longing for more of Christ.

When Jesus returns, fasting will be done. It's a temporary measure, for this life and age, to enrich our joy in Jesus and prepare our hearts for the next — for seeing him face to face. When he returns, he will not call a fast, but throw a feast; then all holy abstinence will have served its glorious purpose and be seen by all for the stunning gift it was.

Until then, we will fast.

How to Start Fasting

Fasting is hard. It sounds much easier in concept than it proves to be in practice. It can be surprising how on-edge we feel when we miss a meal. Many an idealistic new fast-er has decided to miss a meal and only found our belly drove us to make up for it long before the next mealtime came.

Fasting sounds so simple, and yet the world, our flesh, and the devil conspire to introduce all sorts of complications that keep it from happening. In view of helping you start down the slow path to good fasting, here are six simple pieces of advice. These suggestions might seem finicky, but the hope is that such basic counsel can serve those who are new at fasting or have never seriously tried it.

1. Start small.

For those who have never fasted before: Don't go from no fasting to attempting a week long fast. Start with one meal; maybe fast one meal a day during the 21 Day Fast. Then try two meals and work your way up to a daylong fast. Or Perhaps eventually try a two-day juice fast. For the purpose of CrossPointe's 21 Day Fast, you may consider a partial fast (giving up something, but not everything). We recommend the Daniel Fast (see attached description) for those who have never fasted before.

A juice fast means abstaining from all food and beverage, except for juice and water. Allowing yourself juice provides nutrients and sugar for the body to keep you operating, while also still feeling the effects from going without solid food. We DO NOT recommend that you abstain from water or juice during a fast of any length.

2. Plan what you'll do instead of eating.

Fasting isn't merely an act of self-deprivation, but a spiritual discipline for seeking more of God's fullness. Which means we should have a plan for *what positive pursuit to undertake* in the time it normally takes to eat. We spend a good portion of our day with food in front of us. One significant part of fasting is the time it creates for prayer and meditation on God's word or some act of love for others.

Before diving headlong into a fast, craft a simple plan. Connect it to your purpose for the fast. Each fast should have a specific spiritual purpose. Identify what that is and design a focus to replace the time you would have spent eating. Without a purpose and plan, it's not Christian fasting; it's just going hungry.

3. Consider how it will affect others.

Fasting is no license to be unloving. It would be sad to lack concern and care for others around us because of this expression of heightened focus on God. Love for God and for neighbor go together. Good fasting mingles horizontal concern with the vertical. If anything, others should even feel more loved and cared for when we're fasting.

So, as you plan your fast, consider how it will affect others. If you have regular lunches with colleagues or dinners with family or roommates, assess how your abstaining will affect them, and let them know ahead of time, instead of just being a no-show, or springing it on them in the moment that you will not be eating.

Also, consider this backdoor inspiration for fasting: If you make a daily or weekly practice of eating with a particular group of friends or family, and those plans are interrupted by someone's travel or vacation or atypical circumstances, consider that as an opportunity to fast, rather than eating alone.

4. Try different kinds of fasting.

The typical form of fasting is personal, private, and partial, but we find a variety of forms in the Bible: personal and communal, private and public, congregational and national, regular and occasional, absolute and partial.

In particular, we are inviting you to consider fasting together with your family, small group, or our church. Do you share together in some special need for God's wisdom and guidance? Is there an unusual difficulty for which you need God's intervention? Plead with special earnestness for God's help by linking arms with other believers to fast together.

5. Fast from something other than food.

Fasting from food is not necessarily for everyone. Some health conditions keep even the most devout from the traditional course.

If the better part of wisdom for you, in your health condition, is not to go without food, consider fasting from television, computer, social media, or some other regular enjoyment that would bend your heart toward greater enjoyment of Jesus. Paul even talks about married couples fasting from sex "for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer" (1 Corinthians 7:5).

If, however, you have no serious health concerns to keep you from fasting food, choosing an alternative that doesn't hurt as much will likely rob you of the blessing God is calling you to receive by putting down the fork. Your priority should be a food fast as it is clearly a Scriptural calling for believers. Food is a necessity to sustain life. Social Media and television are not. These are things we should control year-round anyway, lest get an unbreakable grip on our lives. *Psalm 101:3 (NKJV) says, "I will set nothing wicked before my eyes...it shall not cling to me."*

6. Don't think of white elephants.

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When your empty stomach starts to growl and begins sending your brain every "feed me" signal it can, don't be content to let your mind dwell on the fact that you haven't eaten. If you make it through with an iron will that says *no* to your stomach, but doesn't turn your mind's eye elsewhere, it says more about your love for food than your love for God.

Christian fasting turns its attention to Jesus or some great cause of his in the world. Christian fasting seeks to take the pains of hunger and transpose them into the key of some eternal anthem, whether it's fighting against some sin, or pleading for someone's salvation (I AM ONE Campaign), or for the cause of the unborn, or longing for a greater taste of Jesus.

To get an idea of the types of fasts you may consider, please continue to read through the next section...

7. Why People Fasted in the Bible

- 1) **The Disciples' Fast** (Matthew 17:21) – For deliverance from sin, addiction, bondage. If we fast, we can break the power of sins and addictions that limit our freedom in Christ.
- 2) **The Ezra Fast** (Ezra 8:21-23) – For God's help in solving problems and for protection from Satan. Ezra said that they prayed and fasted and God answered their request.

- 3) **The Samuel Fast** (1 Samuel 7:6) - For revival. The people were bound by idol worship and needed deliverance. Samuel called them to seek God and to bring the Ark back to Jerusalem. If we fast and pray for revival, God will pour Himself out on His people.
- 4) **The Elijah Fast** (1 Kings 19:4-8) - Mental freedom from emotional problems or habits. Through fasting, God will show us how to overcome emotional problems and destructive habits.
- 5) **The Widow's Fast** (1 Kings 17:9-16) – Fasting to provide for the needy. The widow went without food to meet the physical needs of someone else. Because she sacrificed her food, God made sure that she had more than enough food.
- 6) **The Paul Fast** (Acts 9:9) - For physical healing and to get direction from God. If we fast and submit our will to God, He will reveal His will to us.
- 7) **The John the Baptist Fast** (Luke 1:15) - To enhance our walk with God and witness. If we fast for the influence of our testimonies to reach others for Christ, God will use us.
- 8) **The Esther Fast** (Esther 4:16, 5:2) – For protection from the evil one. If we fast for protection, God will deliver us from evil.
- 9) **The Jesus Fast** (Matthew 4:1-2) - For spiritual power and victory over temptation, the flesh and the devil.
- 10) **The Daniel Fast** (Daniel 1: 5-21; 10:3) – Fasting for health and to seek God's favor, purpose and vision for life.

8. Ways to Fast

- **Normal Fast** – No food, water only.
- **Absolute Fast** – Absolutely no food or water (Caution: Should not be undertaken over 3 days and only then if you have a clear directive from the Lord and are in good health).
- **Partial Fast** – This could mean fasting certain meals of the day or abstaining from certain kinds of foods (i.e.: No meat or sweets, soup only, fruit and vegetables only, etc. In Daniel 10:3, Daniel ate no pleasant bread).
- **Juice Fast** – This mean that you have fruit and vegetable juices only.
- **Corporate Fast** – A church or group of people who feel God has called them to fast together for a certain period of time.
- **Fasting Plus Prayer** — Remember, fasting should be combined with prayer. God called us to fast and pray. If you are fasting a certain meal of the day, use the time you would normally be eating to pray. The combination of prayer and fasting is a powerful way to focus on seeking God for breakthroughs and answers to prayer.
- **Fasting and Abstinence** — Although the word “fast” is used as abstaining from food in the Bible and does not refer to giving up other things, during a fast one can practice abstinence from other pleasures as well, such as entertainment, TV, hobbies and sex, as spoken about in 1 Corinthians 7:1-5.

9. THE DANIEL FAST

Many CrossPointers participate in a 10 or 21 Day Daniel Fast. Daniel did two different fasts and I have provided you an overview of each below. Keep in mind, especially if you are new to fasting, **it's**

okay to modify. If it is a sacrifice for you, it will touch the heart of God and He will honor your fast and hear your prayers. **If it matters to you, it matters to God.**

FOOD GUIDELINES FOR A DANIEL FAST

Daniel went on two fasts. One was for 10 days, and the other was for 21 days.

- **A 10-day Daniel fast is vegetables and water.** *“Please test your servants for ten days and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.” Daniel 1:12*
- **A 21-day Daniel fast is no choice food, no meat, and no wine.** *“I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.” Daniel 10:3 NIV*

Note: Most theologians agree that “choice food” is special bread flavored with sugars and spices – like pastries, donuts, etc.),

When going on a Daniel fast, or any type of fast, if you have questions outside of what Scripture says, prayerfully seek the Lord and be led by the Spirit for the specifics for your personal fast.

BE AWARE!!! THERE ARE A HOST OF WEBSITES OUT THERE MAKING CLAIMS ABOUT THE DANIEL FAST THAT HAVE NO BIBLICAL MERIT. The Daniel Fast has become big business at the beginning of the New Year. Many people are trying to find ways to market this fast to sell a product or a plan. Don't fall for it. The Bible is clear and I have provided what the Scriptures say above.