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A GUIDE TO
FASTING

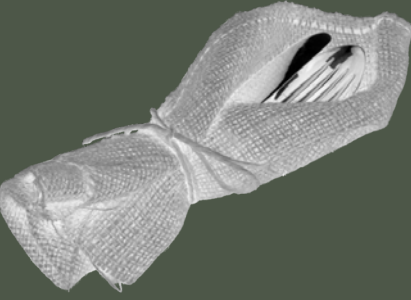


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WHAT IS FASTING?



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.

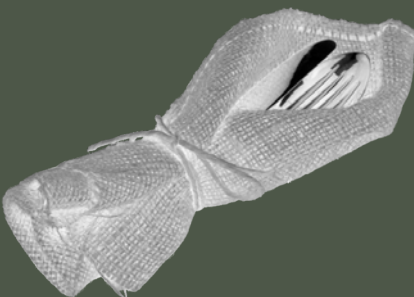
In the Christian tradition, fasting has historically consisted of a voluntary participation in abstaining from something rather normal (most often food) for the sake of spiritual health, whether it be individuals or communities. At its root, Christian fasting is a spiritual practice that aids in cultivating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

WHY SHOULD I FAST?

- To follow Jesus, his commands, an 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**)

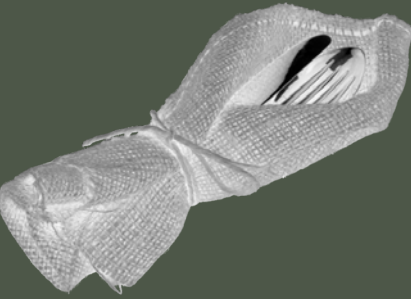
FASTING AS A CHURCH

We can fast together in the desire for renewal in our church, revival in our different communities, and an awakening in the Region. We long for the church to experience more of Jesus, and for those outside our walls to become more open to Him and His ways.



WHAT FASTING IS NOT!

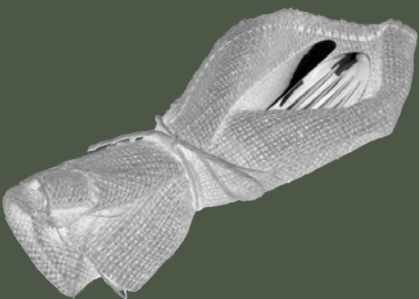
- Fasting is not bending God's will towards ours. It's a practice to aid in bending our wills towards His. Motivation is critical.
- Fasting is not a weight loss program. While there may be health benefits to it, it's a practice to aid in seeking God. Again, motivation is critical.
- Fasting is not easy. 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 TO FAST?

PREPARE SPIRITUALLY AND PHYSICALLY

- Pray and ask God for guidance on how to fast and ask Him what he wants to do in you and through you while you fast?
- Ease in, Ease out: your body needs time to adjust to not eating when you begin a fast time to adjust to eating again when you complete a fast. Take a little while, slowly eating less when you start fasting and at the end of your fast, slowly introduce food again.



MAKE A PLAN

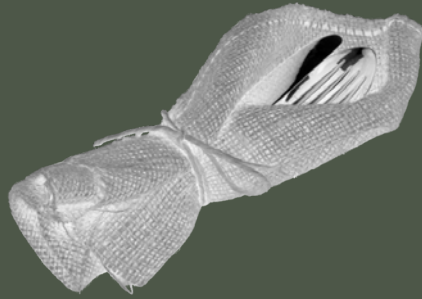
1. PICK A FAST

FOOD FASTS -THIS IS THE MOST COMMON FAST HISTORICALLY

- **Juice Fast** - A juice fast is simply consuming vegetable and fruit juices and water instead of solid food
- **Daniel Fast** - This fast consists only of fruits and vegetables and gets its name from the book of Daniel, where the title character fasted for 10 days.
- **Length** – Will you fast for a meal? A day? A week? The whole month? Determine up front because being clear is being kind to yourself.

IF FASTING IS NOT AN OPTION, SOME ALTERNATE OPTIONS INCLUDE

- **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
- **Screens** – A digital fast unplugs the noise in order to create space to hear God's voice.
- **Social Media** – Though this is not a necessity (like food), social media can cause an unhealthy issue 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.

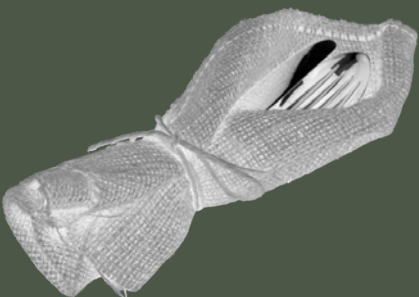
3. DECIDE WHAT YOU WILL DO INSTEAD OF EATING.

Imagine what those times are going to be like, so that intentionality can fill those times.

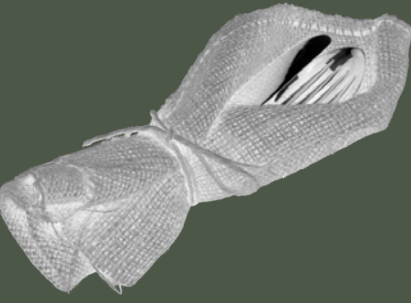
The key is, what is going to aid in seeking God and His presence?

Some ideas include:

- Drink juice with your family
- Spend time reading the Word and praying
- Write a letter to one of the people you are praying for.
- Visit 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 a young family, consider how you will communicate what you are doing to them.
- If you are employed, consider the implications for your work setting

2. MORE GENERALLY

- Consider keeping your fast between you, God and perhaps one or two others who can encourage you along the way.
- How might you use the money you would normally spend on food to bless someone else?

PAY ATTENTION

WHAT IS GOING ON INSIDE YOU?

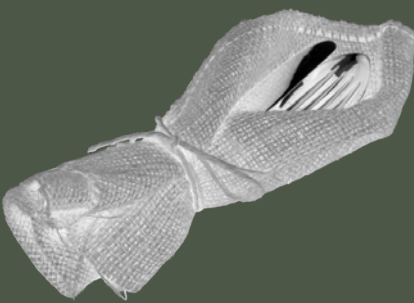
When you take food away, it tends to uncover what else you're going to for comfort, hope, identity etc. This kind of awareness is where real internal change can take place.

WHAT IS GOING ON AROUND YOU?

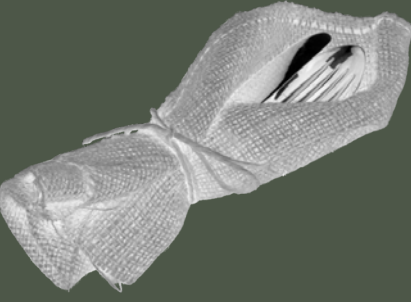
Once a fast takes root, spiritual acuity increases. To be able to join God in His work each day, it is important to pay attention to where He is at work in the lives of others, in the region and in the world.

WHAT STICKS WITH YOU?

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



FINAL FASTING TIPS



- Drink lots of water
- As you select your type of fast, find a rhythm that suits your circumstances.
- Keep your fridge and cupboards stoked with what you might need. Being unprepared to fast can set us up to give in to temptation.
- Be around other believers. It will encourage you to keep going when it feels difficult.
- If you mess up, don't be discouraged! Just get 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.
- Hold you experience loosely, but hold on to God and His promises tightly
- Watch self-righteousness like a hawk
- Consider fasting at least one a month as a minimum



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