

Guide to Fasting – Southland Church

Last updated: January 23rd, 2015

A. Should children be allowed or encouraged to fast?

1. We do not recommend or encourage children 13 and under to fast from nutritious food ever, for any length of time.
 - ◇ Fasting for periods of time from junk food on the other hand (candy, dessert, chips, etc.), is a fine thing to do because it benefits the children both physically and spiritually.
2. Temporary media fasts (TV watching, video games, social media, etc.) should be more emphasized to children and teenagers than food fasts, as these types of fasts give children something tangible to do in their pursuit of God, without affecting their health and nutrition. Furthermore, media fasts involve temporarily giving up things that take up so much time, thereby clearing aside more time for prayer and serving others – which is the whole point of fasting anyway.
3. Fasting should never be pushed on children in a legalistic way that causes them to compare themselves to others or judge their standing with God by how much they fast.
4. Children should only fast after consulting their parents and getting permission.

B. Types of Fasts (for adults):

- **Note:** Pregnant women and people with serious medical conditions should not fast. People with any kind of health issues should consult a doctor before attempting a fast. Know your body and always use common sense when fasting (ie. break the fast immediately if you feel it is hurting your health).
1. **Suggestions for Partial Fasts** (particularly for those who have never tried fasting).
 - a) **The 24-hour partial fast:**
 - ◆ May find lunch to lunch fine, so you're not eating for two meals.
 - ◆ Fruit or vegetable juices are great to drink during this fast.
 - ◆ Attempt this one day per week for the month of Prayer & Fasting.
 - b) **One-meal-per-day fast:**
 - ◆ You may wish to skip one meal a day for three days a week throughout the month of Prayer & Fasting.
 - c) **Daniel Fast:**
 - ◆ Eat only foods like vegetables, nuts, fruit, etc. for a set period of time, or for a certain number of days per week throughout the month of Prayer & Fasting.
 2. **24-hour full fast – drink only juice or water** (for most people drinking juice is preferable to just water).
 - ◇ You will feel some hunger pangs or discomfort before the time is up, but this is not real hunger; your stomach has been trained through years of conditioning to give signals of hunger at certain hours. Ignore these signals or even tell your 'spoiled child' to calm down.
 - ◇ Be sure to devote extra time to prayer and the reading of God's Word.
 3. **3 – 7 day food fast** (start with 3 before doing more).
 - ◇ Most people do best drinking juice rather than water only – the juice provides some calories for energy.
 4. **14 or 21 day food fast** (for experienced fasters only – seek the Lord before trying one of these).

C. What happens to my body?

1. **Days 1-3:** These are the most difficult days of a fast in terms of physical discomfort and hunger pains. Why? The body is beginning to rid itself of toxins built up over years of poor eating habits, and it is not a comfortable process – like withdrawal. This is the reason why some people get a white coating on their

tongue, and bad breath. Do not be disturbed by these symptoms, rather be grateful for increased health and well-being that will result.

- ◇ You may experience headaches during this time, especially if you are an avid coffee or tea drinker – those are mild withdrawal symptoms and will pass.
 - ◇ During the fast you'll probably feel colder than usual due to the body metabolism not producing the usual amount of heat.
2. **Day 4:** The hunger pains are beginning to subside though you will have feelings of weakness and occasional dizziness. The dizziness is temporary and caused by sudden changes in position. There is a general feeling of weakness. Many find this to be the most difficult period of the fast.
 3. **Day 6 or 7:** You will begin to feel stronger and more alert. Hunger pains will continue to diminish until by the 9th or 10th day they are only a minor irritation – your body will have eliminated the bulk of the toxins and you'll feel good! Your sense of concentration will be sharpened and you'll begin to feel like you could fast indefinitely. Physically this is the most enjoyable part of the fast.
 4. **Days 21 – 40:** Hunger pains will return signaling the first stage of starvation. At this point the body has used up its reserves and is beginning to draw on the living tissue. The fast should be broken at this point.

D. What to do during the fasting season?

1. **Make sure you actually set aside extra time for Bible reading and prayer!** The point of fasting is not just to *not* eat – it is to seek God with renewed focus and determination. For that reason, as you fast from food consider also a . . .
2. **Fast from media (at least partially).** Media takes up so much of our time and thought energy – so during a fast it can be extremely beneficial to completely eliminate this from our lives, or to reduce it in significant ways so that we can have more time for prayer and Bible reading, and more thought space for God to speak into.
3. **Fast with others.** There is something about fasting with a small group, or with close friends and family that builds community and lends emotional support when a fast gets difficult. It is much easier to keep your fasting commitments when others know about them, and are doing the fast with you! It is also wonderful to be able to pray for and encourage each other during a fast.
4. **Set clear goals.** Fasting just for the sake of fasting is not a very rewarding experience. There has to be a reason for your fast; some big mountains in your life that need to be moved, or some prayer requests you are desperate to see answered, or just a general desire to get closer to God and encounter Him in deeper and newer ways. So identify what those goals are before you fast: what exactly are you praying for? What are you wanting God to do in your life? What are you hoping to see changed in you? What are you hoping to see happen in your relationship with God? Write your goals (prayer requests) down, and keep them in front of you while you fast.