

Fasting and the Everyday

I. The Main Purpose of Fasting

- Fasting is not about painful asceticism.
- Fasting is not about mere abstinence.
- Fasting is not about a religious act.
- Fasting is about replacement and redirection.
 - Fasting is *intentionally* abstaining from *physical* sustenance to intentionally pursue *spiritual* sustenance.
 - Most broadly, spiritual sustenance starts with prayer and meditation on God's Word. It can also include fellowship with God's people, partaking in the Lord's Supper, praising God in song, and so on.
- Obeying and pleasing God should be the goal of everything we do in life. Colossians 1:10

II. The Secondary Purposes of Fasting

- **Fast to Strengthen Prayer.** Ezra 8:21-23; Daniel 9:3; Acts 14:23
 - Many examples of fasting in the Scriptures are tied directly to intense prayer.
 - The vast majority of the fasts that you do in your life can and should have a massive impact on the strength of your prayer life.
- **Fast to Seek God's Guidance.** Judges 20:26-28; Psalm 119:18, 139:24
 - Fasting doesn't ensure clear guidance, but it does help us tune out the world and focus on the Lord so that we might listen more attentively to His Word.
 - We also don't pray for guidance expecting God to answer us *verbally*. We pray as we study and meditate on the Bible.
 - Time can also be dedicated to supplicating the Lord that He would guide our counselors to wisely advise us in His Truth.
- **Fast to Seek Deliverance or Protection.** II Chronicles 20:2-4
 - Fasting can be a line of defense against persecution from family, schoolmates, neighbors, co-workers, or other Christians. It can also accompany asking God to protect us from storms and diseases and the like.
 - Again, no amount of fasting will bend God to your desire. But it puts us in the best place to respect Who God is and recognize that what He does is best.
- **Fast to Express Grief.** II Samuel 1:11-12; I Peter 3:18; I John 1:9
 - This can include grief over calamities.
 - But it should also include grief over sin. Biblical confession involves grief for the sin committed, and inasmuch as fasting can be an expression of that grief, it is never inappropriate.
- **Fast to Express Repentance.** Joel 2:12; Matthew 5:6
 - God provides joy and peace and contentment and gratitude even in difficult times. God is quick to forgive. And God has already given us everything we need for life and godliness in His Word.
- **Fast to Humble Ourselves before God.** I Kings 21:27-29
 - John Calvin said about fasting, "Since this is a holy exercise both for the humbling of men and for their confession of humility, why should we use it less than the ancients did in similar need?"
 - We all need to be more humble.

- **Fast to Express Concern for the Work of God.** Daniel 9:2-3
 - No one needs to think that they should fast all day every day as an expression of concern for all of God's work. On occasion, however, God does give us so great a concern for His work that fasting may be an appropriate response.
- **Fast to Minister to the Needs of Others.** Isaiah 58:6-7
 - Fasting cannot be compartmentalized from the rest of our lives. As we've observed in episodes past, the spiritual disciplines are not only for our sake, but for the sake of others too. If we give up some meals by fasting, we can use that time and money to minister to others.
- **Fast to Fight Temptation and Strengthen the Spiritual Disciplines.** Matthew 4
 - Fasting is a good exercise in self-discipline. Refraining from eating food can strengthen our ability to refrain from sin when we're tempted. If we train ourselves to accept the small "suffering" of fasting willingly, we will be better able to accept other suffering for the sake of righteousness.
 - The spiritual discipline necessary to fast — especially for longer periods of time — is like a spiritual workout. And as those muscles of Spirit-empowered self-control are flexed and worked, they can be applied to overcoming other temptations as well.
- **Fast to Celebrate God.**
 - To pursue a biblical fast must be the result of loving God more than you love food. We're denying our hunger for food to pursue our hunger for God because seeking more of Him is more important than eating.
 - This is why hunger pangs during fasting are such a blessing. When you feel a hunger pang, let it remind you that your stomach is not your god and that your fasting honors the true God.

III. The Kinds of Everyday Fasts

- **The Degree:** Normal and Partial
- **The Participants:** Private, Small Group, and Congregational
- **The Length:** everything from a meal to multiple days in a row
- **The Frequency:** Regular and Occasional

IV. The Health Implications of Fasting

- For the majority of God's people who don't require food to survive for limited amounts of time, please recognize that hunger pangs, weight loss, and the potential, short-lived fuzzy-brain are not legitimate reasons to not fast. Those aren't health concerns.
- Fasting has many beneficial health ramifications.

V. The Tools for Everyday Fasting

- Visit CelebrationOfGod.com/Fasting-Series for Podcast Episodes, Bible Reading Plans, Journals, and Guides.