

ANSWERS FROM GOD'S WORD ON THE REWARDING SPIRITUAL TOOL OF FASTING

*Information taken from Jentzen Franklin Ministries

I believe that many Christians fail to tap into one of the most powerful and rewarding spiritual reservoirs we have at our disposal—fasting. And it's often because they don't know much about this important command for Christ's followers. This resource is devoted to sharing with you the "what," "why," "how" and "when" of this important scriptural discipline so you can put it into action for your life. If you've never fasted or want to know more about it, I want to cover the basics with you.

WHAT IS FASTING?

Biblical fasting is giving up specific foods and drinks for a specified number of days. The type and length of the fast you choose is between you and God, and should not be determined by what anyone else is doing. (See specific Types of Fasts on reverse side.) Every year our entire congregation at Free Chapel, along with our ministry friends and partners around the world, participate in a 21-day fast at the beginning of the New Year. We want to give God our best and our first.

Fasting, prayer and reading God's Word go hand in hand. When you fast, also pray for God's purpose and plan for your life to be revealed. Fast and pray about every major decision in your life.

Simply put, fasting is a way to conquer the physical and open the door to the supernatural in your life. When you deny your body, you feed your spirit and grow closer to the Lord.

WHY FAST?

In Matthew 6, Jesus gave us specific direction on how to live as a child of God. That pattern addressed three specific duties of a Christian: Giving, Praying and Fasting. Jesus said, "When you give," "when you pray," "when you fast." He made it clear that fasting, like giving and praying, was a normal part of Christian life.

I believe that when all three disciplines—giving, praying and fasting—are at work in your life, you release the complete power of God. It's much like the lesson Jesus taught in Mark 4:8. When you pray, you release the thirty-fold return. Praying and giving releases sixty-fold blessing. But when you pray, give and fast, you will see a hundred-fold return!

HOW DO I FAST?

Before beginning a fast, write down a plan and make a verbal commitment to the Lord. When you approach it with determination, you'll be less likely to waiver in weak moments. You may be surprised to find that fasting is not as daunting as you may think. But if you do find it to be a battle, don't lose heart. God knows your weaknesses. His fasting principles allow you the flexibility to take care of your job and duties while still making a sacrifice to honor Him. (see Fasting Q&A section).

If the traditional full fast has always made you shy away from this important principle, you may be surprised to know that there are actually many different types of fasts. Find the fast or combination of fasts that fits your needs.

For example, if you choose to go on a 21-day fast, you may want to begin with a full fast for 1-3 days and then continue with a Daniel Fast or some other type of partial fast for the remainder of the 21 days. No matter which fast you decide on, you must always remember to consult your doctor and drink lots of water.

TYPES OF FASTS

FULL FAST. Drink only liquids – especially water. On this type of fast you may also take in clear broth and 100 percent fruit or vegetable juices in order to maintain your strength. You establish the number of days for your fast in your prayer time. Be sure to consult your doctor.

PARTIAL FAST. There are many options for partial fasts. Below are just a few for you to select from.

> Daniel Fast: The most frequently used example of a partial fast, found in Daniel, chapter 10, the Daniel Fast is a fast from meats, dairy sweets, breads and any drink, except water, for a specific time period (Daniel 10:2–3). The easiest way to think of this fast is you should eat vegetables, fruits and drink only water. Be sure to consult your doctor, especially if you have any medical condition.

> The following are examples of other types of partial fasts. But remember, the type of fast you select is what you and the Lord agree upon.

- > give up one item of food or drink such as caffeine, coffee, soft drinks or sweets or give up one meal.
- > fast for a specific number of days . . . one day, three days, so on.
- > choose to fast from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. or from sun-up to sundown. When doing this type of fast, consider your work and sleep schedule. The hours that you sleep should not be considered part of your fasting period, so the timeframe for this type of fast may vary.

The Lord speaks of Private fasts and Corporate fasts in Scripture.

CORPORATE FAST. A Corporate fast is a joint fast of believers for a specific purpose that can yield powerful results. Although this fast involves others, it is also very much a “private and personal experience.” Esther called all of her people to fast for protection against danger (Esther 4:16). Samuel declared a fast for national revival (1 Samuel 7).

WHEN SHOULD YOU FAST?

If you want to make fasting a way of life, work out a plan for the entire year to include days or meals to fast that works into your lifestyle. You may decide to fast one day a month or one meal a week. You may even decide to do a partial fast for one week every other month. Options are endless.

There are also other unexpected times that you may feel a need to fast during family struggles, financial problems, etc. Specific times when you need to capture the attention and mercy of God in your life.

FASTING Q & A

Here are some of the most-asked questions about fasting from our friends and partners:

CAN I HAVE SALT, PEPPER, SEASONINGS , MILK, WHOLE GRAINS , SOY PRODUCTS , EGGS , PROTEIN DRINKS, VITAMINS OR BUTTER? The general guidelines for each fast can be found in the “Types of Fasts” section. However, fasting is a private discipline. It is not something that is meant to be unattainable. Decide what is feasible for you and do your best.

CAN CHILDREN FAST?

The best way to show your children the power of fasting is to lead by example. If they want to participate in fasting or if you want to have a family fast, consider giving up desserts or soft drinks. In addition to giving up an item of food, you could also give up television as a family and spend that time reading and discussing Bible stories.

WHAT IF I HAVE A MEDICAL CONDITION?

Consult your doctor before starting any fast. Decide together what is possible. If your health condition prohibits you from fasting food, try fasting something else and concentrate on prayer and Bible study.

WHAT IF I START AND CAN'T FINISH OUT THE FAST . . . HAVE I FASTED FOR NOTHING?

Seeking God through prayer and fasting is never a waste of time. When you make the effort, God takes notice. Just determine within your heart that you will make an even better effort next time. Or try finishing up with a partial fast.

I FORGOT AND ATE SOMETHING THAT WASN'T ON MY FAST . . . DO I NEED TO START AGAIN?

No, think of fasting as a marathon, rather than a sprint. Don't give up! If you fall down, get up and keep trying. Conquering “king stomach” is difficult, but you'll make it.

DO I CONTINUE TO EXERCISE WHILE FASTING?

Moderate exercise is good. But it is best to always consult a doctor about fasting and exercise. If you are on a complete fast, you may not have the energy for a high level of exercise.

WHAT IF I HAVE A MANUAL LABOR JOB?

If you have a job that requires you to expend a lot of physical energy, you may want to consider a partial fast that allows you to receive enough nutrition to perform your job.