

Every great spiritual leader has advocated

Fasting

What is it all about?

A simple guide to fasting.

What is fasting?

Fasting is abstaining from something - traditionally from food.

Fasting is a spiritual discipline, a means of grace. (A "means of grace" is one way to experience the love of God.)

What are some benefits of fasting?

Fasting exposes areas in our lives that are in need of healing and grace. (We often use food to cover these hurts, rather than seeking healing.)

Fasting helps us acknowledge that our relationship with God is the most essential need we have for a healthy life. (We often place a much greater priority on eating than on worship.)

Fasting is one way to monitor our lives to be sure that there is nothing between our soul and our savior. (We often allow our physical needs to create spiritual barriers.)

Fasting allows us time to do other things. (We often "don't have time" to spend an hour in prayer, or to read the Bible.)

Fasting prepares us to be faithful servants of God in the midst of difficult situations. (We all understand that a runner must condition the body to race well, but we often ignore that we must condition our spiritual side in order to "run with *perseverance* the race that is before" us.)

Fasting provides an opportunity to learn to lean more fully on God, and God's love for us. (We often follow the misguided, but common, understanding that we can/should "do it myself", rather than accepting help.)

How long is a fast?

There are different types of fasting, and the length of fasting varies from a few hours to several days. Prayerfully consider what God would like you to do.

Fast for a few hours on one day - especially on Good Friday from noon to 3 p.m. Use this time to reflect on Jesus' sacrifice for us.

Fast during daylight hours - 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Fast for one day - a full 24 hours.

(Fasts which are longer than one day need to be carefully and prayerfully considered. The Bible reports that Jesus fasted for forty days before beginning his ministry. Not many of us are asked to fast for that duration.)

Do I eat nothing at all while I'm fasting?

This aspect of fasting varies, also. Usually people eat no food, but drink fluids. You are encouraged to drink water during your fast. If you choose to drink other fluids, make the decision BEFORE you begin, which types of fluids and how much.

What should I do while I'm fasting?

Structure your time so that during meal time(s) you are doing something to draw you closer to God:

Pray & Meditate

Spend "one-on-one time" with God

Sing praises

Walk in a park

Read the Bible

Memorize a psalm

DO NOT simply work through your meal time(s), feeding your tendency to overwork, and neglecting the opportunity to grow your relationship with God!

Are there people who should not fast?

Most healthy people can fast for a period of time without adverse effects. If a person has severe health problems, or is on a strictly regulated diet for health reasons, then a physician should be consulted prior to beginning a fast.

How to break your fast:

Before beginning your fast you determined the length of it, and what type of fluids you would consume. Now that the fasting time has ended:

Spend time in reflection on what you learned about yourself and what you learned about God through this experience.

Give thanks for this opportunity to move closer to God.

Give thanks, too, that you are able to break the fast, remembering those in the world who continue to live in hunger.

Ask God to help you continue to grow through this experience, that you may become ever more faithful in living a life of joyful service and love.

Eat something simple to begin with, letting your stomach adjust to food again, before consuming a full meal.