

What fasting is and why we do it:

“The greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison but apple pie. It is not the banquet of the wicked that dulls our appetite for heaven, but endless nibbling at the table of the world. It is not the X-rated video, but the prime-time dribble of triviality we drink in every night. For all the ill that Satan can do, when God describes what keeps us from the banquet table of his love, it is a piece of land, a yoke of oxen, and a wife (Luke 14:18–20). The greatest adversary of love to God is not his enemies but his gifts. And the most deadly appetites are not for the poison of evil, but for the simple pleasures of earth. For when these replace an appetite for God himself, the idolatry is scarcely recognizable, and almost incurable.” – From Dr. John Piper

Fasting centers on God and aims to glorify God. Fasting is a way for us to tangibly express our desires for God. It is also a way for us to express our holy discontentment with what this fallen world has to offer and with our hearts that become easily satisfied with the status quo.

Some of the spiritual purpose for fasting from the bible (adapted from Donald S. Whitney):

- *Strengthening prayer (Ezra 8:23; Joel 2:13; Acts 13:3)*
- *Seeking God’s guidance (Judg. 20:26; Acts 14:23)*
- *Expressing grief (2 Sam. 31:13; 2 Sam 1:11-12)*
- *Seeking deliverance or protection (2 Chron. 20:3-4; Ezra 8:21-23)*
- *Expressing repentance and returning to God (1 Sam. 7:6; Jonah 3:5-8)*
- *Humbling oneself before God (1 Kings 21:27-29; Ps. 35:13)*
- *Expressing concern for the work of God (Neh. 1:3-4; Dan. 9:3)*
- *Ministering to the needs of others (Isa. 58:3-7)*
- *Overcoming temptation and dedicating yourself to God (Matt. 4:1-11)*
- *Expressing love and worship to God (Luke 2:37)*

Typically, fasting is expressed through voluntarily abstaining from food for a limited time for a specific spiritual purpose. But we can also fast from other good things besides food.

Fasting not only helps us center our lives on God, but also reveals the things that control us. Pride, anger, bitterness, jealousy, fear – if they are in us, they will surface during fasting. We can rejoice as our weaknesses are revealed, because we know that Christ can uproot these idols from our lives.

In New Testament times, fasting was seen as a way of drawing upon more of God’s power. In Matthew 4:1, Jesus was “led by the Spirit into the desert”, where he fasted for forty days. During this time, the Holy Spirit prepared and equipped Jesus for his public ministry that would soon follow. As we desire to prepare ourselves for the mission and vision God has given our churches, we want to commit the next two weeks in fasting to God. During this time, we want to de-emphasize our daily “needs” by denying our fleshly hunger and desires. We want to set aside our earthly pleasures to glorify the Lord - with our hearts and minds fixed on His grace and love.

When you fast:

- Devote the time you would normally be eating to meditation and prayer. It defeats the purpose of the fast if you do not pray
- Have a clear target as you pray. Try creating a list of prayer topics that you will wrestle with in prayer to God
- Prepare for opposition as you set your heart and your mind on pursuing God. Remember that Satan tempted Jesus during his fast, and we must expect the same
- As you fast, make sure that you are getting enough fluids into your body. Make sure you are drinking water throughout the day
- If you fall or give into your hunger, don't give in to condemnation. Remember that God always extends grace when we return to him with humility and repentance
- Remember that breakthroughs will come – but sometimes, they come after the fast. Don't listen to lies that nothing is happening during your fast