

# Fasting – The Basics

## **TYPES OF FASTS**

(from Derek Prince)

### **DRY / TOTAL FAST:**

There are times when God does lead us to abstain from fluids, but this can be a dangerous area physically. The only examples I can find in the Bible of people fasting extensively without food or water are Moses and Elijah, who each fasted forty days. However, they were on a supernatural plane - in the immediate presence of God or under supernatural power. I don't believe that is a normal pattern for us. I believe the pattern for the length of time without fluids is found in Esther 4:16.

*Esther 4:16 - "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"*

Three days, night and day is 72 hours, and personally I would not advise anybody to go beyond 72 hours without eating or drinking, I think you will find that you'll be on your knees at the end, if not spiritually, at least physically. However, I must say that I have been twice 72 hours without food or drink, and God blessed me in it. I would not recommend anybody to go beyond this length of time. To do so, I believe, is very dangerous physically. I think any doctor would confirm that.

### **FAST:**

Water only - when the Bible says the word 'FAST', this is what it means, unless it specifies differently, like with Daniel and Esther.

### **PARTIAL FAST:**

There is a biblical precedent for what I would call a partial fast. In other words, you eat something, but you don't eat much.

*Dan 10:2 – 3 - "In those days, I Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh (meat) nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled."*

That was not a complete fast, but it was what is called a partial fast. He didn't eat meat, he didn't eat dessert - he just ate simple, basic food. Daniel's fast was a kind of mourning. Fasting and mourning are very closely related in the Bible. There is a spiritual mourning which God has promised to bless:

*Matthew 5:4 - "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."*

There may be a time when you are led to a kind of partial fast, like Daniel.

If a group agrees to fast together, I think that if possible they should also meet together at least part of the time to pray and seek God as a group. There are things accomplished by praying together that often will not happen just by praying on our own.

## **HOW LONG SHOULD I FAST**

(from Derek Prince)

"Now we come to the question of choosing a length of time to fast. My advice is: Don't begin with a very long fast. Don't begin with a week, two weeks or forty days. Some people do, and they achieve it, but I find it's better to start climbing the ladder from the bottom, rung by rung.

The problem is, if you start with too long a period, and don't achieve it, then you feel defeated. You may give up and never try again. I would suggest that normally it is better to begin at the bottom of the ladder and climb toward the top.

If you are not familiar with fasting, and you don't really feel equal to a big test, begin by omitting the last meal of the day. If you normally would eat your last meal about 6:00 or 6:30pm, and don't have any snacks afterwards until breakfast the next morning, you've actually fasted from lunch time to breakfast time, which is about 18 hours. That's quite a substantial period to be without food by only missing one meal. That way you achieve a real fast without too drastic a change in your life pattern or too great an objective. If you succeed in that, the next time you may want to skip the last two meals - the noon meal and the evening meal. If you don't eat until breakfast, then you have actually been 24 hours without food.

Then when you begin to feel like a real soldier, you can omit all three meals one day, and you will have fasted from supper the previous night until breakfast the next day - about 36 hours. Once you have achieved that and know you can do it, then I think it's time to seek the Lord as to whether He wants you to go on a longer fast.

Again, I would advise you not to take too big a step the first time. Take two or three days, or a week. If you spend a week fasting, this will probably have a substantial effect on the course of your life."

## **PRACTICAL HELP FOR FASTING**

(from Jentzen Franklin)

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## PREPARING SPIRITUALLY

Often when we fast, physical and spiritual problems can arise. They were already there, fasting simply alerts us to them, prepare your heart for this, be ready to forgive others. We should have a practical plan, and we approach with faith, but often the Lord will bring things up in our hearts we were not expecting, so remain flexible. Reading the word and prayer are very important and powerful during times of fasting, we always encourage planning for that time in the day. Be expectant for things in your life to shift.

## PREPARING PHYSICALLY

If you have health concerns, consult your doctor prior to beginning a fast and explain what you plan to do. This is especially important if you take prescription medications or have a chronic ailment. Some people should never fast without professional supervision.

## HOW TO BEGIN

Start with a clear goal. Why are you fasting? Do you need direction, healing, restoration of marriage or family issues? Are you fasting for the salvation of loved ones? Are you facing financial difficulties? Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Pray daily and read the Bible.

## DECIDING WHAT TO FAST

What you fast is between you and God. It is a decision made in your prayer time with God. You may choose a full fast or a partial fast. Sometimes it helps to work towards a full water fast if you are choosing to do a longer fast. You can start with a partial fast (no meat, sweets or wine. It's mostly eating vegetables, fruit and drinking water), then moving to a liquid fast with juices, then to water. Whatever you decide, please be wise and get some advice from those who have fasted before if you need to.

There are a few other things to focus on during this time that will help you maintain a “clean vessel.” For example, refrain from critical speaking and spreading negative words about or to anyone else. Also, consider limiting how much time you watch TV, and how much time you spend on things that are distracting. Remember to replace that time with prayer and Bible study. That time with Jesus will produce dramatic change in your life.

## DECIDING HOW LONG

Most people can easily fast from one to three days, but you may feel the grace to go longer, even as much as 21 to 40 days. Use wisdom and pray for guidance. Beginners are advised to start slow.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

When you fast, your body detoxifies, eliminating toxins from your system. This can cause discomfort such as headaches and irritability during withdrawal from caffeine and sugars. Naturally, you will have hunger pangs. Limit your activity, and exercise moderately. Take time to rest. Fasting brings miraculous results.

You are following Jesus' example when you fast. Spend time listening to praise and worship music. Pray as often as you can throughout the day. Get away from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mind set on seeking God's face.

## HOW TO END

This varies a great deal on the length of your fast. Don't overeat when the time comes to end your fast. Begin by eating smaller portions of food or snacks such as fruits and vegetables, avoid processed foods and sugar. If you have fasted for a great length of time on only water, please seek advice on how to break your fast, it is important to do this correctly. Ending a long water fast correctly can be very difficult, and it's crucial to your health.

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