

6 Basic Steps to Successful Prayer & Fasting

How to Begin Your Fast

How you begin and conduct your fast will largely determine your success. By following these six basic steps to fasting, you will make your time with the Lord more meaningful and spiritually rewarding.

STEP 1: Set Your Objective

Why are you fasting? Is it for spiritual renewal, for guidance, for healing, for the resolution of problems, for special grace to handle a difficult situation? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically.

Through fasting and prayer we humble ourselves before God so the Holy Spirit will stir our souls, awaken our churches, and heal our land according to 2 Chronicles 7:14. Make this a priority in your fasting.

STEP 2: Make Your Commitment

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus implied that all of His followers should fast (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14,15). For Him it was a matter of when believers would fast, not if they would do it. Before you fast, decide the following up front:

1. How long you will fast - one meal, one day, a week, several weeks, forty days (Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts.)
2. The type of fast God wants you to undertake (such as water only, Daniel fast, or water and juices; what kinds of juices you will drink and how often)
3. What physical or social activities you will restrict
4. How much time each day you will devote to prayer and God's Word

Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

STEP 3: Prepare Yourself Spiritually

The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin will hinder your prayers. Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:

1. Ask God to help you make a comprehensive list of your sins (Psalm 139).
2. Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit reveals to your heart and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
3. Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3, 4).
4. Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you.
5. Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit according to His command in Ephesians 5:18 and His promise in 1 John 5:14, 15.
6. Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Master; refuse to obey your fleshly nature (Romans 12:1, 2).
7. Meditate on the attributes of God, His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others (Psalm 48:9, 10; 103:1-8, 11-13).
8. Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart (Hebrews 11:6).
9. Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16, 17).

STEP 4: Prepare Yourself Physically

Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision.

Physical preparation makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so that you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer.

1. Do not rush into your fast.
2. Prepare your body. Eat smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high-fat and sugary foods.
3. Eat raw fruit and vegetables for two days before starting a fast (for those who are fasting for prolonged periods of time).

While You Fast

Your time of fasting and prayer has come. Although we immediately think of abstaining from food when we think of fasting, Richard Foster says, "fasting is a voluntarily denial of an otherwise normal function, for the sake of intense spiritual activity". As you begin to chase after God, here are some practical suggestions to consider:

1. Medications and herbal drugs should be withdrawn or adjusted only with your physician's supervision.
2. Limit your activity.
3. Depending on the type of fast, you may need to adjust your exercise routine.
4. Rest as much as your schedule will permit.
5. Prepare yourself for temporary mental discomforts, such as impatience, crankiness, and anxiety.
6. Expect some physical discomforts, especially on the second day. You may have fleeting hunger pains, dizziness, or the "blahs." Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches. Physical annoyances may also include weakness, tiredness, or sleeplessness.

The first two or three days are usually the hardest. As you continue to fast, you will likely experience a sense of well-being both physically and spiritually. However, should you feel hunger pains, increase your liquid intake.

STEP 5: Put Yourself on a Schedule

For maximum spiritual benefit set aside ample time to be alone with the Lord. Listen for His leading. The more time you spend with Him, the more meaningful your fast will be.

Morning

- Begin your day in praise and worship.
- Read and meditate on God's Word. Plan out and reflect on what you will be reading.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to work in you and through you according to his will. Philippians 2:13.
- Invite God to use you. Ask Him to show you how to influence your world, your family, your church, your community, your country, and beyond.
- Pray for His vision for your life and empowerment to do His will.

Noon (breaktime/ lunchtime) – if you only have five minutes, this will work. Quality is key.

- Return to prayer and God's Word.
- Take a short prayer walk.
- Spend time in intercessory prayer for your community's and nation's leaders, for the world's unreached millions, for your family or special needs.

Evening

- Get alone for an unhurried time of "seeking His face."
- If others are fasting with you, meet together for prayer.
- Avoid television or any other distraction that may dampen your spiritual focus.

When possible, begin and end each day with God, with your spouse, family or friends for a brief time of praise and thanksgiving to God.

A Final Word

STEP 6: Expect Results

If you sincerely humble yourself before the Lord, repent, pray, and seek God's face; if you consistently meditate on His Word, you will experience a heightened awareness of His presence (John 14:21). The Lord will give you fresh, new spiritual insights. Your confidence and faith in God will be strengthened. You will feel mentally, spiritually, and physically refreshed. You will see answers to your prayers.

A single fast, however, is not a spiritual cure-all. Just as we need fresh infillings of the Holy Spirit daily, we also need new times of fasting before God. A 24-hour fast each week has been greatly rewarding to many Christians.

It takes time to build your spiritual fasting muscles. If you fail to make it through your first fast, do not be discouraged. You may have tried to fast too long the first time out, or you may need to strengthen your understanding and resolve. As soon as possible, undertake another fast until you do succeed. God will honor you for your faithfulness.

I encourage you to join me in fasting and prayer again and again until we truly experience revival in our homes, our church, our nation, and throughout the world. **WE NEED GOD!**