



Christian Leaders  
Church



"I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer shall be turned into my bossom" (Psalm 35:13)



prayer & fasting



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## What is Fasting?

The term 'Fasting' generally refers to a period of abstinence from food for the purpose of engaging in uninterrupted study, prayer and meditation with a clear objective and goal in focus; while drawing near to God.

### Why is Fasting Necessary?

The scriptures are replete with numerous accounts of remarkable results and dramatic testimonies produced through Fasting. As Christians, Fasting is one of the godly exercises we should engage in regularly, with the promise of present and eternal benefits. The advantages are numerous, and here are a few: Through Fasting, we can improve our effectiveness in the things of the Spirit. In simple terms, Fasting helps you to tame the flesh and lift your spirit. As Christians, we are required to walk in the Spirit, always. This means to be spirit-controlled and not flesh controlled. This is important because [Rom 8:6](#) says *"...to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace"*, and also in [John 6:63](#) our Lord Jesus said *"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing..."*

So, how does Fasting help you to tame the flesh and lift your spirit? One of the cravings of the body is food. It is a craving that is connected to the senses. When we fast, we deliberately abstain from food even though our body craves it. We resist the urge to eat thereby improving our mastery over the cravings of the body, and instead focus on activities that build the spirit. Of course, we could engage in activities that build our spirit without abstaining from food, but the abstinence from food adds a level of 'seriousness' and 'discipline' to the exercise.

Fasting helps to sharpen our ability to receive or hear from God. It is like raising a spiritual antenna to pick the finer signals of the Spirit's communication. But how does this happen?

When we Fast, abstinence from food is a key characteristic, but that is not all. The Fasting exercise promotes focus and undivided attention to study and prayer. There should be a deliberate cessation of all unnecessary activity and a conscious increase

in activities of that which engage the Spirit. This helps to declutter the mind and remove the 'noise' or interference that often prevents the hearing of God's voice.

During a period of Fasting, many have received clear direction and heard the voice of God in a more distinct way than before.

Fasting can be a vehicle to effect dramatic and urgent change in things that pertain to us or even in the circumstances of others around us. In [James 5:17](#) (AmpC) the scriptures assure us that *"...the earnest (heartfelt) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available (dynamic in its working)..."*; which means power to effect changes, shift things, re-arrange things in the present or in the future can be produced by us – when we pray a certain way. So, how do we ensure our prayers are earnest and heartfelt? When you declare a Fast, you are raising the stakes. It is a declaration of seriousness and urgency in addressing the matter at hand. It helps you to be earnest in your prayers and certainly it will be heartfelt. Your heart is in it to the point that you are giving up eating to focus on the matter at hand; and when you pray like this, the results are guaranteed!

Fasting is not a way to get God's attention or get God to do something for you, but rather for you to hear from God in a clear and unhindered way. God is always talking to us; and fasting allows us to declutter the mind and focus on God's voice. Fasting is a way to receive instructions rather than making request; and when we receive instructions on the matters at hand, we are able to pray the right prayers.



## Effective Fasting!

### FASTING THE RIGHT WAY - MAKING IT EFFECTIVE

It is important to note that Fasting is not an effort to change God's mind. When we fast, we are the ones that change and we are the beneficiaries of the Fast. Our Fasting does not change God for the scriptures say in [Mal 3:6](#) “...I am the Lord, I change not...” So, with this in focus, here are steps that can make our Fasting more effective.

Have a clear objective in focus – what are your expectations from this Fast? The period of Fasting must include regular intervals of prayer, study and meditation on the Word. Having a clear focus and expectation will help guide your prayer, study and meditation time. Minimize unnecessary activity or distractions during the Fasting periods. Though solitude may not always be achievable, strive to be ‘alone’ with the Spirit as much as possible; and while there is no single prescription for the length of a Fast, it should be sufficiently long to be effective or such as corporate fasting. It ought to be long enough to span several normal eating periods; and you should be hungry at some point during the Fast. However, this is not a reason to break the fast, but rather to endure and continue! Remember, part of the training of the Fast is to curb the craving of the flesh and maintain focus on God.

### WHO SHOULD FAST, AND WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO FAST?

It is quite common for people to Fast when they are in dire need or in trouble, but you don't need to be in trouble or in a messy situation to be compelled to Fast. We can Fast to improve our spiritual acumen, stay ahead of situations, make general improvements in our life and to prepare for a greater future. While anyone can Fast at anytime, there are special times when the Spirit of God leads us to Fast. These are special Fasting sessions not to be missed, because they bear an accuracy and grace that is unusual. The advantages of Fasting are numerous, and every Christian should benefit from it. What Fasting can do for you may not be obtainable in any other way. Like many things in our Christian walk, the benefits come to you by doing. You may learn, read or even talk about Fasting – but that won't bring the benefits. The benefits are realized and received when you do it.

## The Benefits of Prayer & Fasting

*“And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” ([Acts 14:23](#)).*

Part of the ‘more than just staying away’ from food; it has to go hand-in-hand with prayer, as well as studying; a discipline you should consciously develop to have times of prayer and fasting. Our Lord Jesus prayed and fasted while He was on earth, and so should we!

Contrary to what some people think, prayer and fasting is not a way to get God to do something; it is actually a spiritual exercise that benefits you in many ways. When you fast, you train your spirit to be sensitive. “What if I get hungry?” you might want to ask. That is the idea! You should be hungry and refuse to eat! It helps you discipline your human body and allows your spirit to take control as you pray and study the Word of God. At such times, it is easy for you to pick the signals coming from the Lord to you.

So, how do you fast? First of all, pick a day when you won’t be so busy with visitors and activities. Some people occupy themselves with various activities when they’re fasting, just so they don’t feel the hunger until it’s time to break the fast. That is wrong! Get on the floor before God; take your Bible and some Christian study materials such as books, audio or video messages to listen to. Switch off the television and your telephone. Spend some time to speak in other tongues and pray. If you want specific results that only the anointing can produce, you must set yourself apart like this from time to time. When you participate in corporate fasting, try your best to spend as much time away from things that can distract you - that way your fasting will be beneficial.

## Fasting Guidelines

Fasting is very biblical with many examples of different types of fasts. It is important to understand that we don't fast as a means of manipulating God to do our will. It is not a hunger strike to force God to do what we desire. Through prayer and fasting, we position ourselves to come into line with God's will and His plans. It is a means to show ourselves humble and submissive to the Lord; surrendering our own desires to Him to find and submit to His will for us.

Fasting is also not a way to earn 'points' with God. The only thing that gives us merit before God is the sacrifice of Jesus. Fasting is not a diet! Our motivation is not one of losing weight, or getting what we want; but rather to be spiritual attuned with God, so our spirit-man may be more sensitive to hear and receive from the Lord. With many examples of fasting given in the Bible; we see that fasting is led by the Spirit; and is not self-will. However, you might have the desire through the Spirit to do a fast; and He will also lead you in the fast you should do. So, when the desire arise, it is good to seek the guidance of the Spirit to which type of fast you should do and for how long. There is no formula for deciding the right fast for you, as the Spirit will lead you on this. If you had never fasted before, don't be over ambitious. Ask the Lord what type of fasting you will do:

*For example, there is;*

1) *Full Fast: Drinking only water;*

2) *Partial Fast:*

*a. Abstaining from all 'pleasant foods'*

*b. Abstaining from certain meals during every day of the fast;*

3) *Liquid Fast: Drinking fruit juices [none sugar juices], no food;*

4) *Dry Fast: Abstaining from drinking any liquids [this is for higher levels of Fasting].*

Some folks say that they fast from abstaining from watching television, or certain activities they like to do – these are not biblical practices.



## Thanksgiving During Payer & Fasting

*'And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small" ([Jeremiah 30:19](#)).*

If you look into your life, especially during your time of praying and fasting, you would find that the Lord has been so gracious and kind; His love, mercy and grace have seen us through very remarkable seasons in the past and has set us up for a greater future as individuals and as the church. Therefore, in celebrating all that He's done for us, there are four important things to do in your gratitude and appreciation – not just in past blessing, but also all that's been predestined by the Lord for us.

The first is the prayer of thanksgiving – from your heart to the Lord today, appreciating Him for a successful fasting sessions. ([2 Corinthians 9:11-12](#) / [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#)).

Secondly, offer Him the worship and praise of thanksgiving. ([Psalm 95:2-3](#) / [Colossians 3:17](#)).

The third is your testimony of thanksgiving, where you tell of what He's done in your life; and during your fasting time especially. Be thankful for the foundation of your spirit; the foundation of faith that God gave you! You're thankful for the hope in your spirit ([Isaiah 12:4](#) / [Revelation 12:11](#)).

The fourth is to give an offering in thanksgiving. Give the Lord a special thanksgiving offering today, and project yourself into the greater future He's planned for you. ([Psalm 50:14](#) / [Deuteronomy 15:10](#)). You can do this through the CL-Church Give-it-Forward Portal: <https://www.christianleadersinstitute.org/?form=FUNMJWYXFKL> - no matter how small or big your offering is, as long as you give from your heart in expressing your gratitude to the Lord.

Make your mark as you give special thanks to the Lord, and let the whole day be full of joy as you doing this. Carry the atmosphere of thanksgiving with you wherever you go.



At designated times of the day, have praise and thanksgiving sessions on your own, or with your family. Make it an entire day of praise and thanksgiving, because you're grateful for all that Christ is to you, and for what has been accomplished on your behalf and in the church.



### **Key Points to Remember if You have Never Fasted Before**

#### **Getting used of Fasting:**

The human body can stay without food for a period of 40 days and 40 nights; and can also stay without water for a period of 3 days and 3 nights.

It is not recommended to attempt a 40 day fast without eating, or a 3 day fast without drinking liquid. Start gradually and increase the number of days you fast.

For example:

- Start with 1 day (24hrs) of not eating.
- The following week, do a 3 day fast from 6am to 6pm.
- The following week, do a 7 days fast from 6am to 6pm.
- The following week, do a 3 days fast sustaining from food for 72 hours.
- The following week, do a 15 days fast from 6am to 6pm.
- The following week, do a 5 days fast sustaining from food for 120 hours.

Continue this pattern until you reach a 40 days fast; but don't rush the process. Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights; only taking water, no food for 40 full days – and medical science has proven that the human body can go without food for 40 full days; however, you must be dedicated to frequent prayer times; and studying the Word of God more that you have ever done before – monitoring your health along the way.

## Special Insert Hungry for God

(from Dr. David Feddes)

*Excerpt from the [CLI Prayer Class](#)*

*"O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you" ([Psalm 63:1](#))*

What New Year's resolution is more common than any other? Quite a few people resolve to stop smoking, and some resolve to be kinder or to improve their character, but the number one New Year's resolution is to go on a diet. Dieting is number one in resolutions made--and in resolutions broken!

Millions of people resolved to diet, but only a few resolve to fast. Dieting and fasting both involve saying no to food, but the goals are different. A diet restricts food for physical reasons; a fast restricts food for spiritual reasons. Why do so many people resolve to diet and so few resolve to fast? It seems we care more about the physical than about the spiritual.

Millions of us diet because we are concerned about our health or our appearance or both. We want to live longer and healthier. We want to look better. And that's fine. In a society where two thirds of the people are overweight and one third are classified as obese, it's not a bad idea to change our eating habits and get our weight under control. If you want to lose weight in order to be physically fit, that's a good goal.

But it's not the best goal. The best goal is godliness: to know God better and better, to find forgiveness and freedom from sin, to thrive in your spirit through God's life in you, to become more like God in your character, and to advance God's agenda more effectively.

Fasting is an important way to grow in all these aspects of godliness. Physical fitness "is of some value," says the Bible, "but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" ([1 Timothy 4:8](#)). Because godliness is the highest goal we can have, and because fasting is a powerful aid to godliness, a resolution to engage in fasting is much more valuable than a resolution to start dieting.

## **What is fasting?**

It's going without food for a period of time, or going without some other good thing for a period of time, in order to seek God. How can fasting help godliness?

How can skipping meals now and then help you taste more of God? We might not be able to figure out exactly how it works, but the Bible leaves no doubt about the value of fasting.

## **Key People, Key Moments**

The list of God's people who fasted is a Who's Who of greatness and godliness. Moses fasted. The prophet Elijah fasted. Daniel fasted. Queen Esther fasted. Anna the prophetess fasted. Jesus fasted. The apostles and members of the early church fasted.

Christians of later centuries fasted. Francis of Assisi fasted. John Calvin, Martin Luther, John Wesley, and Jonathan Edwards fasted and encouraged personal and communal fasting. The list of men and women of God who fasted goes on and on. Even if it's not clear to us exactly how fasting can aid godliness, this much is clear: fasting figured in the lives of many giants of godliness.

Fasting has been important to key people, and fasting has been prominent at key moments. Moses was fasting when he met God on Mount Sinai and received the Ten Commandments. The prophet Elijah was fasting when God spoke to him in a still, small voice after Elijah had almost given up on life. King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah were fasting when the Lord caused the massive military forces that were invading their land to turn on each other and self-destruct. The city of Nineveh was fasting after the prophet Jonah said the city would be destroyed for its evil, and God decided to spare the city. Queen Esther and her people were fasting when she took action to stop a plot against the Jewish people. Anna was fasting when God gave her the opportunity to see the baby Jesus. Jesus was fasting when the Holy Spirit sent him into the wilderness for a showdown with Satan, and Jesus decisively defeated the tempter. Jesus' followers were fasting when the Holy Spirit directed them to send Paul and Barnabas as missionaries.

To look at it another way, here are a few "what ifs." What if the Ten Commandments had never been received by Moses? We would not know God's charter for human conduct. What if Jesus had not resisted Satan and overcome the tempter? All of humanity would have been lost. What if Paul and the other apostles had not taken the gospel of Christ to the wider world? Most nations would not know Jesus and the way

of salvation in him. But these "what ifs" didn't happen. Instead, God's will was accomplished, and it happened in connection with fasting.

If fasting was practiced by such key people at such key moments, can we afford to neglect fasting? If the Son of God himself chose to fast when he confronted the tempter, can we afford to ignore fasting? If the apostles of Jesus fasted when they wanted to get closer to God in worship and when they needed to find out the next step in God's mission strategy, can we afford to ignore fasting?

Fasting helps people get closer to God and to do great things for God. Receiving the Commandments, hearing God's quiet voice, surviving enemy attacks, being pardoned for terrible sins, defeating Satan, getting the Holy Spirit's guidance for advancing God's mission and changing the world--this is what God has done among people who fasted, and what God will still do through people who seek his face by fasting.

Please don't misunderstand. Fasting is not magic. The real power is not in fasting itself but in God. In fact, not all fasting is right or helpful. There are wrong ways of fasting, just as there are wrong ways of praying and wrong ways of giving to good causes and wrong ways of doing almost anything. But this doesn't change the fact that fasting, done properly and in the right spirit, is a powerful aid to godliness.

Fasting is so important and so neglected that we're going to spend six articles on what the Bible says about fasting. In this article, we're going to see that the main point of fasting, on which all else depends, is to be hungry for God. In later articles, we'll see how people who are hungry for God may also fast when they are hungry for mercy after they have sinned, when they are hungry for holiness as they long to be more like Jesus, when they are hungry for help in the face of overwhelming challenges, when they are hungry for guidance to find out the next step in God's plan for them, and when they are hungry for justice and want people to treat each other fairly. All these are purposes and benefits of fasting, but the first and most basic is to be hungry for God.

### **Our Emptiness, God's Fullness**

Fasting is where our emptiness meets God's fullness. Every one of us is made in such a way that nothing can fully satisfy our hearts except God himself. If you've tasted even a little of God and his love, you prize the Lord more than anything else, and you hunger for even more of him. [Psalm 63](#) puts this longing for God into words: "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you..."

Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you... My soul will be satisfied as with the riches of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you" ([Psalm 63:1-5](#)). Fasting expresses a longing for God so strong that even the body pines for him. When God feeds this longing with his nearness and goodness, it's better than the finest feast.

Fasting is not just a self-improvement project or a way to impress others. Real fasting is turning attention away from self and from others and paying attention to God. The moment fasting loses its Godward focus, fasting loses its value. Jesus affirmed fasting, but he warned against doing it for show. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Notice that Jesus doesn't say "If you fast..." He says, "When you fast." Jesus assumes his followers will fast. He warns against doing it in the wrong way and for the wrong motives, but he does not do away with fasting altogether. He takes it for granted that his followers will fast, and he directs us to focus our fasting on God.

In Jesus' time, some people had turned fasting into a religious showcase, a way of impressing others. The Pharisees usually fasted two days a week, on Mondays and Thursdays. Those days served the Pharisees' purpose well. Mondays and Thursdays were market days, and that meant bigger crowds to notice them and to admire the holiness and uprightness of their fasting. The Pharisees timed their fasting to be noticed by as many people as possible, and they made sure everybody would know they were fasting by looking as hungry and miserable as possible.

Religion can be a terrible thing. Even the best of things can be corrupted. Fasting can be corrupted. Prayer can be corrupted. Giving money for good causes can be corrupted. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warns not only against fasting to impress others but also against praying for show and against making donations in order to get recognition. Giving, praying, and fasting are all excellent but the more excellent something is, the worse it becomes when sin and Satan turn it away from God toward self-centeredness. C. S. Lewis pictures the senior demon Screwtape telling fellow tempters, "All said and done, my friends, it will be an ill day for us if what most humans mean by 'religion' ever vanishes from the Earth. It can still send us the truly

delicious sins. The fine flower of unholiness can grow only in the close neighbourhood of the Holy. Nowhere do we tempt so successfully as on the very steps of the altar.”

The Pharisees made at least three huge mistakes in their approach to fasting. Their first mistake was that they cared more about impressing the people around them than about their relationship with God. They succeeded in getting people to admire their piety, but in the process, they offended God.

Their second mistake was that when they did think of God in connection with fasting, they saw fasting as a way to score points with God ([Luke 18:12](#)). They thought they could earn God's acceptance by their own efforts, rather than admitting their sinfulness and trusting in God's mercy as an undeserved gift.

Their third mistake was that they treated fasting as an exercise in misery. Not only did they look as hungry and sad as possible in order to impress others with their fasting, not only did they think that their hunger pangs would put God in their debt, but they treated the whole enterprise of relating to God as a sorrow to endure rather than a delight to savor.

When Jesus warned against looking miserable when we fast, when he told us to look wellgroomed, healthy, and happy instead, he wanted to prevent fasting as a way of showing off, but he also wanted to prevent us from viewing fasting as misery in the first place. The main point of fasting is not for the body to hunger but for the soul to feast.

### **Fasting Is Feasting**

Richard Foster says in his book *Celebration of Discipline*, "We are told not to act miserable when fasting because, in point of fact, we are not miserable... In experiences of fasting, we are not so much abstaining from food as we are feasting on the word of God. Fasting is feasting!"

Fasting is all about seeking and finding satisfaction in God. Fasting is a way to experience the fact that "man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" ([Matthew 4:4](#)). Fasting gives up certain pleasures for a time but only in order to enjoy greater pleasures of communion with God.

I love to eat, but even my love of eating teaches me the value of fasting. Let me explain. Sometimes my love of eating prevents me from eating one thing so that I can eat something else that I enjoy even more. For example, I like salads and potatoes, but I'm crazy about barbecued ribs. If I'm at a meal with lots of barbecued ribs available, I might skip the salad and take fewer potatoes so that I have more room in my stomach to eat lots of barbecued ribs. Or if I'm eating a meal that I like okay but know that a delicious dessert is coming, I might eat less of the main course and save room for a big piece of dessert.

Now, when I take less of one food in order to enjoy more of a food I prefer, should I put on a sad face or act like I'm making a huge sacrifice? Of course not! I'm just limiting a lesser pleasure to enjoy more of a greater pleasure. Limiting a lesser pleasure to enjoy more of a greater pleasure--that's a basic principle of fasting. If you decide to fast and skip some meals in order to seek closer communion with God, you are giving up a lesser pleasure to enjoy a greater pleasure. In fasting, you skip some physical food to make room for more spiritual food, much as you skip one part of a meal to make more room for your favorite part. During a period of fasting, the point is not merely to put yourself through anguish but to expand your capacity to enjoy God. The pleasures of the stomach are lessened to savor the pleasures of the soul.

Fasting redirects your appetite from food to God, in the confidence that God is more enjoyable than eating. The Bible speaks of people "whose god is their stomach" ([Philippians 3:19](#)). If your god is your stomach, if your physical appetites rule your life, you can't imagine anything better than good food, good sex, good movies, good games, and whatever else you enjoy doing. But if your God is the Lord revealed in Jesus, you see things differently. You see food, sex, fun, and games as good gifts from him, but you know God as the supreme good. You are willing to limit lesser goods to enjoy the greatest good. You'd rather enjoy growing fellowship with God than unlimited physical pleasure and prosperity. As King David once prayed, "You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound" ([Psalm 4:7](#)). Fasting is a way to seek that "greater joy," to be hungrier for God than for anything else, to delight yourself in the Lord and receive the desires of your heart ([Psalm 37:4](#)). Fasting is feasting on the delights of God.

Fasting is a physical expression of spiritual desire. When you fast, you say to God, "I want you with my whole being--spirit and body."

You echo [Psalm 63:1](#), "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts



for you, my body longs for you.” Fasting says to God, “You are my everything--the joy of my spirit, the health and happiness of my body. I enjoy your gift of food, but I enjoy the Giver even more, and for this little while, I abstain from the gift to seek the Giver.” Never fast for the sake of fasting; fast for the sake of God.

When you're not fasting, enjoy your food to the full as a reason to delight in the heavenly Father who gave you that food. Don't feel guilty about an extra helping now and then or a scrumptious hot fudge brownie. Enjoy those God-given pleasures with a clear conscience, but keep your focus on the Giver. Godly fasting helps to make food and other pleasures all the more enjoyable when you're not fasting, because you are better able to enjoy not only the pleasure itself but the additional pleasure of experiencing it as a special gift from God's loving hand and as another reason to delight in God.

One thing I dislike about modern dieting is the way it treats many delicious foods more as enemies than as delightful gifts from a good God. Another thing I dislike is that much of the appeal of dieting springs from a view that being thin is one of life's highest goals. Cleanliness is not next to godliness. You'd be better off knowing how to fast and how to feast, even if you gained a few extra pounds. In most cases, a rigid diet will do less for your relationship with God than simply being able to relax and relish God's gift of food, and then to take a break from food for a special time to savor nothing but God himself. Dieting may be okay in some circumstances, but many of us might be better off if we simply ignored the diet programs and learned more about feasting and about fasting.

## BENEDICTION

*“May the Lord bless us and protect us. May the Lord smile on us and be gracious to us. May the Lord show us His favor and give us His peace.”*

[\(Numbers 6:24-26\)](#)

*“And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, And the love of God, And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.”*

[\(2 Corinthians 13:14\)](#)

*“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives, As we dwell in the House of the Lord.”*

[\(Psalm 23:6\)](#)

Amen!



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