

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

How should you fast? My answer is long, but let me begin with a guiding principle that has helped me. I define a fast as ***a voluntary abstinence from food or an activity, within a period of time, for spiritual purposes.*** On the web or in your reading, you will find slightly different summary definitions than mine but the result is the same. Fasting is for spiritual reasons and we abstain from habits that, if we are not careful, can become addictive behaviors or interfere in our walk with God, and therefore are idols in our life. **Fasting adds new meaning to our worship of the living God.**

If you think fasting from food is too radical, try fasting from:

- \* fasting from facebook
- \* television
- \* time on the computer (outside of work)
- \* alcohol
- \* sweets
- \* spending time with friends ( yes, even relationships can be addictive behaviors like a fix)
- \* reading ( yup, some folks are compulsive bookworms)
- \* gaming
- \* or anything in your normal routine that instead, can be dedicated to God.

Be creative!

From Scripture, here are some of the different reasons for fasting: to strengthen prayer (Ezra 8:23); to seek God's guidance (Acts 14:23); to express grief (2 Samuel 1:11,12); to seek deliverance or protection (2 Chron. 20:34); to express repentance and return to God (1 Sam 7:6) ; to humble oneself before God (1 Kings 21:27,29); to express concern for the work of God (Neh 1:34) ;to minister to the needs of others (Isa 58:17); to overcome temptations and dedicate yourself to God (Matt 4:1,11); to express love and worship to God (Luke 2:37).

There are many different types of fasts recorded in Scripture:

- 1) Normal Fast: abstain from all food but not water (Matt 4:2)
- 2) Partial Fast: limit the diet but not abstain from all food (Daniel 1:12)
- 3) Absolute Fast: avoid all food and water (Ezra 10:6)
- 4) Supernatural Fast: long fast divinely enabled (Deut 9:9; 1 Kings 19:8)
- 5) Private Fast: a fast that no one knows about (Matt 6:16-18)
- 6) Congregational Fast: the church gathers together to fast corporately (Joel 2:15-16; Acts 13:2)

7) National Fast: the nations gathers to fast (2 Chron 20:3; Neh 9:1; Esther 4:16; Jonah 3:58)

8) Regular Fast: on a special day each month/year (Lev 16:29-31)

9) Occasional Fast: on special occasions as the need arises (Matt 9:15)

Here are some helpful and IMPORTANT notes as reminders when preparing or while food fasting:

1) IMPORTANT- If you have poor health, certain dietary restrictions, other health issues such as diabetes or are pregnant, food fasting is not for you. You can still participate in A50's week long fast by abstaining from an activity and offer the normal time and energy you would put into that activity as prayer, meditating on Scripture or a service to someone else.

2) Drink plenty of clean water. Limit caffeinated drinks such as tea, coffee or other beverages. You may want to cutback on these before the fast so that you don't go through withdrawals ( headaches or lack of energy).

3) Rest as much as you can and pace yourself at work. If you workout, adjust the level accordingly.

4) Your body is adjusting, so be prepared for temporary physical weakness, irritability or impatience.

We suggest that if you are new to fasting from food, and want to commit to doing it, start slow. If you eat three meals a day, abstain from one. Individually, Trudy and I will have slightly different regimens. Talk about your ideas for fasting with others and decide for yourself what kind of fast you will do. The important thing is whatever you decide, try to stick to it. Make it a commitment to God.

I hope I have shared enough that will help you in your week of fasting. Next week, I'll conclude my thoughts with taking a deeper look at why we are fasting plus a few other helps you may find beneficial for your fast.

Grace and Peace,

*Pastor John*