

## **GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER AND FASTING**

### **DEFINITION OF FASTING:**

Dictionary: To abstain from all or some kinds of food or drink, especially as a religious observance.

Wikipedia: Fasting is primarily an act of willing abstinence or reduction from certain or all food, drink, or both, for a period of time. An absolute fast is normally defined as abstinence from all food and liquid for a defined period, usually a single day (24 hours), or several days. Other fasts may be only partially restrictive, limiting particular foods or substances. The fast may also be intermittent in nature.

### **GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUAL FASTING** from the book Shaping History through Prayer and Fasting by Derek Prince

1. Enter into fasting with positive faith. God requires faith of this kind in all who seek Him. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6). If you determine to seek God diligently by fasting, you have a scriptural right to expect that God will reward you. In Matthew 6:18, Jesus gave this promise to the believer who fasts with right motives: "Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."
2. Remember: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). Your fasting should be based upon the conviction that God's Word enjoins this as a part of normal Christian discipline.
3. Do not wait for some emergency to drive you to fasting. It is better to begin fasting when you are spiritually up, rather than when you are down. The law of progress in God's kingdom is, "from strength to strength (Psalm 84:7); "from faith to faith" (Romans 1:17); "from glory to glory" (II Corinthians 3:18).
4. In the beginning, do not set yourself too long a period of fasting. If you are fasting for the first time, omit one or two meals. Then move on gradually to longer periods, such as a day or two days. It is better to begin by setting a short period as your objective and achieving it. If you set too long a time at the outset and fail to meet it, you may become discouraged and give up.
5. During your fast, give plenty of time to Bible study. Where possible, read a portion of Scripture before each period of prayer. The Psalms are particularly helpful. Read them aloud, identifying yourself with the prayers, the praises, and the confessions contained in them.

6. It is often helpful to set certain specific objectives in your fasting and to make a written list of these. If you keep the lists that you make and turn back to them after an interval of time, your faith will be strengthened when you see how many of your objectives have been achieved.
7. Avoid religious ostentation and boastfulness. Apart from special periods of prayer or other spiritual activity, your life and conduct while fasting should be as normal and unpretentious as possible. This is the essence of the warnings give by Jesus in Matthew 6:16-18. Remember that boasting is excluded by “the law of faith” (Romans 3:27). Fasting does not earn you any merit badges from God. It is part of your duty as a committed Christian. Bear in mind the warning of Jesus in Luke 17:10, “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.”
8. Each time you fast, keep a watchful check on your motives. Take time to read Isaiah 58:1-12 once again. Note the motives and attitudes that are pleasing to God. Study the motives and objectives that are pleasing to God. Your own motives and objectives should line up with these.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF FASTING from the book Shaping History through Prayer and Fasting by Derek Prince.

When practiced with due care and sense, fasting is beneficial to the physical body.

Here are some points to observe if you wish to obtain the physical benefits of fasting:

1. Remember that “your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit” (I Corinthians 6:19). It pleases God when you take proper care of your body, seeking to make it a clean and healthy temple for His Spirit. Health is one of the specific benefits promised by fasting when it is properly practiced (Isaiah 58:8).
2. If you are on regular medication, or if you suffer from some kind of wasting disease, such as diabetes, etc. it is wise to obtain medical advice before entering into any fast that extends beyond a meal or two.
3. In the early period of a fast, you may experience unpleasant physical symptoms such as dizziness, headache, or nausea. Usually these are indications that your fasting is overdue and that you need the purifying physical action of fasting in various areas of your body. Do not allow physical discomfort to deter you. “Set your face” (Ezekiel 4:3 ASV), and go through with the fast that you planned. After the first day or two, these unpleasant physical reactions usually subside.
4. Remember that hunger is partly a matter of habit. In the early stages of a fast, hunger will probably return at each normal mealtime. But if you hold out, the

sensation of hunger will pass away without your having eaten anything. Sometimes you can fool your stomach by drinking a glass of water instead of eating.

5. Guard against constipation. Before and after fasting, choose meals that will help you in this respect, such as fresh fruit or fruit juices, dried figs, prunes, or apricots, oatmeal, etc.
6. During a fast, some people drink only water. Others take various kinds of fluid, such as fruit juices, broth, or skim milk. However, it is wise to abstain from strong stimulants such as tea or coffee. Do not come under bondage to other people's theories. Work out for yourself the particular pattern of fasting that suits you best as an individual.
7. It is scriptural to abstain at times from fluids as well as solid food, but do not abstain from fluids for a period exceeding seventy two hours. This was the limit set by Ester and her maidens (Ester 4:16). To go over seventy two hours without fluids can have disastrous physical effects. It is true that Moses twice spent forty days without eating or drinking (Deuteronomy 9:9-18). However, Moses was then on a supernatural plane in the immediate presence of God. Unless you are on the same supernatural plane, do not attempt to follow Moses' example.
8. Break your fast gradually. Begin with meals that are light and easy to digest. The longer you have fasted, the more careful you need to be about breaking your fast. At this point, you will need to exercise watchful self-control. Eating too heavily after a fast can produce serious physical discomfort and can nullify the physical benefits of fasting.
9. During any fast that exceeds two days, your stomach will shrink. Do not over expand it again. If you have been prone to eat too heavily, guard against going back to this habit. If you train yourself to eat more lightly, your stomach will adjust itself accordingly.