

# Fasting Fact Sheet

## What is Fasting?

Fasting is the discipline of abstinence from food. It can also consist of eating very little or abstinence from certain foods.

## Why do Christians Fast?<sup>1</sup>

- Fasting is an act of humility before God, undertaken in part to seek His divine intervention in the events of our physical world.
- It is the example of Christ, the prophets, and the apostles.
- It provides more time to pray, seek God's face, and repent because we are more focused on the Lord and less concerned with daily routines such as preparing meals and eating.
- It brings revelation by the Holy Spirit of our true spiritual condition, leading to brokenness, repentance, and change, and allows the Holy Spirit to work in a most unusual, powerful way.
- It helps us concentrate on the Word of God to make it more meaningful, vital, and practical in our lives.
- It transforms prayer into a richer, more personal experience.
- It can help us regain a strong sense of spiritual determination and restore the loss of our first love for our Lord.
- Fasting is private in nature, in that Christians do not use it to be seen, but to follow the example of Christ (Matt 6:16-18).

## The Most Common Fasting Styles<sup>2</sup>

- **Water fasting:** Water fasting is a purifying practice, both physically and spiritually. A true water fast maintains a zero caloric intake. This means water only, nothing added to it. Water fasters are advised to consume one to two quarts per day of the purest water available.
- **Juice fasting:** A juice fast consists of 100% fruit and/or vegetable juice; no solid foods.

- **Daniel fast / Fruit fasting:** The Daniel fast is often done as 'no meats, no sweets'. But, in reading Daniel 1, many people will choose to do this fast as only fruits and vegetables and water, i.e. no breads, pastas, milk, meats or sweets. This is a good fast for beginners, especially the one-day fruit fast. It offers some choices as to the fruit to use. For those with heavy workloads or those who cannot afford to lose any weight, a protein shake fast is recommended.

- **Rice fasting:** Yes, you can fast on rice! Rice fasting is actually an ancient practice dating back thousands of years. Plan on 3-6 cups of rice per day, keeping to moderation as much as possible.

## Most Common Lengths for Fasting<sup>3</sup>

- "Unto the 9th hour" fasting means abstaining from food until 3:00 p.m. (if your day were to start at 6:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m. would be the ninth hour).
- One day fast or 24-hour fast. This is the recommendation for beginners. But don't discount even shorter fasts if you've never fasted before.
- 3-day fast.
- One week fast. Often used as a quarterly (seasonal) fast.
- 10-day fast. Recommended only for advanced fasters.
- Several week fast. These are only for the seasoned or those under close medical supervision.

## Biblical References<sup>4</sup>

### Biblical references to types of fasting

- Without food, but water is allowed: Matthew 4:1-2, Luke 4:2
- No food and no water for three days: Esther 4:16, Ezra 10:6, and Acts 9:9
- Some food items are eliminated for the period of the fast: Daniel 1:15,10:2-3

### Illustrations

- Exod 24:18, 34:28; Deut 9:9 & 18; 10:10 – Moses twice spends forty days on Mount Sinai without eating or drinking, and in mourning over Israel's sin.
- 2 Chr 20:3 – Jehoshaphat proclaims a fast throughout Judah to seek YHWH for fear of the armies of Ammon and Moab.
- Ezra 8:21-23 – Ezra calls a fast to seek God's protection for those leaving Babylon for Israel.
- Joel 2:12-15 – YHWH call the people to return to Him with fasting, rending their hearts, not garments; Joel calls for a fast.
- Matt 4:2; Luke 4:2 – Jesus fasts forty days in the wilderness, being tempted by the devil.
- Matt 17:21; Mark 9:29 – Jesus says that this kind of demon goes out only by means of prayer and fasting.
- Acts 14:23 – Paul and Barnabas appoint elders in the churches, having prayed with fasting.
- 2 Cor 6:5; 2 Cor 11:27 – Paul lists "fastings" as among the hardships he suffered as a mark of his apostleship.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: Bright, B. (1995). *Preparing for the Coming Revival. How to Lead a Successful Fasting and Prayer Gathering*. NewLife Publications. Orlando, FL. (p. 17-18).

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from and for more details on each of these fasting types, and the specific requirements, recommendations, and notes go to: <http://www.allaboutfasting.com/> and <http://www.ihop.org/Publisher/Article.aspx?id=1000015597>

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from, and for more details and the specific requirements, recommendations, and notes go to: <http://www.allaboutfasting.com/>

<sup>4</sup> For more information go to: <http://bible.org/seriespage/appendix-2-fasting-scripture>

