

Fasting Guide for B3

Jesus assumed that His disciples would fast (Matthew 6:16-18). Fasting is not a weight-loss program. Fasting is abstaining from food (all calories) for the purpose of:

1. mourning tragedies, sin, and brokenness in our lives and in the church,
2. leaning into Christ, humbling ourselves in prayer and repentance, and
3. deepening both our walk with Christ and our reliance on Christ.

We abstain from food, a life-sustaining source in our physical experience, to set our focus and dependence on Christ, who truly gives and sustains life (Mt 4:4)

If you have never fasted, you can start small and build. Make it a regular practice. Start by skipping one meal and use that time to pray, read Scripture, repent, and seek God's will. Consult your doctor if there are any medical concerns or questions. Fasting is specifically geared toward abstaining from food, but you can drink water. An absolute fast (no food or water) is an option, but depends on the length of the fast and if God leads you to do so. The Bible presents fasting as abstaining from food and/or water. "Fasting from" TV, social media, chocolate, etc. is not the same thing. While cutting these out can be a helpful choice, this is not what the Bible presents as a fast. *Simply put, fasting means do not put any calories in your body for a period of time.*

We are doing a church-wide fast and time of prayer.

1. **Pick & Plan a day** on which you will fast. You may skip one meal that day or you may fast the whole day, or you may fast longer if you wish. Don't fast on a day you need to participate in a planned meal at work or a special family occasion like a birthday. Don't eat a big meal before the fast to try to offset the lack of food that comes later. Pick out a book of the Bible or some passages that you want to focus on.
2. **Keep the main thing the main thing** - drawing closer to Christ is the ultimate focus. If you focus on food every time your stomach growls, you are letting food be an idol and not seeking Christ. **Focus on what you are seeking, not on what you are missing.** Focus on Him and His word. Jesus said during His forty-day fast, "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God*" (Matt 4:4). Don't look forward to when you can eat again. Look forward to hearing from God. *Seek Him*, not the next meal.
3. **The Word of God and Prayer** - the time of fasting should be full of prayer and reading God's word. Again, the point of fasting is mourning any tragedies, sin, and brokenness in our lives, in the church, and in the lives of others. The motive is to glorify God, to seek healing where needed, to repent where needed, and to seek revival in our lives and the church. True life ultimately comes from Him.
4. **Your stomach will growl!** Every time it growls, let it remind you to seek Christ and His kingdom. **Reflect, Repent, Revive, and Rely.** *Reflect* on your life, character, and situation. Every time it growls, mourn and *repent* over sin and pray for deliverance and *revival*. If it is your sin, repent. If it is the sin of others, lift them up and intercede for them. Every time it growls, let it remind you of how much you need Christ and that you must *rely* on Him.

What Do I Pray About?

Praise - praise God in your prayers. Worship Him for who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do.

Personal sins and struggles - As the fast goes on, let God remind you of sins and struggles that need your confession and repentance. See your sins the way God sees them. Lay them down and fully trust in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross to forgive you of those sins. Commit to change and walk in the newness of life He gave you.

Others - Intercede for those you know who are struggling, for both their sin and their sufferings. Mourn the darkness that has overtaken so many lives in our community.

Church - Mourn and cry out for the collective brokenness and sin that hinders B3 and the churches in our community. Pray for repentance and revival. Pray for God to prepare the way for B3 as we engage the local, national, and international mission fields. Pray for our church planting and church revitalization efforts. Pray for our missionaries and partnerships and the impact those will have. Pray for our community. Pray for marriages and families. Pray for the leaders of our church. Pray for church planting opportunities.

Scripture - pray through Scripture. As you read a passage, turn it into a prayer. Example: Psalm 23 - "Lord You are my Shepherd, and because of You, I lack nothing. You lead me to abundance and in paths of righteousness for Your name's sake. Forgive me when I do not follow You in those paths. Forgive me for living for *my* name's sake instead of Yours..." and so forth.

Pit-falls in Fasting

I don't know the purpose - Many Christians struggle with fasting because we see food as enjoyable and expected. People in biblical times saw food as precious and not guaranteed to be available. Food was meant for survival. Fasting meant abstaining from life-giving sustenance. Fasting was a meaningful sign of repentance and mourning. Fasting was a way of expressing that they would trust God for their survival and needs. Fasting signals our trust in God and our resolve to rely on Him moving forward.

Eating habits - the first time you will struggle during your fast will be at a meal time or snack time, not necessarily because you are hungry, but simply because it is the normal time to eat. Be aware of how habits may entice you to eat.

Lack of denial - We struggle to deny ourselves comfort and convenience. Yet, we are not to seek comfort in food, but in our great Comforter. We need to deny our comfort and let ourselves experience the longing for and dependence on Christ.

Lack of intentionality - We need to guard against simply letting distractions and busyness get us through the day. If we are using entertainment or work to keep our minds off our hunger, then we have missed the point of fasting. Our hunger needs to drive us to hunger and thirst for God's righteousness and to seek His kingdom first. Set aside time for prayer and Scripture. Substitute your social media scrolling time or TV time with prayer and Scripture.

Lack of patience - we do not need to manufacture mourning, but allow God to show us how He sees our situation. If we begin to see a bad situation or a sin from God's perspective, then we will mourn and desire to intercede and respond. Lean into Jesus, and may He reveal something to mourn and pray over that you did not expect.

Be aware - If you engage in a multi-day fast, reintroduce food slowly. Your stomach will thank you! Many people fast 24 hours. A 40-hour fast can be meaningful and help you connect to Jesus' 40 days of fasting in the wilderness.

The Joys of Fasting

Seek the Lord above all else, and let the fasting be a time to draw close to Him.

Let it reveal what you need to change.

Let it be a time of intercession and transformation.

Let it be a practice that opens you up to God's will and power.

Let it be a time to build your prayer life.

Let it be a time to engage Scripture.

Let it deepen your trust in the Lord.