

# HOW TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S PRESENCE THROUGH FASTING



## The Art of Living In The Presence of God

*"We cannot for one moment separate ourselves from Christ with safety. We may have His presence to attend us at every step but only by observing the conditions, which He Himself has laid down." -E. G. White, SL, p. 93*

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*The whole gospel, to the whole world, by the whole church*

## EXPERIENCING GOD'S PRESENCE THROUGH FASTING

If you have a desire for a new intimacy with God and a greater awareness of His presence in your life, then fasting is the spiritual discipline that taps into the divine Source. Throughout history men whose lives displayed the presence and power of God in unusual ways made fasting a part of their spiritual arsenal. These included great Christian leaders such as Martin Luther, John Wesley, John Calvin, John Knox, Ellen White and many more. Jesus Himself often fasted and assumed fasting is a practice that his followers would undertake (Matthew 6:17, 18). Jesus did not say "if" you fast but "when" you fast. He assumes that fasting will be a normal part of His disciples' spiritual life and every believer who desires a greater awareness of the reality of God's presence ought to engage in fasting.

### FOUR KINDS OF FASTING

The literal meaning of the Hebrew word for "fast" is "to cover the mouth." You may choose to abstain from other activities during a fast but fasting by definition involves the abstaining from food. There are *four kinds of Biblical fasting*:

**The Normal Fast:** In Scripture the normal means of fasting involves abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, except for water. The duration can be 1 day, 3 days, 1 week, 1 month or 40 days. Long fasts should be undertaken only after seeking medical advice and under the supervision of a physician.

**The Partial Fast:** This fast omits certain foods and is on a schedule that allows limited eating. This fast is described in the book of Daniel. There was a three-week period in which Daniel abstained only from delicacies, meat and wine. (Daniel 10:3). The partial fast is sometimes referred to as the *rotational fast*, which consists of omitting certain foods for designated periods of time on a rotational basis.

**The Absolute Fast:** This fast involves abstaining from all food, solid and liquid, including water. Paul went on an absolute fast for 3 days following his encounter with Christ on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:9). Esther called for an absolute fast for 3 days when the Jews faced annihilation in the Persian Empire (Esther 4:16).

**The Supernatural Fast:** Supernatural fasts are absolute fasts that were forty days in duration. Moses, Elijah, and Jesus engaged in these supernatural absolute fasts of forty days (Deuteronomy 9:9; 1 Kings 19:8; Matthew 4:2). This fast would kill anyone without supernatural intervention and it is not to be practiced today.

### THE PURPOSE OF FASTING

Biblical fasting brings you into closer union with God so that you can experience His presence more fully. While you abstain from food and pleasures for the purpose of drawing near to God, He has promises in return to draw near to you. Too often the focus of fasting is on the lack of food. However, the purpose of fasting is to take your eyes off of food and the things of this world and instead focus on God.

Although fasting in Scripture is almost always a fasting from food, there are other ways to fast. Anything you can temporarily give up in order to better focus on God can be considered a fast (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). As you take your focus away from your *diet* and through *detachment* from the things of this world you exercise self-*discipline* you are constantly increasing your *devotion* to God. There is a four- fold purpose for Biblical fasting: ***diet, detachment, discipline*** and ***devotion***:

**Diet:** God has represented His Word as spiritual food that nourishes your spiritual life in the same way that physical food nourishes your physical life. Just as food strengthens and sustains you physically His Word strengthens and sustains you spiritually. When you fast you allow your spiritual hunger to become stronger and more focused, and spiritual hunger takes priority over physical hunger.

Your physical body needs food and is trained to expect it. As you fast you will experience both a physical and psychological craving for food. If you will turn your hunger into prayer: “Father as my body craves food, I crave your presence,” you will experience new dimensions of God’s manifested presence. You will not be disappointed, for His Word assures you that “He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things” (Psalm 107:9).

**Detachment:** During a fast you should detach yourself from the things that bind you to this world in order to receive all of your sustenance from the spiritual world. You determine that for a period of time you will deny all of your worldly cravings to focus on your spiritual cravings. To this end, you should consider fasting from such things as television, radio, computer, cell phones, credit cards, recreation and other forms of regular enjoyment so that you can bend your heart toward greater enjoyment of Jesus.

As you fast you will experience a craving for these things, Each time you deny a craving for the sake of your fast, if you will turn each craving into a prayer: “Father. As I crave for these things, I crave even more for the deep things of God,” you will experience a new revelation of God’s presence and His power. You will not be disappointed, for His Word assures you: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

**Discipline:** The discipline of fasting is about focusing your attention on God by intentionally turning away from the habits and people which distract you the most. To this end, it is crucial to identify and fast from habits that get in the way of your relationship with God and other people. These have been called “junk habits”—selfish habits that rule your life such as too much shopping, sports, sleep, sex, the internet and the latest in fashion and entertainment. Junk habits also include “junk associations” with certain people with whom you do gossiping, partying, socializing and hanging out, but whose association is a detriment to your spirituality.

Fasting is exercising the discipline to stare these habits and people in the face and say as Paul declared: “I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Corinthians 6:12). It’s about saying “no” to habits and people who hinder your walk with God and gaining strength to do what is right. By denying and abstaining from such habits and people, you express your longing for God to break their power over you. The discipline of fasting becomes the means by which God can help you to put your sinful habits to death.

**Devotion:** You may fast for a variety of reasons but ultimately the primary reason is to express your devotion to God. When done properly fasting will please and glorify God. The proper motivation is a longing for more of God, a hungering for the godly life and a desire to seek God with all of your heart, mind, soul and strength (Matthew 22:37). To this end, fasting connects you with the presence of God and the power of the Holy Spirit as you seek to deepen your daily commitment and devotion to God.

The spiritual reality behind authentic fasting is the practice of the presence of God. Through fasting you begin to realize that you need God more than you need food. This realization leads you to a greater understanding of what the Psalmist meant when he wrote: “Like the deer that pants after water, my soul longs for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1). God wants nothing more than a closer connection with you and through fasting you can quench that desire for more of Him in your life. This life transforming relationship with God, knowing God’s presence and finding God’s power is the “reward” that Jesus promises to those who fast (Mathew 6:18).

### Reasons For Fasting

- For closer communion with God. 2T 146
- For answers to your prayers. CD 188
- For spiritual growth. 4T 535-6
- For healing. 4T 283
- For wisdom from God. TM 497
- For development of character. 4T 400
- For removal of trials. EW 106
- Victory over Satan. DA 430-1
- For cleansing of the heart. CD 187-8
- Victory over appetite. CD 400
- For strengthening of your faith. CD 158-9
- For solutions to serious problems. PK 601
- For the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. CD 290
- For the advancement of God’s work. 1T 624
- For deliverance. AA 124
- For subjection of evil nature. GC 123
- For a receptive frame of mind. CD 187-8
- For medicinal value. CD 158-9
- For grace to deny fleshly lusts. MM 283
- For reconciliation. 2T 157-8
- For full surrender. CD 189
- For change of disposition. 4SG 139
- For special needs. DA 212
- For renewal and reformation. PK 665-7

### Suggested 40-Day Fasting Schedule

DAYS	Type	Excluded (Cannot Eat)	Included (Can Eat)	Excluded
SUNDAYS	Partial Fast	One meal	Two meals	Computer
MONDAYS	Partial Fast	Two meals	One meal	Television
TUESDAYS	Partial Fast	One meal	Two meals Fruits & Veggies only	Sweets
WEDNESDAYS	Partial Fast	One meal	Two meals Fruits & Veggies only	Flesh
THURSDAYS	Partial Fast	Two meals	One meal	Credit cards
FRIDAYS	Partial Fast	One meal	Two meals	Radio
SABBATHS	Normal Fast	Food	Water	Sex

### GENERAL FASTING PRINCIPLES

- Fasting is not a hunger strike designed to convince God to release what He has not, up to now, held back. It is not a last ditch effort to get through to God. Instead it is a sharpening of the spiritual senses so God can get through to you.
- Fasting from food is not necessarily for every one. Some health conditions may keep even the most devout from fasting from food. If you have a health condition consult a physician and if necessary seek a different kind of fast that does not involve food.
- Before you begin your fast set a specific objective. Seek God's guidance as to the type and duration of the fast He wants you to undertake. Prepare yourself spiritually by confessing every known sin and asking God to clothe you in Christ righteousness.
- For a normal fast you can fast for any twenty-four hour period, but the ideal is from sunset to sunset. Pray every hour on the hour if possible. Write down on paper the focus of your fast and spread your petition out before the Lord.
- A fast is more than abstaining from food. It is replacing physical food with spiritual food. As you are fasting from certain meals and activities use the time that you would normally be engaging in those activities for prayer, study of the Word and listening to God. Craft a simple plan and connect it to the purpose of your fast.
- Sometimes it might be beneficial to invite a partner to fast with you so that you can fast and pray together and encourage each other. Both of you should keep in view the motive, mission and manner of the fast.
- Avoid all contact with food if possible. When tempted to break your fast get down on your knees and pray earnestly. Rather than breaking your fast completely or prematurely, drink juices rather than revert to solids.
- Avoid the temptation to eat a large meal prior to a fast or break a fast with heavy foods. Your meals prior to and ending a fast should consist of mostly fruits, vegetables and low fat foods.
- It is important to fast with the right motive. The Pharisees fasted twice a week, to prove their status and devotion before the public (Luke 18:12). However, God sees the heart and rewards deeds done in sincerity and not for the purpose of self-promotion.
- Fasting is not a way to influence, impress or manipulate God. It doesn't prove anything to Him or show Him whether you are serious. He knows your heart better than you do. It is not to impress God with your self-denial but to remind yourself of your earnest and desperate need of His presence and power in your life.
- Always fast as the Holy Spirit leads. Just as Jesus was led into the wilderness to fast, we should also be led by the Spirit into times and seasons for fasting.
- Legalistic fasting earned the Pharisees no brownie points with God. The New Testament never laid down strict rules regarding fasting and we should never impose strict rules upon others or ourselves.