

WRITTEN BY CATHY WENTZ

THE CHRISTIAN WOMAN'S GUIDE TO

FASTING & PRAYER

**BONUS
21 DAY
FASTING
JOURNAL
INCLUDED!**



iBelieve

What Is Fasting Anyway?

Bible Study Tools describes the **practice of fasting** as “the spiritual discipline of denying ourselves something (typically food) to feast on the things of God.” The article further explains where the words “fast” or “a fasting” come from in both Hebrew and Greek. The Hebrew language translates them as *tsom* while the Greek language translates them as *nesteia*. The literal Hebrew translation means “not to eat,” while the literal Greek translation means “no food.”

Although the standard practice of fasting involves going without food for a specific period of time, people occasionally may fast from something else they enjoy, such as television, social media, exercising, etc., to take time to deepen their relationship with God.

For instance, in [Daniel 10:3](#), the prophet did not completely fast from food but just did not consume any “pleasant food” such as meat or wine as a reaction to a divine message he had received. Additionally, the NKJV translation says he did not anoint himself for three weeks, which probably meant that he did not use any lotions or oils on his skin.

An essential component of the fasting practice is prayer. Bible Study Tools states, “Fasting without praying isn’t fasting. It is dieting or deprivation.” So, without prayer, fasting has no spiritual impact and no special connection with God.



Reasons for Fasting

There are many reasons believers in the Old and New Testaments fasted. Here are a few of them:

#1 God's intercession in a precarious moment

2 Chronicles 20:3-4 (NLT) – This fasting time was called by King Jehoshaphat when armies of the Moabites and Ammonites, and a few others, were advancing against Judah.

"Jehoshaphat was terrified by this news and begged the Lord for guidance. He also ordered everyone in Judah to begin fasting. So people from all the towns of Judah came to Jerusalem to seek the Lord's help."

The next verses tell us that when the people had assembled in Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat stood before the "community of Judah and Jerusalem" and prayed for God to intercede in the situation.

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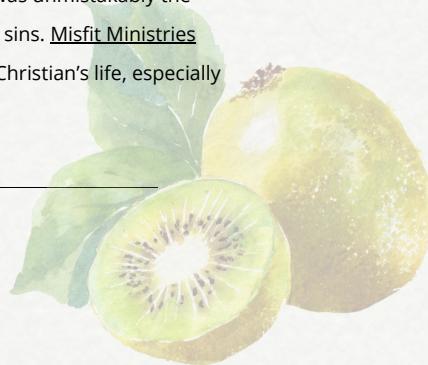
Reasons for Fasting Cont.

[Esther 4:15-16 \(NLT\)](#) – Queen Esther requested this fasting time for all the Jews living in Susa when her cousin Mordecai informed her of a plot to kill all the Jews. Mordecai asked Esther to approach the king and tell him of this plot, but there was one complication. The law said that no one could approach the king unless he held out his gold scepter to that person. Despite her fear, Esther gathered her courage and prepared to ask permission to approach the king.

"Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai, 'Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, although it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die.'"

#2 Closeness to God

In the New Testament, Jesus began his earthly ministry fasting for 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness ([Matthew 4:1-11](#)). Although Scripture does not specifically explain Jesus' purpose in the extended fast, it does record an incident between Jesus and Satan during which Jesus began to feel hungry after the 40-day fast. At a weak physical point, Satan tempted Jesus three times with things the average human might desire and be willing to compromise obedience to God to receive, such as turning stones to bread to quell His hunger pangs. Not Jesus, though. Being fully man and fully God, He rebuffed Satan over and over again with Scripture. This fasting time and rejecting the temptations that came with it proved that Jesus was unmistakably the Son of God and, therefore, the perfect sacrifice for the world's sins. [Misfit Ministries](#) asserted that Jesus' fasting illustrates the value of fasting in a Christian's life, especially when one desires to be victorious over the devil.



Reasons for Fasting Cont.

#3 Spiritual Warfare

Jesus told His disciples, at one point in His ministry, that a certain demon could not come out of a man except by prayer and fasting ([Matthew 17:21, NKJV](#)). The disciples had asked Jesus why they could not exorcise a demon from a man, and He had replied that their unbelief was mostly to blame for their inability to cast the demon out. In the NKJV version, however, Jesus is quoted as adding that the demon could only be driven out by prayer and fasting. The footnotes indicate that this statement of the verse is not in all Scripture texts.

#4 Guidance in Ministry

In the very early days of the Church, after Paul's conversion, he and Barnabas had a practice of praying and fasting in the process of appointing elders for the churches they planted and "turning them over to the care of the Lord in whom they had put their trust." ([Acts 14:23, NLT](#))



Tips on Fasting

Here are a few practical principles to consider when committing to a fast:

Plan your fasting and prayer time to attain a deeper relationship with God.

Check your calendar to ensure no planned events could jeopardize completing your fast. Family trips and holidays are not the best time to fast. Additionally, plan ahead in terms of the activities in which you will be engaged during your fast. Why not prepare to spend the time you would normally be eating a meal in prayer and time in God's Word?

Do not abstain from medication without a doctor's approval.

Additionally, diabetics should consult their doctor if they are considering a food fast because of the effect that could have on blood sugar. Generally speaking, it is unnecessary to abstain from health-preserving medications for common chronic conditions such as high blood pressure or cholesterol.

Limit your activity and exercise moderately if you are fasting from food.

You really don't want to pass out during your fast. Of course, if you are fasting from exercise, that won't be an issue.

Fasting should be a very private practice.

Do not advertise that you are fasting. However, when you live in a home with others, you may want to alert them to your plans to fast so they are not expecting you to eat meals with them if they are accustomed to that. Remember Jesus' words regarding fasting practices. He said, "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites with a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting ... But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." ([Matthew 6:16-18, NKJV](#))

Benefits of Fasting & Praying

Most people are not inclined to embark upon any discipline, especially one that involves deprivation unless they can see some benefit. Yes, fasting and praying do come with benefits. Pray Ray enumerates a few of these:

- A deepening of one's relationship with God
- A greater level of personal discipline – The author observes, "By fasting, the body learns to obey the soul," and "By praying, the soul learns to command the body."
- Spiritual breakthrough – The same article states, "Fasting breaks the chains of bondage and frees us from the things which bind us to the world of materialism and our surroundings."

Willing to Try It?

The baby Christian or even the more mature Christian who has never tried the discipline of fasting from food should start slowly – perhaps by missing one meal that they are accustomed to eating and then maybe advance the next time to two meals, etc. Another approach would be to set a specific time period of going without food – perhaps from waking up to 3 p.m. or however long one wishes to set their goal. No matter how you approach it, by combining that period of fasting with prayer and time in God's Word, you will find a degree of peace and freedom from the pressing demands of this world; and you may find answers from God regarding questions you have.



Fasting Journal

Date: / /

Day:
S M T W T F S

Focus: What do you want to focus on during today's fast?

Reflection: What has God showed you today during your time fasted?

Pray: Write prayer notes from today's fast.

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About the Author

Cathy Wentz

Cathy Wentz lives with her husband, Brian, in Cedar City, UT, and has been a believer in Jesus Christ for more than 30 years. She has two grown children and four grandchildren, all who live in Cedar City.

Her writing experience includes working as a newspaper reporter for eight years, and she currently serves as a public relations assistant for a local orthopaedic surgeon, which involves writing blogs, social media posts and other web content.

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