

Ten Fasting Tips For a Successful Fast

The following provide some practical fasting tips that will assist you in fasting with the least number of distractions. They come from a resource of personal experience of those who fast often and have been forced to learn the hard way to find the smoothest path into the sometimes difficult personal terrain of fasting. During a fast, focus is critical. You will become painfully aware of how nosy, chaotic and cluttered your world has become. This is because fasting will force you to slow down. Vacations allow us to leave our busy life for awhile and escape to a quieter landscape. Fasting is quite the opposite, instead of an escape, you will come face to face with your life in a new way. It can be overwhelming, even unmanageable when all the years of useless pursuits flash before you, demanding focus and attention.

Here are ten principles which will help manage the chaos and find victory and power over your life again.

1. Tell the least number of people that you are fasting.

Fasting is an exciting event and it is easy to blab off to everyone that you are on a fast, especially when you begin to experience the incredible benefits. The problem is that you set yourself up for failure and disappointment when you make your fast public. There are two reasons for this:

First, most people will think that you are crazy. They will not understand. And if you do not have any fear of fasting, they will supply all the fear you need. Satan often uses those who are closest to us to cause the most trouble.

You look like you have aids!

You're becoming a fanatic!

You're going to become protein deficient!

Times have changed, people don't fast any more!

Are you under a doctor's supervision?

Fear, fear, fear, fear--the last thing you need on your fast is fear. And, keep in mind fear does not come from God, it comes from the devil.

Secondly, do not tell people that you are fasting as it can cause the fast to become a law to your heart. When you are tempted to break the fast, the thinking will be that, *Aunt Myrtle, Uncle Ed, Dad, Mom, and half the church know I'm on a fast. If I quit now, I'll be humiliated in front of all of them.*

Your fast is between you and God and no one else. And when you are being tempted to break, it is not Aunt Murtill you need to be concerned with. You are fasting because you are in *love* with Jesus. The key to a great fast is to stay fixed on Jesus, not people or circumstances. Keeping your fast between you and God will help you stay focused in times of temptation.

2. Turn off the TV.

Watching TV while on a spiritual fast will become increasingly ridiculous. In every commercial you are being tempted with food. Most of all, it destroys your Christ-focus. It is not going to kill you to turn off the TV and radio, and stop buying the newspaper. The world will continue happily along without your presence. Of the many times I have broken a fast, I can usually root it back to allowing myself some form of earthly distraction.

Even a short fast has many different stages. Fasting speeds up emotional states to the point where one moment you will have a sense of closeness to God with a feeling of well-being and the next moment the bottom falls out and you feel empty and cold.

Remember, a tug-of-war is going on in the soul between the flesh that is being inflicted, and the spirit that is being strengthened.

You are the most vulnerable when you're feeling deprived. That is the time when you must be aware of the temptation to find an escape. Let God be your entertainment. Turn to Him when you feel deprived.

Look for your Bible, not the converter!

3. Get alone with God.

Fasting and solitude have always gone hand in hand. Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit away from the crowds, into the desert. (Luke 5:15)

What kind of man would King David have been if he had not spent countless lonely nights as a shepherd. Where the stars were his friends and the harp, a way of expressing his heart to God. It is in loneliness and the quietness of solitude that we learn friendship with Jesus. It does not matter how large a ministry you have, you need to get alone with God. Your ministry will survive without you--and if it doesn't, it was built on the wrong foundation, *you* not Christ!

4. Feast on His Word.

Just think of all those lost hours of time spent on radio, television and newspapers. Well, during your fast make a diet adjustment. Saturate yourself in His Word. Use every available means possible--tapes, books, videos, Christian television, but most of all, the Bible.

But be careful, you might develop a renewed mind. You may begin to think differently. Behavior patterns may begin to surface that others will think fanatical. The Word will develop within you an irrepressible enthusiasm that, *you can do all things in Christ who is your strength, and you are the righteousness of God.* You might have the nerve even to think that the only difference between you and the apostle Paul is that he didn't have a cordless phone. In your spare time, you may start a new hobby, like casting out demons or healing the sick.

We are not ignorant of the power of media to change peoples' thinking. Can you imagine the power the creative Words of God will have on your thinking if you begin to fill yourself with His spiritual food.

5. Meditate.

Christians, especially in North America, have lost the art of meditation. In fact, we almost consider it a pagan practice. *But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night (Psalm 1:2).*

For the most part, our thinking, especially for the undisciplined, has a mind of its own. We are victims of our own thoughts. I'm sure that you've experienced it time and time again. You could be driving your car, and without any conscious decision you begin to worry. You envision yourself in the worst case scenario and before you know it you are embraced by a mood of melancholy and despair.

Through meditation we wrestle down negative thoughts and emotions that plague us every day. Meditation is a discipline of the mind where you take charge of your thoughts, directing them towards God.

We are a society of lazy thinkers. Television has become an electronic imagination. It determines, with vivid stereo and full color imagery, how we feel and think.

Try sitting down, closing your eyes and allow your imagination to be filled with a single thought. *You have been chosen by God before the creation of this world, according to his good pleasure and will.*

Allow your mind to be filled with the implication of how that single truth affects who you are, and your importance to this world. This will be difficult because negative thoughts come easiest to the mind. They are safe.

As you travel throughout your thinking, you will begin to experience obstacles of fear and unbelief. Those thoughts will oppose themselves against the Word of God. You will find that often your first experience with meditation is like a wrestling match in the mind, instead of an experience of peace and stillness. As you begin to experience the authority you have over your own thinking, the floodgates of joy will burst within you, maybe for the first time. You will develop an awareness of how you and the Word of God are one in your thinking.

There may be fifty years of hardened residue built up that you will have to come up against as you meditate to internalize the Word. The Word of God is the single force in all of eternity that is able to enter your thinking and recreate your character, mind and emotions, conforming them into the image of Christ.

There is nothing spiritual about opening a Bible and reading it. Christians all over North America do that in their personal devotions and remain unchanged. Meditation opens the soul to the Word that it may begin to come in and make great change.

We suggest that you take a scripture or a single nugget of truth and meditate all day. Look at your reflex-thinking, see if it conforms to that truth--and if it does not, cast it down as an evil thing that hinders you from communing with God.

6. Go for walks alone.

Clouds, a breeze in the face, flowers, trees, sun, moon and stars. These are the expressions of God to you--His creation, and as you fast, your five senses will become sharp and clear, allowing the loveliness of God in all that He has made, to impact your soul. Whether winter or summer, go for long walks with God. Invite Him to come with you. Experience the beauty of what He has made to. Feel the quality and vastness of His universe. Reach outward with your soul, embracing God through what He has made.

7. Take a phone break.

Clear your schedule. Take a break from the phone. No interruptions! This is a period of time to minister to Christ and your own spiritual need for deeper intimacy with Him. Whatever ministry you are involved with it can survive without you. If it falls apart without you, God's not running it.

Withdraw from people's lives for a time of intimacy with God. Jesus did it often. He would wander the desolate hills and valleys, the no-man's land of Israel. It must have been hard to leave those who were sick and emotionally shipwrecked, those searching for some meaning and purpose, but he left them repeatedly. If Christ needed to refresh His spirit, then even more so do you.

Many have found escape by submerging in ministry. They leave themselves behind by focusing on the needs of others. They draw people like a magnet with kindness and compassion. However, what seems to be selfless devotion is just a search for identity and purpose, a desperate attempt to prove value. Men and women rise to large ministries, teaching millions of people, through television and radio, yet have never quieted themselves enough to meet their own inner terror. If only they knew that in that quietness, they would find the smiling face of their God. A God who does not condemn, reject or criticize, but accepts, embraces and loves us as we are.

Dear friend, during your fast, find your peace. Pause your soul. Deal aggressively with every thought of rejection, loneliness and self-contempt. Tell yourself that you are fully accepted by God and that you need nothing more. Christ's blood paid for your acceptance. Are you trying to give more than that?

Enter the solitude of loneliness. No ministry or throngs of people, only God. A place of inner reflection to realign the heart. When you emerge from the desert, your ministry will take on a depth which will profoundly touch the lives of those whom you serve.

8. Be quiet.

Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore stand in awe of God.

Ecclesiastes 5:7

With pride comes many words. Tame the tongue. Bring it into submission. Be silent. There is humility in silence. The literal interpretation of the word fast is to *cover your mouth*. The noise of words can cover insecurity, drowning the murmurs of a restless soul. What vulnerabilities do our face show when we are silent? We use words for boundaries, for protection, for meaningless distraction. Yet it is only in silence that we can quiet the soul to experience the awe of God, an experience of majestic greatness that transcends the emptiness of words.

9. Do not enter into needless temptation.

The smells and sight of food can be difficult during a fast. As you continue along the path of fasting, all five senses will increase in sensitivity. When the next door neighbor opens a jar of fresh peanut butter, you will know it. Every desire to draw closer to God will be obscured in peanuts. All you can imagine is the smooth, delicious flavors of peanut butter melting on freshly-browned toast.

During a fast, you will be surrounded with the hostile world of food, especially in a country that has become addicted to eating. Do all you can to separate yourself from temptations--the neon signs, commercials and the golden arches.

You will learn that you can live quite happily without food. God can supply all your needs emotionally for the trials and difficulties of the day. Caffeine, fat and sugar are crutches that we depend on to keep us moving when we feel emptiness. God will fill all emptiness if we are simply willing to give Him a chance.

Take a risk. Get hungry! Explore the emptiness of your own stomach. Of course, your children need to eat. Do your best to arrange a schedule where your spouse is able to do the cooking. This also can be an excellent situation for your children to experience a sense of responsibility in the home. You can plan meals for the next five, 20 or 30 days or however long you decide to fast. They may not want too, but

once your family sees that your decision is firm and that this is important to you, they will support you. You are displaying a powerful example of seeking God that they will never forget.

10. Sleep.

If you are going to detoxify you ought to do it on a good night's sleep. The last thing you need during the difficult part of your fast is to be tired and overworked. It is worth investing time and energy toward a fast, as if you were investing in a vacation. We look forward to a vacation, saving money, planning as if it will become a highlight of our year. Fasting is a spiritual vacation with God, traveling to foreign parts of your character, learning more about yourself. Breaking old patterns and developing a brand new culture that will affect the rest of your life.

Most of us live on the edge, rarely getting the sleep that we need to function with clear-mindedness. During a fast it is essential that you get enough sleep. Come home from work, take a shower, and allow yourself time to quietly and restfully meditate and pray.

by
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