

Prayer and Fasting Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Why should I fast?

The spiritual discipline of fasting helps us to quiet our own voice so that we can hear the voice of God more clearly, and to move from hearing to obeying. There is power in fasting and praying together. As we fast and pray together in January 2021, we expect God will equip us and guide us for the year ahead.

What does it mean to fast?

Fasting is the willful refrainment of physical gratification, sitting aside earthly pleasures to focus on the spiritual. Put another way, fasting is intentionally denying ourselves of those things that satisfy us, in order to gain a response from the spirit. It means renouncing the natural in order to invoke the supernatural

Do I have to be a Christian to fast?

Many people who are not Christians fast for dietary purposes, or in accordance with the religious practices of other religions. Fasting is different from dieting because the goal of fasting is to deepen our connection with God. Christians fast because Jesus taught that fasting is a way to connect with God (Matthew 6:16-21) and because fasting helps us to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 17:21; Acts 13:2-3).

Does a fast mean I can't eat anything?

We are inviting you to take part in some type of fast, and to commit to praying daily. The type of fast is up to you, but here are several options, including fasting from something other than food.

- Intermittent fasting, or fasting from one or two meals; some people set a time of day for their fast period, others eat just one meal a day or refrain from eating one specific meal a day.
- A partial fast, in which you restrict your diet, typically eliminating foods that have less nutritional value, or eliminating

snacks, eating a vegetarian diet, etc. The goal is discipline that turns your focus from food, from satisfying your physical hunger, so that you can become more aware of your spiritual hunger.

- A juice and water fast, which eliminates all solid food. This type of fast needs preparation and good health, and more information can be found at the links below. Some health conditions would preclude this option, so it's best to check with your medical provider to follow this fast for 21 days.
- A water-only fast; again this type of rigorous fast requires good health (check with a medical provider first) and good preparation. It is not recommended for someone who has never fasted before.
- Fasting from something else: social media, entertainment, or a specific thought pattern (negativity, for example). The goal of this fast is a change in our normal behavior that helps us to increase our awareness of and connection to God. For instance, you might want to do a "social media" fast if you notice your time on your phone is preventing you from taking time to pray and to be with God.

Is it safe for me to fast?

If you are someone with a specific physical condition, a history of unhealthy behavior patterns, or an eating disorder, you should check with a health provider to determine if it's safe for you to fast.

In general, fasting is safe to do within limits. People can fast from all food and drink for a limited amount of time, but only while also limiting activity. Likewise, it is possible to fast from food for up to 40 days, but again, this requires changes to your daily activities. If you have never fasted before it's best to begin with a meal, or with

a shorter period of time, 24 hours for instance. The suggestions for partial fasts, as noted above, offer several ways for you to practice the spiritual discipline of fasting if it is new for you.

Where does prayer fit in?

Generally, when fasting the time spent not eating is time we use to meet with God in prayer. The more fully you can simplify and adjust your daily routine to make space for fasting and prayer, the more available you are to be changed by God's word and his grace. This year, in our 21-day fast, we invite you to join us daily for 21 minutes of prayer. This will provide an opportunity for us to focus on the same daily Scripture and unite in prayer around it.

What if I have a health condition that means I'm not able to fast?

There are reasons (for instance, pregnancy, chronic health conditions or a history of eating disorders) for some people to avoid fasting. If you are not able to fast from food, we recommend you ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in finding another way to "humble yourself" and carve out extra time to meet with God in this season. Many people today find that taking time off from social media or even time off from accessing the internet for news and social commentary purposes awakens their awareness of spiritual hunger and allows deeper connection with God.

What if I start the fast and don't keep it up?

We encourage you to fast and pray with us for these 21 days, January 11-31. If you have a day when you get off-track there is grace! Just continue and you will still benefit from the effort to do this for 21 days; even as Jesus stumbled and fell when he carried the cross, you might experience challenges as you seek to learn this discipline of saying "no" to your physical hunger. Every day you do keep the fast adds strength to your spirit and helps you learn this discipline.