

PRESSING ON

FORWARD IN FAITH

HOW TO CONDUCT A

24-Hour Fast

A simple, practical guide to fasting with faith and purpose

What Is Fasting?

To fast is to voluntarily go without food, or some other regularly enjoyed, good gift from God, for a specific period of time for the sake of some spiritual purpose. Fasting is very counter-cultural in our overindulged, consumerist culture.

Fasting is a way to temporarily set aside our earthly desires in order to intensify our desire for God. It is an attitude of trust and dependence upon God — a way of saying, “God, I want you more than my necessary food.”

“I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” — Job 23:12

Why Fast?

Jesus fasted, and His language suggests that fasting is not a matter of “if,” but of “when.”

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” — Matthew 6:16–18

How Do I Conduct a 24-Hour Fast?

Before you start, understand that fasting is hard! It sounds much easier than it proves to be in practice. You may be surprised how on edge you feel when missing a meal. But remember, nothing worthwhile comes easily. Besides, when was the last time you intentionally took a step of faith outside your comfort zone? A 24-hour fast may be the most significant spiritual step you’ve taken in a long time.

To help you take this step of faith, below you'll find seven basic steps to guide you — especially helpful if you're new to fasting or have never seriously considered it.

Step 1: Ask the Medical Questions

If you have any special health concerns, it is highly recommended that you consult your physician before conducting a fast. Certain people should not consider a food fast, including expectant mothers, diabetics, and those on certain medications.

If a food fast is not an option, consider fasting from other things that take your time and attention, such as TV, your phone, or social media.

Step 2: Schedule Your Fast

Pick a date on our “40 Days of Prayer and Fasting” calendar. Sign up to fast on a day that works best with your schedule. A 24-hour fast is essentially a commitment to miss meals — for example, eating dinner one night, and then not eating again until dinner the next night (thus, missing breakfast and lunch).

Step 3: Plan Times of Prayer

Make specific plans to pray during your fast. The most obvious times might be during the meals you will be missing. As your schedule permits, set aside some additional periods of time for prayer.

Step 4: Determine the Type of Fast

Will you conduct a regular fast (water only) or a partial fast (water and juice)? It is recommended that you not chew gum or drink caffeinated beverages during your fast.

Step 5: Eat Healthy Before and After

Eat a healthy meal (low-fat, low-sugar) before and after your fast.

Step 6: Expect Some Side Effects

Everyone reacts differently to going 24 hours without food. Common side effects include headaches, bad breath, less energy, irritability, and hunger pangs. Use hunger pangs as a reminder of your hunger for God and your total dependence upon Him.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” — Matthew 5:6

Step 7: End with Thanksgiving

As you break your fast, thank God for the communion you had with Him. Thank Him for the things He taught you. By faith, thank Him for the prayers He will answer through your times of prayer.

Adapted from an article by Jim Leggett