

FASTING INSTRUCTION PACK

WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is the intentional denying of oneself, specifically of food, for the purpose of focusing on spiritual things over a specific period of time. There are a variety of ways a person can do this, several of which will be describe in this Instruction Pack.

The idea behind fasting is that we are demonstrating to ourselves the truth that Christ spoke in Matthew 4, that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” By denying ourselves of a real physical need for a specific period of time, we are focusing on our dependence on God.

WHY DO WE HEAR SO LITTLE ABOUT FASTING?

Fasting is something the Bible speaks of often, but has largely become a lost practice in modern church culture. One of the reasons it has become a lost practice is due to common misunderstandings of Christ’ teachings on fasting in Matthew 6 where Jesus instructs us not to fast for the purpose of drawing others attention at how “spiritual” we are for sacrificing food for God. Because of this, very few churches ever even teach on the subject, and unfortunately, even fewer ever participate in this powerful experience. Christ was not teaching us to “never talk about fasting.” He was telling us to keep it as a personal exercise, and not to seek others sympathy or approval based on our weakened physical state. We are to go about our normal activities with no outward demonstration of suffering.

Also, because fasting is so counter-intuitive to the self-indulgent, consumerism mentality of our culture, the thought of skipping a single meal seems disdainful, let alone multiple days.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT FASTING?

A LOT! Feel free to look up the following references that give us insights about what fasting is, when and how to do it, and why God values it as a spiritual practice in our lives.

- 2 Chronicles 20:3-4: To meet a specific need
- Ezra 8:20-23: To seek God’s favor
- Nehemiah 1:4-11: For repentance
- Esther 4:14-17: Done in community
- Daniel 9:3: To receive guidance from God
- Joel 2:12: For revival/Obedience to God
- Matthew 4:1-4: To draw close to God/Gain His strength
- Matthew 6:16-18: Keep a clean, uncomplaining appearance

WHY IS LIFECITY CHURCH FOCUSED ON FASTING?

LifeCity Church was built on prayer and fasting. We understand that unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Collectively, several dozens of people have fasted, praying specifically for LifeCity Church before it ever launched. Literally hundreds of days of fasting have been spent, committed to praying for our church before it even began.

Fasting is a means of keeping us concentrated on seeking God. Every hunger pang, every skipped meal is a constant reminder that we need God, and are putting aside food for that specific time to focus on Him instead.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS TO FASTING?

Going without food for long periods of time can tax your strength and immune system. But the greatest difficulty with fasting is psychological. Your brain has been programmed to eat several times during a day through years of repeatedly doing so. Breaking that routine is a tough mental step to overcome. Because of this, it is most difficult for approximately the first 36 hours. You will physically experience many abnormal feelings during the time you fast including:

- Fatigue
- Slightly accelerated heart rate
- Sore muscles
- Dry/stale-tasting mouth
- Light-headedness when standing quickly

There are other risks/concerns for fasting for periods over 7 days:

- Low blood sugar
- Increased fatigue
- Low electrolytes
- Low blood pressure

Because of these potential health concerns, every individual who chooses to participate in a fast agrees to assume all of their own risks for doing so, medical and otherwise. Only you and your professional medical care provider can determine whether or not you are healthy enough to participate in this exercise.

If you are pregnant, nursing, or have some health condition (such as HBP, heart disease, diabetes, etc.) fasting is a spiritual exercise to consider avoiding.

The length of time spent fasting will largely determine what physical affects you experience. Jesus, and others in Scripture fasted for up to 40 days. Medically, most sources indicate that the average healthy adult can survive for up to 60 days without food. We personally know individuals who have fasted for over 4 weeks. But this is not some weird religious competition. So no one should do it just to prove they can.

BESIDES “SPIRITUALLY” ARE THERE ANY OTHER BENEFITS TO FASTING?

Several. Despite the potential risks, several legitimate medical studies have shown that fasting for specific periods of time are not only good for spiritual insights, but other, more tangible benefits as well.

For instance:

- Physically: Almost everyone who fasts reports losing weight, and feeling stronger afterwards. Additionally, fasting is a natural way to purge your body of toxins, and other unhealthy build-ups in your digestive system and entire body.
- Mentally: Many people who have fasted for more than 3 days indicate that during the latter days of their fast and after the fast, they feel a great sense of mental clarity and focus. Those who have fasted for extended periods of time (over 7 days) often say they have never felt as “clear-headed.”

- Emotionally: Because of the spiritual benefits, many people who fast for up to three days or longer generally feel happier, more satisfied, less irritable, and content.

ARE THERE ANY “BAD” REASONS FOR FASTING?

- Weight loss. While the vast majority of people participating in a fast will experience weight loss, this is a poor motive, even medically speaking. Generally, most people who fast for this reason over-compensate afterwards and end up gaining weight!
- Ego. Trying to prove yourself to someone by going without food is nothing but pride. And usually backfires somehow.
- Other: For the purpose of this Instruction Pack, we are dealing with fasting from a spiritual perspective. While there are legitimate, non-spiritual purposes for fasting (cleansing, healing, etc.), that is not the subject dealt with here.

WHAT TYPES OF FASTS ARE THERE?

There are generally three types of fasts that we talk about at LifeCity Church. The fast that you choose to participate in depends upon your personal health concerns. The three we refer to are:

- ***Daniel Fast:*** This fast involves eliminating all but a select few food groups from one’s diet and is the safest/easiest type of fast. It involves reducing one’s diet to raw fruits and vegetables. Water and juices are also included in a Daniel Fast. This means eliminating meats, sweets, breads, pastas, and dairies.
- ***Juice Fast:*** This fast means no food whatsoever, but drinking fresh juices is still allowed. This is a great way to get most of your important vitamins and minerals while still experiencing a meaningful spiritual practice.
- ***Water Fast:*** As it’s name implies, this fast eliminates all intake but water. This is the purest form of a fast, and also the most difficult. When the Bible speaks of fasting, it is almost universally accepted that a “water fast” is what the mentioned individuals participated in.

WHAT SHOULD I DO BEFORE FASTING OVER MULTIPLE DAYS?

Because fasting is something that impacts the mind and the body, we suggest that you prepare for a fast in the following ways:

- Physically:
 - Break any addictive habits (caffeine, smoking, etc.)
 - Take appropriate vitamin/mineral supplements (vitamin B12)
 - Eat moderate portion sizes/do not try to eat 2 days of food in 1 day!
 - Eat Dark leafy greens, raw preferably.
 - Include healthy proteins such as eggs and fish.
 - Drink plenty of water.
 - Avoid eating lots of sugary foods.
- Mentally:
 - Pay attention to everything you eat. This will help keep you from eating “accidentally” once you begin to fast.

- Consider fasting with another person. There is strength in accountability.
- Become comfortable with not “snacking” in-between meals.
- Begin praying beforehand for the right attitude to focus during the fast.

HOW SHOULD I COME OFF OF A FAST?

The longer an individual fasts, the more care that person must take in resuming normal activities and diet. Generally, however long a person fasts, an equal amount of time should be taken to recover fully. If water fasting for 7 days or more, it is advised that a person take the following diet afterward:

- 1st day after fast: Juices, broths, and water.
- 2nd – 3rd day: Add soft fruits and eggs.
- 4th – 6th day: Add dairy and soft breads.
- 7th day: Begin eating meats, but control portion-size.

HOW LONG IS LIFECITY CHALLENGING PEOPLE TO JOIN THEM IN FASTING?

LifeCity Church is encouraging healthy Christ-followers to set aside three days that they will spend time to fast and pray for either:

- **3 MEALS in three days:** Give up one meal time a day for three days, or fast all day for one full day, using the time to pray for our church.
- **3 DAYS in a row:** Fast all day for three full days, praying just as with the previous fast.

SO WHAT DO I NEED TO DECIDE?

1. “Am I healthy enough to assume all of the potential risks for fasting?”
_____ Yes! _____ No/Unsure?
2. “What kind of fast will I participate in?”
_____ Daniel _____ Juice _____ Water
3. “How long will I fast for?”
_____ 3 MEALS _____ 3 DAYS
4. “When will I begin my fast?”
_____/_____/_____

WHAT IF I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

You can always email us at the church email, or talk to Pastor John.

Email us at hello@lifecitynow.org