



LVCC FASTING GUIDE

WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is the intentional act of denying oneself—most commonly by abstaining from food—for the purpose of focusing on spiritual matters over a specific period of time. There are a variety of ways to fast, many of which will be outlined in this guide.

At its core, fasting is a way of reminding ourselves of a powerful spiritual truth that Jesus declared in Matthew 4: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” By temporarily denying ourselves a basic physical need, we create space to focus more intently on our dependence on God and His sustaining word.

WHY DO WE HEAR SO LITTLE ABOUT FASTING?

Fasting is a spiritual practice that the Bible addresses often, yet it has largely fallen out of use in modern American church culture. One reason for this decline is a common misunderstanding of Jesus’ teachings on fasting in Matthew 6. In that passage, Jesus warns against fasting with the intention of drawing attention to ourselves or appearing “super spiritual” in the eyes of others.

As a result of misinterpreting this teaching, many churches rarely address the topic, and even fewer engage in fasting as a community or personal spiritual discipline. But Jesus was not instructing us to never speak of fasting—He was emphasizing that fasting should be a sincere and personal act of devotion to God, not a display for human approval. We are not to seek sympathy or admiration for our sacrifice. Instead, we should carry on with our daily lives without visibly showing signs of discomfort or weakness.

Fasting also stands in stark contrast to the self-indulgent, consumer-driven mentality that dominates much of our culture. In such a context, even skipping a single meal can seem extreme—let alone abstaining for multiple days. Yet it is precisely this counter-cultural nature that makes fasting such a powerful spiritual practice. It reminds us that our ultimate satisfaction and sustenance come not from food, but from God Himself.

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 6:16-8** – To keep a clean, uncomplaining appearance



WHY SHOULD I FAST?

There are many excellent reasons to participate in a fast. Ultimately, all fasting should be done for the purpose of growing closer in our walk with God. But specifically, you can focus on a number of different areas, including:

- **Protection** – From harm, temptation, and illness.
- **Unity** – For our church, your family, etc.
- **Favor** – With God, or specific people.
- **Provision** – Seeking a physical or financial need.
- **Guidance** – Seeking to discern God's will over your life, or for a specific purpose.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS TO FASTING?

Fasting, especially for extended periods, places stress on the body and mind. While it can be a powerful spiritual discipline, it's important to be aware of the physical and psychological challenges you may encounter—particularly if you are attempting a longer fast (over 3 days).

One of the greatest initial challenges is *mental*. Your body has been trained over years to expect food at regular times. Breaking that rhythm can feel unnatural and even distressing at first. For most people, the first **24–36 hours** are the most difficult as your mind and body adjust to the change.

Common Physical Symptoms (In the First Few Days)

During a fast, you may experience:

- **Hunger!** You will be hungry, but filling up on water can mitigate this some.
- **Fatigue** – Decreased energy is common as your body begins to rely on stored energy.
- **Slightly elevated heart rate** – A normal response to lower caloric intake.
- **Sore muscles** – A result of the body shifting its energy processes.
- **Dry or stale-tasting mouth** – Often due to dehydration or reduced saliva production.
- **Light-headedness when standing quickly** – Caused by changes in blood pressure.

Additional Risks for Fasts Longer Than 7 Days

Extended fasts (over one week) should be approached with extra caution and ideally under medical supervision. Risks may include:

- **Low blood sugar** – Can cause dizziness, confusion, or fainting.
- **Increased fatigue** – The body begins conserving energy more aggressively.
- **Electrolyte imbalances** – Can affect heart rhythm, muscle function, and nerve responses.
- **Low blood pressure** – May lead to fainting, especially when changing positions quickly.
- **Muscle loss** – While your body will eventually burn fat, it will burn muscle first, to conserve its “reserve” energy.

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, both 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 high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, eating disorder, etc.) fasting may be a spiritual exercise to consider avoiding.** The length of time spent fasting will largely determine what physical effects you experience. Jesus, and others in Scripture fasted



for up to 40 days. There are plenty of people alive today who have imitated this example of a 40 day fast, but again, only those healthy enough to do so should attempt this, and do so under guidance from their medical professionals.

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

Several. Despite some risks, numerous credible medical studies and personal testimonies affirm that fasting can yield not only spiritual insight but also a range of physical, mental, and emotional benefits.

Here are some of the key advantages:

- **Physical Benefits:**

Many people who fast report weight loss and an overall increase in physical well-being. Fasting is also recognized as a natural method for detoxifying the body, helping to clear out harmful toxins and accumulated waste from the digestive system and beyond.

- **Mental Benefits:**

Individuals who fast for more than three days often describe a significant increase in mental clarity and concentration. Those who engage in extended fasts (seven days or more) frequently report feeling more “clear-headed” than they ever have before.

- **Emotional Benefits:**

Along with the spiritual clarity that fasting brings, many participants note a boost in emotional health. They often feel more peaceful, satisfied, less irritable, and emotionally balanced during and after a fast lasting several days.

ARE THERE ANY “BAD” REASONS FOR FASTING?

Yes—while fasting can offer significant benefits, it’s important to examine our motives before engaging in it. Here are several reasons that are *not* appropriate or spiritually healthy:

- **Weight Loss:**

Although weight loss is a common side effect of fasting, it should never be the primary motivation—especially in the context of a spiritual fast. Fasting for this reason is not only spiritually misaligned, but it’s often ineffective in the long term. Many who fast solely to lose weight tend to overcompensate afterward and end up gaining more weight than they lost.

- **Ego or Pride:**

Fasting to prove something to others—or even to yourself—is rooted in pride. This kind of motivation can easily become a self-righteous display, which Jesus warns against in Matthew 6. Fasting is meant to be an act of humility, not a performance for human approval.

- **Eating Disorders:**

If you struggle with disordered eating, a total (water-only) fast can be harmful and should be avoided. In such cases, it’s essential to consult with a medical professional and consider alternative forms of fasting that are safe and appropriate for your health and spiritual journey.

- **Non-Spiritual Motives (in this context):**

While there are valid physical reasons for fasting—such as cleansing or healing—this guide is focused specifically on fasting for spiritual purposes. Other types of fasting may be beneficial, but they fall outside the scope of what is being addressed here.



WHAT TYPES OF FASTS ARE THERE?

At Life Valley Church, we typically refer to three main types of fasts. The type of fast you choose should depend on your personal health conditions, spiritual goals, and any medical advice you've received. Each type offers a unique experience and level of intensity:

- **Daniel Fast:**

This is the most accessible and health-safe option, especially for beginners or those with medical considerations. The Daniel Fast involves eliminating most foods by limiting the diet to raw fruits, vegetables, and natural juices. Water and fresh juices are permitted, but meats, sweets, breads, pastas, and dairy products are excluded. Some may include broth. This is the most safe and sustainable way to practice fasting while still maintaining essential nutrients.

- **Juice Fast:**

A juice fast involves abstaining from solid foods altogether, while continuing to drink fresh fruit and vegetable juices. This approach helps maintain some energy and nutrient intake, making it a good middle-ground option for those seeking a more intense spiritual focus without completely eliminating calories.

- **Water Fast:**

This is the most rigorous form of fasting, involving complete abstinence from all food and beverages except water. It is considered the “purest” type of fast and is the most commonly referenced method in Scripture. However, it is also the most physically demanding and should only be undertaken by those in good health and, ideally, with prior fasting experience.

HOW SHOULD I PREPARE FOR A MULTI-DAY FAST?

Fasting affects both the body and the mind, so preparation is key—especially if you plan to fast for multiple days. Taking time to prepare can ease the transition, reduce physical discomfort, and help you stay focused spiritually.

Physical Preparation

Before you begin your fast, consider the following steps to prepare your body:

- **Break addictive habits** like caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, or sugar ahead of time. This will reduce withdrawal symptoms during the fast.
- **Start taking appropriate supplements** such as vitamin B12 or a multivitamin to support your health during the fast. This is optional, of course.
- **Avoid binge eating** in the days leading up to your fast. Eating excessively to “store up” only puts more strain on your system when you begin fasting.
- **Eat nutritious foods**, especially:
 - Dark leafy greens (raw, if possible)
 - Healthy proteins like eggs or fish
- **Hydrate well.** Drink plenty of water in the days before the fast.
- **Limit sugar and processed foods**, which can lead to energy crashes and cravings.

Mental and Spiritual Preparation

Fasting is as much a mental and spiritual discipline as it is a physical one. Prepare your heart and mind by:

- **Becoming mindful of what you eat.** Start paying close attention so you don't eat “accidentally” out of habit once the fast begins.
- **Fasting with a partner.** Accountability can help you stay encouraged and committed.



- **Getting used to skipping snacks.** This helps train your mind to resist impulsive eating.
- **Praying ahead of time.** Ask God to prepare your heart, sharpen your focus, and give you the right mindset for the fast.

HOW SHOULD I COME OFF A FAST?

Breaking a fast is just as important as how you begin it. The longer your fast, the more gradually you should return to normal eating. A good general rule: **take as many days to reintroduce food as you spent fasting.**

This allows your digestive system to readjust slowly and safely, avoiding shock to your body and unnecessary discomfort.

Post-Fast Recovery Plan (Example for a 7-Day Water Fast)

Day 1:

- Stick to **clear liquids** only: fresh juices, light broths, and plenty of water.
- Sip slowly and space out your intake to avoid nausea.

Days 2–3:

- Begin eating **soft, easily digestible foods**: soft fruits (like bananas or melons), well-cooked vegetables, and eggs.
- Avoid raw vegetables, meat, or anything too fibrous or heavy.

Days 4–6:

- Gradually introduce **firmer vegetables, some dairy** (if you can tolerate it), and **soft breads** or grains (like oatmeal or whole grain toast).
- Continue avoiding spicy or fried foods.

Day 7 and Beyond:

- Begin eating **small portions of meat** or heavier proteins.
- Go slowly—overeating at this stage can lead to stomach cramps or indigestion. Stick with lean meats and gradually reintroduce variety.

HOW LONG IS LIFE VALLEY CHALLENGING PEOPLE TO JOIN THEM IN FASTING?

We are inviting all healthy Christ-followers to join us in a dedicated time of fasting and prayer for Life Valley Church and the people of the South Bay. This is a time to seek God together and intercede for our community in unity and purpose.

You are encouraged to participate at one of two levels, depending on your health, experience, and spiritual leading:

- **Option 1: Fast One Meal per Day for Three Days**

Commit to skipping **one meal each day** over the course of three days. Use that time to pray, read Scripture, and focus on God's heart for our church and city.

- **Option 2: Full Three-Day Fast**

Set aside **three full days** for fasting (juice or water, as appropriate) and prayer. This is a deeper level of sacrifice and commitment, and we recommend preparing physically and spiritually in advance.

- **Option 3: Longer**

If you have experience fasting, you may consider joining us in fasting for more than a few days. We would strongly encourage you to involve your medical professional in this process, but it can also be a deeply meaningful experience when done right.



SO WHAT DO I NEED TO DECIDE?

Before beginning your fast, take a few minutes to prayerfully consider the following questions. Write down your answers to help commit your plan to God and stay focused throughout your fast.

1. Am I healthy enough to assume the potential risks of fasting?

(If unsure, consult a medical professional.)

☐ Yes! ☐ No / Unsure?

2. What kind of fast will I participate in?

☐ Daniel Fast ☐ Juice Fast ☐ Water Fast

3. How long will I fast?

☐ 3 Meals ☐ 3 Days ☐ Longer (____ Days)

4. When will I fast?

Date(s): _____ / _____ / _____

WHAT IF I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

In addition to consulting with a medical professional, we are here to support you in your fasting journey. If you have any questions or need guidance, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. We're happy to help if you decide to participate in a fast.

Feel free to email me at pastorjohn@lifevalley.church with any inquiries, and I will do my best to assist you.