

BASIC GUIDELINE TO FASTING AND PRAYER

by Lou Engle

With this call to enter into extended fasting, we must prepare ourselves adequately so that the fast can honor God and fulfill its purpose. I want to share some thoughts from our own experiences to help and encourage you.

1. Seek medical advice if you are older or have health challenges

2. Fast and pray to humble yourself and purify your worship

In Fasting we are not trying to get something from God; we are seeking to realign our hearts' affections with His. We do holy violence to the "pleasures which wage war against the soul," opening the way for a greater submission to the Holy Spirit. Lust is a perverse form of devotion. Fasting enables us to cleanse the sanctuary of our hearts from such idols.

3. Take time to pray and read the Word

This may seem obvious, but busyness and distractions can keep you from devotions. Reading books with testimonies of victories gained through fasting will encourage you. Register at TheJesusFast.com to schedule your fast and receive encouragements by email.

4. Have a clear target for prayer focus

Without a vision (a clear, prophetic prayer goal), the people perish. During a fast, I have four or five prayer goals I have clearly articulated. When I am not deeply motivated by a clear goal, I usually fast until break-fast! Write down your vision so you can run with it.

5. Do the fast with someone else

Two are better than one! We encourage young people to talk this through with their parents before starting the fast. Parents and kids should consider fasting together.

6. Do not give in to condemnation if you fail

The "to fast or not to fast" dilemma can be a major tool of the enemy. Even though you may fail several times, God always extends grace. Hit reset and resume right where you left off.

7. Husbands and wives, consider sexual abstinence for the sake of prayer (1 Corinthians 7:5)

8. Determine the length in advance of the fast, not after you start

- A total fast is without water. This is extremely hard on the body. Do not go beyond three days.
- A water-only fast is a very challenging but deeply spiritual experience. Many people can endure forty days on water alone, though this is dependent on one's weight and metabolism.
- A fruit and vegetable juice fast allows you to enter into fasting but still gives enough energy to function. Most people can do a forty-day juice fast. Out of consideration for

their health and metabolism, I encourage teenagers to drink juice and protein drinks to sustain them.

9. Prepare physically

Two days before your fast, limit your intake of food to fruit and vegetables. Fruit is a natural cleanser and easy to digest. Stop drinking coffee before the fast. Prepare yourself for mental discomforts such as impatience, crankiness, and anxiety. Expect physical discomforts. You may experience dizziness, headaches and different kinds of pains. The headaches are not necessarily a sign to stop fasting. Your body is working to cleanse itself of impurities.

10. Prepare for opposition

On the first day of your fast, you can bet doughnuts will somehow show up at the office or in class. Your spouse (or mom) will suddenly be inspired to cook your favorite meals. Take this as encouragement from God to press ahead! Many times you may feel increased emotional tension at home. My fasts are just as difficult on my wife as they are on me. Satan tempted Jesus on His fast, and we must expect the same. Discouragement may come in like a flood, but recognize the source and take your stand upon the victory of Christ.

11. Fast in secret

Do not boast about your fast, but do not go to extraordinary lengths to mask it when people inquire; if necessary, just let them know you will not be eating. The bigger deal you make of it, the more attention you draw. Be discreet, be transparent, then move humbly along.

12. Break the fast over several days with fruit juice and/or light soups

On a light juice fast or a water fast, your digestive system shuts down. It can be dangerous if you eat too much too soon. Break such a fast gently with several days of diluted, nonacidic juice, then regular juice, followed by fruit and vegetables. When breaking one of my early water fasts, I ate too much too quickly and almost needed hospitalization. Be careful!

13. Feel free to rest a lot and to continue to exercise

14. If you are pregnant or nursing, do not fast PERIOD

15. Expect to hear God's voice in the Word, dreams, visions, and revelations

Daniel prepared himself to receive revelation through fasting (Daniel 10:1-3). Scripture also speaks of a fasting reward (Matthew 6:18). Expect God to fellowship and communicate with you in special ways.

16. Breakthroughs often come after a fast, not during it

Do not listen to the lie that nothing is happening. It is my conviction that every fast done in faith will be rewarded.