

## **Some Thoughts on Fasting**

### **Why fast?**

The first answer to consider is that Jesus assumed we would. When Jesus gave instructions on how to pray, He used the phrase "when you fast." In other words, He assumed that fasting would be a regular part of our prayer lives.

It's also clear from scripture that we can receive a degree of spiritual power when we fast. When the disciples asked Jesus how He was able to cast a demon out of a young boy when they weren't, He replied: "These kind only come out by prayer and fasting." Interestingly, in this passage, Jesus casts the demon out without praying OR fasting. What He was saying, then, is that when one regularly fasts and prays, they are habitually formed into the kind of person who can walk in spiritual authority.

So, fasting is not about twisting God's arm to intervene in a situation. Rather, fasting changes US, and trains us to adopt a posture where we are more in tune with the spirit of God. Our prayers will be more effective from that place, but it's important to note that God doesn't grant us things because we fast, as if it's a transactional exchange. We already have the ear of our Father - fasting just helps us walk in deeper conviction of that truth and to align our prayers with His heart.

That's not to say that we can't fast about particular situations and ask the Lord for help and intervention. In the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, corporate fasts were often called to bring God's people back to their first love for God, and to catalyze breakthrough in the life of the community. Likewise, with this fast, we are asking the Lord to shape and guide our community in its decisions and priorities this new year as we focus our eyes on what He desires to build here at HTC.

### **What is fasting?**

Pete Greig, from 24/7 Prayer ([prayercourse.org](http://prayercourse.org)), puts it this way: "Fasting is the practice of giving something up we normally consume to focus on God." In abstaining from things like food or entertainment, we leave room to feast instead on the Lord, by spending time in prayer. Fasting gives us the opportunity to rewire all of our various desires towards their ultimate and deepest source of satisfaction, the Lord Himself. By placing God before these things, we recommit ourselves to Him while saying a decisive "no" to things that may distract us from Him.

### **What do we fast?**

We can fast lots of things, not just food! There's freedom in your fast, so don't feel bound to any one way of approaching it. When determining what to fast, a good place to start is considering if there are habits or priorities in your life which are in danger of becoming idols, or of becoming an unhealthy source of security or comfort in your life. Some examples of things to fast might be: food, technology, social media, games, hobbies, alcohol/vices, certain relationships, or any combination. That being said, there IS something uniquely powerful about fasting food, so we do gently encourage you to give that a try in whatever way feels approachable to you.

### **How do we fast?**

When fasting food, there are several ways to structure your fast. You can do a time restricted fast, where you only eat during certain hours of the day. You can do a nutrient restricted fast, where you're still eating, but on a limited diet. The "Daniel fast" is a common example where you eat fruits and vegetables only. Some find it helpful to eat a handful of nuts on the "Daniel fast" as a protein source. Click [HERE](#) for some great recipes for a Daniel fast. Other examples include a no sugars diet, a meat only diet, a keto diet, a liquid diet, where you eat no solid foods at all, or water fast, where you only drink water. Click [HERE](#) for some practical tips on how to do a liquid fast. Finally, click [HERE](#) for advice on a water-only fast.

### **Medical disclaimer:**

If you have health issues (especially relating to your digestion and/or metabolism), consult a doctor before introducing any drastic changes to your diet. That being said, there's broad medical consensus that strategic fasting can be physically restorative, especially TO metabolic conditions. If you have any questions or concerns about your current health situation, choose one of the alternative forms of fasting that still include some food. If you are currently unwell, please do not fast all food, however, eating healthily is still a good option.

### **What to expect:**

Whatever you fast, you can expect to navigate a suite of physical and emotional responses. A key principle to keep in mind is this: whenever you get hungry or have the internal impulse to engage with whatever activity or substance you're fasting from, THAT'S your cue to turn your attention to the Lord in your heart and say a prayer.

As you continue the fast, it's likely that discomfort will emerge, and perhaps irritableness. Take that to the Lord! When gold is refined, heat is applied, and impurities rise to the top. Sometimes fasting exposes heart issues and if you allow the Lord to meet you there, He can minister to those things. You might be surprised by what new

avenues of prayer are opened up in these spaces, and your heart will soften as you follow these promptings.

**Practical food fast tips:**

Don't underestimate the importance of water. If you're feeling hungry, you'd be amazed how much better you'll feel if you drink a large glass of water. If you're on a nutrient restricted fast, try incorporating bananas or another source of potassium.

Good first meals after a food fast include a single egg on a small piece of toast, a small portion of rice and beans, or cooked vegetables (gently seasoned, if at all). If you're coming off an extended water fast (3 days or more), try sipping bone broth and/or juice several hours before your first meal to gently kickstart your metabolism.

Take it slow! You'll take that first bite and immediately want to eat a lot of food, and quickly. To prevent this, give yourself 20-30 minutes after eating a predetermined amount to decide whether to eat any more for that meal.