

GREATER BETHEL MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH, INC.

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TOPIC: SPIRITUAL FASTING

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:16-18

March 4, 2025

The Bible presents fasting as something good, profitable, and expected. The Book of Acts records believers fasting before they made important decisions (Acts 13:4; 14:23).

Fasting and prayer are often linked together (Luke 2:37; 5:33). Too often, the focus of fasting is on the lack of food. Instead, **the purpose of fasting should be to take your eyes off the things of this world and instead focus on God.** Fasting is a way to demonstrate to God yourself, that you are serious about your relationship with Him. Fasting helps you to gain a new perspective and a renewed reliance upon God.

- Fasting is not about food, but it is about **consecration** and **concentration**.
- Fasting is **willingly** and **deliberately** removing ourselves from the business of life.
- Fasting is not intended to punish your flesh but to **focus on God.** Fasting should not be considered a “**dieting method**” either

By taking our eyes off the things of this world, we can focus better on Christ. Fasting is not a way to get God to do what we want. **Fasting changes us, not God.** Fasting is to be done in a spirit of humility and a joyful attitude. **Read Matthew 6:16-18**

Not So Fast

Fasting is voluntarily going without food — or any other regularly enjoyed, good gift from God — for the sake of some spiritual purpose. It is markedly countercultural in our consumerist society, like abstaining from sex until marriage.

Jesus assumes his followers will fast and even promises it will happen. He doesn't say “if,” but “when you fast” (**Matthew 6:16**). And he doesn't say his followers might fast, but “they will” (**Matthew 9:15**).

Radical, Temporary Measure

Fasting is for this world, for stretching our hearts to get fresh air beyond the pain and trouble around us. And it is for **the battle against sin and weakness inside us**. We express our discontent with our sinful selves and our **longing for more of Christ**.

- “Fasting is markedly countercultural in our consumerist society.”

How to Start Fasting

Fasting sounds so simple, and yet the world, our flesh, and the devil conspire to introduce all sorts of complications that keep it from happening. Here are six simple pieces of advice.

1. Start small.

Don't go from no fasting to attempting a weeklong. Start with one meal; maybe fast one meal a week for several weeks. Then try two meals, and work your way up to a daylong fast. Perhaps eventually try a two-day juice fast.

2. Plan what you'll do instead of eating.

Fasting isn't merely an act of self-deprivation, but a **spiritual discipline** for seeking more of God's fullness. This means we should have a plan for *what positive pursuit to undertake* in the time it normally takes to eat.

We spend a good portion of our day with food in front of us. One significant part of fasting is the time it **creates for prayer and meditation on God's word or some act of love for others**.

Before diving headlong into a fast, craft a simple plan. Connect it to your purpose for the fast. **Each fast should have a specific spiritual purpose**.

3. Consider how it will affect others.

Fasting is no license to be unloving. It would be sad to lack concern and care for others around us because of this expression of heightened focus on God.

4. Try different kinds of fasting – partial, corporate, or Daniel

5. Fast from something other than food.

Fasting from food is not necessarily for everyone. Some health conditions keep even the most devout from the traditional course. However, fasting is

not limited to abstaining from food. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, “Fasting should really be made to include abstinence from anything which is legitimate in and of itself for the sake of some special spiritual purpose.” “Without a purpose and plan, it’s not Christian fasting; it’s just going hungry.”

6. Don’t think of white elephants.

When your empty stomach starts to growl and begins sending your brain every “feed me” signal it can, don’t be content to let your mind dwell on the fact that you haven’t eaten

Christian fasting turns its attention to Jesus or some great cause of his in the world.

Question: “What is a Daniel fast?”

Answer: The concept of a Daniel fast comes from **Daniel 1:8-14**. A Daniel fast is eating only fruits and vegetables for a certain amount of time, and abstaining from meat products.

GUIDELINES FOR DANIEL FAST (*Foods We May Eat*)

Whole Grains: Brown Rice, Oats, Barley

Legumes (the fruit or seed of plants): Dried Beans, Pinto Beans, Split Peas, Lentils, Black Eyed Peas

Fruits: Apples, Apricots, Bananas, Blackberries, Blueberries, Boysenberries, Cantelope, Cherries, Cranberries, Oats, Figs, Grapefruit, Grapes, Guava, Honeydew Melon, Kiwi, Lemons, Limes, Mangoes, Nectarines, Papayas, Peaches, Pears, Pineapples, Plums, Prunes, Raisins, Raspberries, Strawberries, Tangelos, Tangerines, Watermelon

Vegetables: Artichokes, Asparagus, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery, Chili Peppers, Corn, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Garlic, Gingerroot, Kale, Leeks, Lettuce, Mushrooms, Mustard Greens, Okra, Onions, Parsley, Potatoes, Radishes, Rutabagas, Scallions, Spinach, Sprouts, Squashes, Sweet Potatoes, Tomatoes, Turnips, Watercress, Yams, Zucchini Seeds, Nuts, Sprouts

Liquids: Spring Water, Distilled Water, 100% All-Natural Fruit Juices, 100% All Natural Vegetable Juices

(Foods to Avoid)

Meat, White Rice, Fried Foods, Caffeine, Carbonated Beverages
Foods Containing Preservatives or Additives, Refined Sugar, Sugar
Substitutes, White Flour and All Products Using It, Margarine, Shortening,
High Fat Products

If you are seeking the presence of God and would like to learn more of His truths, I want to encourage you to join the ministerial staff in this spiritual fast. The details are here listed. Please adjust them to meet your situation.

1. The fasting hours are 6:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. every Tuesday during Lent. **(March 11, 18, and 25 – April 8, 15, and 22)**
2. Avoid all television, newspapers, radio, social media, and all worldly distractions.
3. Do not involve yourself in recreation, such as sports, movies, etc. Avoid reading anything that is not spiritual. Only read things that are Biblical and inspiring. If it doesn't give you a sense of God's presence, then don't read it! Consider it to be poison or a breaking of the fast.
4. Spend all your time (outside of work and other obligations) studying the Bible, praying, listening to sermons, singing hymns, sitting quietly, and meditating on God. Reading the Book of Psalms is good.
5. Prayerfully search your Bible, with the help of a dictionary and concordance, and seek the truth and the wisdom that God will reveal to you.
6. Do nothing that brings you carnal pleasure (such as going to the mall, casual shopping, playing worldly games, etc.) Your focus must remain on God.