



Why fast?

Fasting was a practiced discipline in both the Old and New Testament. Moses, Elijah and Paul all fasted, as did Jesus; who clearly expected his followers to do so too. Key figures in Christian history like Luther, Calvin and the Wesleys all made fasting a regular part of their lives. Christians who fast regularly report these sorts of blessings, and we pray we'll see some of these too:

- More time to pray and seek God.
- A reminder that 'people can't live on bread alone, but on the word of God'. Physical hunger can sharpen and define spiritual hunger, and be a helpful reminder of where our true nourishment lies.
- Fasting and prayer can help revive our 'first love' for God and result in a more intimate relationship with Christ.
- Fasting is a biblical way to humble ourselves in the sight of God. (Psalm 35:13; Ezra 8:21).
- Fasting can help us see our true spiritual condition, leading to repentance from unconfessed sin and taking us through brokenness and repentance, towards a restored spiritual life.
- Fasting can transform our prayer life into a richer and more personal experience.

Who shouldn't fast?

Be wise; if you know there are medical reasons why fasting may be harmful to you, don't. If you're unsure, seek professional medical advice. If you are under any type of medication that needs to be taken with food, make sure you talk to your doctor before fasting. Pregnant women, young children and those with significant health challenges shouldn't fast, and if you do the sort of job and have the sort of metabolism that could damage yourself or others if you miss a meal, then don't.

If you can't fast from food in general, explore other kinds of fasts you could do, individually or as a family: a fast from screen time, from a particular TV show, from listening to music, from one particular sort of food, etc. But if you are in good health and can fast from food, do.

We advise that **we fast from food, but not from drink**. What sort of drink you take is of course entirely up to you: some may choose to fast from caffeine, sugary drinks, etc. A popular choice is to fast from food but to keep drinking water and fruit juices. But whatever you choose **make you sure you always stay hydrated**.

Other useful tips

You might find it helpful to eat smaller meals before you miss a meal altogether. Resist the urge to feast before a fast. Cutting down slightly on portions will signal to your mind, stomach, and appetite that less food is acceptable. Weaning yourself off caffeine and sugar products could also ease your initial hunger or discomfort.

If possible, change your schedule as you're fasting to make it possible to spend the time with God in fellowship, worship, adoration and Bible reading that you would have spent eating. Where possible, get together with others to pray.

As we enter this time of prayer and fasting, let's be aware that the Evil One will do everything he can to pull us away from this, and will tell us we're wasting our time.

Jesus said ...

¹⁶ "When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Matthew 6:16-18

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Belmont Chapel, Western Way, Exeter, EX1 2DB 01392 258029
office@belmontexeter.church www.belmontexeter.church
Registered Charity No. 1184841

