

21 days

PRAYER & FASTING

PRINCIPLES OF FASTING

- **Fasting is a forgotten principle:** Jesus says we will fast (Matthew 9:15, NIV) and in the Sermon on the Mount He assigns the same priority to fasting as to generosity and praying (Matthew 6:3: but when you give ; 6:6: but when you pray; 6:17: but when you fast).
- **Fasting subordinates the soul:** Psalm 35:13 (NIV): I humbled my soul with fasting. The soul is the half-hearted part in us. It consists of wanting (I want...), thinking (I think...), emotions (I feel...). The **four appetites** of humans are for: 1) food, 2) sex, 3) material or immaterial things 4) the spiritual. Food intake supports 2) and 3) so there is nothing left to satisfy the spiritual appetite. When food is renounced, 2) and 3) are also dried up and all appetite is concentrated on spiritual growth. When the soul becomes quiet, the spirit becomes loud.
- **Fasting does not change God, it changes me:** Often fasting is misunderstood as "blackmail of God", he must act now, if I show God through fasting how important something is to me. However, we do not fast to get from God, or to change his mind, but to subordinate our will to God's will and thus to understand that in him we already have everything. Fasting therefore changes me, my attitude, my image of God, my awareness of authority, my identity as a child of God and out of that comes change.
- **Fasting casts out unbelief:** Mark 9:29 (NKJV): This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting. From the context, it becomes clear that Jesus is not speaking here of a particular kind of demon, but of unbelief that only goes away through prayer and fasting. Mark 9:23 (NIV): Everything is possible to him who believes! In fasting, faith becomes so strong that unbelief goes and is replaced by confidence and authority.
- **The blessings of fasting:** Increase of faith | Hearing God's voice more clearly | Sanctification | Opens doors to God's presence | Increases God-given potential | Hones spiritual gifts | Breaks spiritual bonds | Gives special protection | Opens spiritual eyes | Helps understand oneself | Increases spiritual authority
- **Further Bible passages on fasting:** Matthew 4:2; 4:4; 17:21 | Luke 2:37; 5:33-35; 18:11-14 | Acts 10:30 (NKJV); 13:2; 14:23 | 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 | 2. Corinthians 6:3ff; 11:27 | Colossians 3:5 | Jeremiah 36:6 | Zechariah 7:5 | Ezra 8:21ff | Joel 2:12 | 2 Chronicles 20:3 | Jonah 3:5ff | 2 Samuel 12:16ff | Isaiah 58:3ff | Psalm 69:10 | Daniel 9:2-3, 21-22

WHY FAST AS A CHURCH?

We at ICF Rhine–Main have decided to call a special time of fasting and prayer at the beginning of the year to fast together as a church and to start the new year in a special way with God and to consecrate it to Him.

At this time, we want to pray consciously for people in our surroundings to come to know Jesus and for faith to spread in our cities, regions, and country.

At the same time, it is our desire that everyone would use this time of fasting and prayer at the beginning of the year to lay down excess baggage, give God space and get to know his love better and more deeply.

We have decided on a three–week collective fasting period. Whether or not and how you want to engage in this time of fasting is up to you – and especially up to God (ask Him in prayer how you can shape this time of fasting and prayer in His spirit).

There are different ways to fast. In the Bible, it is mostly about abstaining from food. Some drank only water, others ate only vegetables during their fast, or abstained from rich foods.

When you fast, prayerfully consider what and how you want to fast.

This fasting and prayer plan suggests a period of 21 days, during which you can fast in a variety of ways. You can abstain from eating and solid food completely during this time, or you can abstain from one or two meals a day. You can fast on specific days within this fasting period or choose a shorter period. Below are examples of a few fasting variants and what you should pay attention to, so that you fast in a healthy way.

HOW? PREPARATION AND TIPS FOR FASTING!

Prepare well for your fast so that fasting honors God and can fulfill its purpose. Here are a few tips from our own experiences.

1. **Decide how you want to fast.** There are different ways to fast. Some drink only water, others drink juice and broth, or protein shakes and smoothies. Others reduce their diet to vegetarian or eat a vegan diet during their fast. We have summarized more info on the different variations for you at the end of this document. If you are older or have health problems, be sure to seek medical advice before you start fasting. Also, if you have ever struggled with an eating disorder, it may be better for you to continue eating in a healthy routine, perhaps only giving up certain favorite foods. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you should definitely not give up balanced foods. Rather, fast from social media or television.

2. **What will you do instead?** Fasting as a spiritual exercise is about seeking God. Take time to pray and read the Bible, perhaps especially during times when you would otherwise eat. In our YouVersion fasting plan, you will receive daily inspiration for the 21 days.
3. **Set a clear goal!** What will you pray for? The Bible says in Proverbs 29:18 (KJV), Where there is no vision (a clear, prophetic prayer goal) the people perish. Together with the Holy Spirit, set three to five prayer goals and put them down in writing. Where do you need a breakthrough? Which friends are you praying for? How is your prayer concerned with God's work in relation to your church, your city, or your country? If I don't know why I'm really doing this, I'll barely last until breakfast.
4. **Fasting as a team.** Two are better than one! Consider teaming up with friends, such as your smallgroup. For example, create your own WhatsApp group and encourage each other. If you are a minor, discuss with your parents what and how you should fast. As a rule, young children should not fast, but they may decide to give up their favorite sweet for three weeks.
5. **Determine the length of the fast ahead of time.** Reflect with the Holy Spirit on how long you want to fast. Most people who start without considering how long they actually want to fast do not last for long.
6. **Prepare physically.** Two days before the fast, limit your food intake to fruits and vegetables. If you are completely abstaining from solid food, it may be advisable to empty your bowels (e.g. with an enema or Glauber's salt). Be prepared for the transition to challenge you physically and emotionally, and you may struggle with impatience, bad moods, anxiety, or physical discomfort such as dizziness or headaches. This is normal because the body cleanses itself and adjusts its metabolism.
7. **Prepare for resistance.** During fasting, experience shows that you can almost bet that suddenly a colleague will bring a birthday cake to the office, you will be invited to an opulent dinner, and the most delicious smells will waft around your nose at every turn. Fasting has spiritually intensive power, and you have an enemy who will do everything he can to keep you from fasting. Even Jesus was tempted during His fast. But don't worry: He passed every test and lives in you today with His strength and the power to overcome temptation. He already carried the victory back then on the cross over 2,000 years ago by rising from the dead.

8. **Do not condemn yourself when you fail.** Despite your best intentions, what do you do if you break your fast and think that now you might as well not continue at all? Don't give up. Even if you fail several times, you can always get back up and keep going. Our righteousness comes through Jesus alone and God loves you just as you are with your flaws and your niceties. Sometimes through our failures we learn the precisely the lesson that we need to learn at such a moment. It is in failure that we realize that God is a loving Father who walks the path with us. He cheers us on, rejoices with us, comforts us, and always loves us with unchanging love. Hit the reset button and pick up where you left off.
9. **Fast in secret.** Jesus once said, "But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that your fasting will not be obvious to men, but only to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Don't tell everyone that you are fasting, but if someone asks, of course you can say that you are not eating right now.
10. **Rest.** Fasting is a special time for body, mind, and spirit. Plan for plenty of rest and, when possible, slow down a bit. Of course, you can continue to exercise as it suits you.
11. **Break your fast the healthy way.** Start eating slowly again in the first few days after fasting, e.g. with fruit juice or light soups in the first few days. During a light juice fast or a water fast, the digestive system shuts down and needs to slowly get used to eating again. It can be dangerous if you eat too much too soon. At the end of this brochure you will find some literature references for further reading.
12. **Expect God to speak** through His Word, in dreams, visions, and revelations. Daniel prepared to receive revelation from God through fasting (Daniel 10:1ff). The Bible also speaks of a fasting reward (Matthew 6:18). Expect God to seek fellowship with you and communicate with you in a special way.
13. **What is the point?** You may have the impression that fasting "doesn't accomplish anything." Breakthroughs often come after fasting, not only during it, and sometimes God uses our fasting time in ways that are different from what we expect. Don't listen to the lie that nothing happened. It is my conviction that every fast done in faith will be rewarded.

TYPES OF FASTING:

Water fast

According to Luke 4:2, Jesus was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness and ate nothing for 40 days. He drank only water. Fasting with water is especially challenging physically, but many relate that they experience it as a very special time and that hunger pangs settle very quickly as digestion is completely at a standstill. Since the body does not get any energy from food, it is important to get enough rest. In the case of a longer period of water fasting, one should inform oneself well beforehand how to prepare such a period well by means of reduction and build-up days and, in the case of health concerns, also consult a doctor.

In the Bible there are also people who not only abstained from food but also from water, e.g. Moses or the people of Israel in Esther's time.

You can find practical tips for carrying out water fasting further down in this document.

Juice fast

A juice fast is a fast in which you drink mostly water but supplement it with one to two glasses of juice a day and otherwise eat no food. This type of fasting gives you more energy than a water-only fast. Many prefer this type of fasting because you lose all feelings of hunger and at the same time maintain a certain level of energy so that you can still cope well with everyday life. If possible, freshly squeezed juices or fruit juices without pulp are recommended here. There are a lot of good guides on the Internet as well as books with tips and tricks for juice fasting.

Smoothie fast (liquids only)

With smoothie fasting, you get all the nutrients you need to function, but in liquid form. In smoothie fasting, you can use anything: protein powder, fruits, vegetables, milk and of course you can have warm vegetable soup. You simply give up the pleasure of chewing and eating solid food.

Daniel Fast

The Daniel Fast is a very well-known type of fasting and is performed according to the pattern narrated in Daniel 1:12 and Daniel 10:2-3. In this type of fasting, you can fulfill all the demands of life while denying yourself some of the delights typically found in your diet. This type of fasting is also very healthy for your body. A Daniel fast is essentially a vegan diet plan with additional restrictions. It is a plant-based diet where the only beverage is water.

Media fast

If you're not able (or don't feel led by the Holy Spirit) to choose one of the fasts associated with abstaining from food, abstaining from something else, such as media, may be an option. In 2019, the average German spent about two hours a day on social media. It only takes about 71 hours to read the entire Bible at read-aloud speed. If you replace your social media/Netflix time with Bible reading, you could read the entire Bible in 36 days!

Other fasting options

You could fast a certain favorite food, sugar coffee, or anything else you normally spend time on for 21 days. Be creative. Ask the Lord what He wants when it comes to your planned fast.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR CARRYING OUT WATER FASTING:

- On the first day of fasting: cleanse the digestive tract with an enema or Epsom salt/Glauber salt (all of which can be purchased inexpensively at pharmacies). This is important, especially before a prolonged fast. It cleanses the body and prevents toxins from remaining in the body that cause headaches and discomfort.
- The first 3-6 days are the hardest, because the body cleanses itself and changes its metabolism. Headaches, fatigue, weakness, strong feeling of hunger, etc. may occur. These are good signs because the body is cleansing itself!
- Drink plenty of water, min. 3 liters per day. It helps to cleanse and satisfy hunger pangs.
- Do not drink teas or juices, because they keep the stomach and intestines active, and stimulate hunger.
- The body needs more oxygen during fasting. Recommendation: open windows, take walks, breathe deliberately and deeply – especially if you feel weak.
- You will lose weight. Regular moderate exercise is recommended to prevent muscle loss. The body has the energy for it – but do not overdo it.
- Acid reflux may occur. Burnt fat is converted into acid. Heartburn tablets help or even better: drink spa water. Important: this water must have a hydrogen carbonate content of more than 1300 mg/litre. Best: Adelheid Quelle, Hirsch Quelle waters.

- The first few days you will have an unpleasant mouth odour. However, refrain from chewing gum, as the body thinks it is now getting food. Also refrain from sweets etc. because of the sugar. Brush your teeth several times a day. Always have mouthwash with you. Put sage leaves on your tongue.
- Cold is perceived more strongly. Dress warmer, drink warm water.
- Dizziness, weakness, fatigue may occur from time to time. Don't let it make you feel uneasy. Get up slower, drink enough, take time for a power nap.
- If it gets too physically intense, allow yourself a spoonful of honey (but don't make it a habit).
- Instead of eating food, "eat" the Word of God. Read the Bible 3 times a day, the times of normal meals are the ideal times.
- Focus on God all the time. Take lots of time for fellowship with Him, prayer, being in His presence, being quiet and listening to Him.
- What you fill yourself with will define, among other things, the outcome of your Lent: Prefer worship music to other music; reduce social media, television, video games, other pastimes.
- Abstain from tobacco consumption. During fasting, the body is significantly more affected by it.
- Observe your dreams - you will perceive God much better during the time.
- Prayer gains strength while fasting. The requests you bring before him during the time will go ahead.
- If you lose motivation, start praying, read a book about fasting, listen to a sermon, or get encouragement from someone in your smallgroup.
- Keep a diary and note at the end of each day, how you felt physically and how you experienced the time with God, besides other information.

BREAKING THE FAST:

“Every fool can fast, but only the wise man knows how to break a fast.”
(George Bernard Shaw)

- Break fast with an apple cut into small pieces, chew carefully and eat slowly. Fruit juices are also good.
- The period when you return to normal eating, should last 1/3 of the time of the total fasting length. Ex: 12 days fast, 4 days return. The section Recommended Reading contains a link to a build-up plan (sorry, in German)
- Take another one day of fasting a few days after returning to establish a "fasting and prayer culture" in your life.

FURTHER READING

Biblical fasting:

- Atomic Power with God through Fasting and Prayer, Franklin Hall
- The Fasting Prayer, Franklin Hall.
- God's Chosen Fast, Arthur Wallis.
- Der Lohn des Fastens, Mike Bickle.

Links to health fasting (non-Christian sources, no translation available):

- Build-up plan copied from:: Richtig essen nach dem Fasten, Hellmut Lützner und Helmut Million (München: Gräfe und Unzer, 1989).
- List of mineral waters: <https://mineralwasser-test.com/>
- <http://www.heilfastengesundheit.de/>
- <http://www.fastenzeit.com/fasten-anleitung.html>

We are glad if this information has encouraged you to join us this Lent!