

INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF PRAYER

Fasting Information

“But the days will come when the Bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.” — Matthew 9:15

“Fasting begets prophets and strengthens strong men. Fasting makes lawgivers wise; it is the soul's safeguard, the body's trusted comrade, the armor of the champion, the training of the athlete.” — Basil, Bishop of Caesarea (AD 330-379).

With this call to enter into extended fasts, we must prepare ourselves adequately so that the fast can honor God and fulfill its purpose. Here are some items to help and encourage you.

Physically Preparing For a Fast That Extends More Than Two Days

- Prepare your body for the fast and prevent constipation during and after the fast by eating certain preventative foods at least two days beforehand (even longer before an extended fast), such as: fresh fruit and raw vegetables, fruit or vegetable juices, oatmeal, etc.
- Eat smaller meals a few days prior to the fast
- Avoid high-fat and sugary foods before the fast as well
- Make your commitment and determine the length. You can fast in many different ways. Pray and ask God what he will give you faith for as far as the length of time.
 - A Daniel fast, with vegetables and water, is good for those carrying a heavy workload.
 - A fruit or vegetable juice fast allows you to enter into fasting but still gives enough energy to function. Many people have done a 40-day juice fast. Out of consideration for their health and metabolism, I would encourage teenagers to use juice and protein drinks to sustain them. If you have sugar sensitivities or problems, consult your physician before attempting this fast.
 - A water-only fast has been done by many people. We would not encourage this without strong medical supervision, particularly for youth. Depending on your weight and metabolism, you can go forty days on water alone.
 - A total fast is without water. Do not go beyond three days without water. Discuss your plans with your doctor, church leaders, and spouse or parents. We do not encourage this type of fast without specific confirmation from the Lord through your parents and church leadership.

Helpful Hints For During Your Fast [Physical]

- Drink plenty of non-tap water. (Drinking at least half of your body weight in ounces of water per day is a good rule of thumb whether you are fasting or not.) Distilled water is most beneficial, but filtered and purified water also work well
- It is wise to abstain from strong stimulants such as caffeinated and sugary drinks during a fast, including artificial sweeteners found in diet drinks. Also, avoid soy protein drinks, which have been known to cause health problems during a fast
- If juice fasting, drink raw fruit juices such as apple, grape and pineapple, which are excellent sources of necessary natural sugar to stabilize blood sugar and keep energy levels up. Orange and grapefruit juice are good as well, but these are not recommended for arthritis or allergy sufferers. Monitor juice acidity carefully as it can cause canker sores (mouth ulcers). Raw vegetable juices such as carrot, celery, beet or green vegetable combinations are excellent as well. Fresh

fruit and vegetable juices can be made in a juice extractor. If one is unavailable, purchase fruit and vegetable juices without any added sugars. Some of the benefits to drinking raw juice versus bottled, are that it does not stimulate digestion (hunger) and it maintains all of its enzymes and nutritional value

- Expect some physical discomforts because of the detoxification process, especially on the second day. You may have fleeting hunger pains or dizziness. Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches, but it is a part of the detoxification process. Physical annoyances may also include weariness, tiredness, nausea and sleepiness
- During a fast, there are four major physical areas going through a detoxification process. Take care to attend to each of these four areas:
 - **The bowels/colon/large intestines** — During a fast of three days or more, taking an herbal laxative (inquire at your local health store) or an enema before bedtime will help eliminate solid waste products; these can cause headaches and sluggishness if left in the body during a fast. This should be done early during the fast and then intermittently throughout the rest of the fast. The body begins detoxifying during a fast, depositing these toxins into the intestines. If you do not take a laxative or an enema, the toxins can hurt your intestines or reabsorb into the bloodstream making you feel nauseous
 - **The kidneys** — Drinking fruit juices, vegetable juices, broth, or just plenty of water will remove many toxins via the kidneys
 - **The lungs** — If strength permits, walk half an hour during the day to help cleanse the lungs. Also do some deep breathing throughout the day by inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth
 - **The skin** — Since one-third of the waste products eliminated during a fast are removed via the skin, bathing adequately is essential. Use a natural bristle body brush or loofah sponge on your skin prior to bathing to help cleanse the skin

Helpful Hints For During Your Fast [Spiritual]

- Seek advice and permission before the fast. Seek medical advice before the fast, especially if you have any existing medical concerns or conditions. If you are under 18 years of age, discuss your desire to fast with your parents. Spiritual covering, submission, and unity are important factors when fasting. Discuss your plans with your church leaders. Remember, fasting is an attitude of the heart! Ask them if they would consider fasting with you!
- Fast and pray in order to humble yourself and purify your worship. In fasting we are not trying to get something from God, but rather seeking to realign our hearts' affections with His. In fasting we can more readily say, "We love you Lord, more than anything in the world." Lust of any kind is perverted worship, but fasting enables us to cleanse the sanctuary of our hearts from every other rival.
- Don't boast about your fast. Let people know you won't be eating only if you need to (Matthew 6:16-18).
- Do the fast with someone else. Two are better than one! We encourage parents and kids to consider fasting together. Several generations fasting together has a powerful impact!
- Have a clear target as your prayer focus. Without a vision (a clear, prophetic prayer goal) the people perish. Write down your vision, so you can run with it (Habakkuk 2:2).
- 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, too. Changing History through Prayer and Fasting by Derek Prince, Fast Forward by Lou Engle and God's Chosen Fast by Author Wallis are just some of the books about fasting that are available.
- Expect to hear God's voice in the Word, dreams, visions and revelations. Daniel prepared himself to receive revelation

through fasting (Daniel 10:1-2). There is a fasting reward (Matthew 6:18).

- Prepare for opposition. On the day of your fast you can bet donuts will be at the office or in class. Your spouse (or your mom) will suddenly be inspired to cook your favorite meals. Press through. Many times you may feel more tension build at home. Satan tempted Jesus on the fast, and we must expect the same. Discouragement may come in like a flood, but recognize the source and take your stand on the victory of Christ.
- If you fail, don't give in to condemnation. 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. Just hit the "delete" button and continue on your fast!
- Feel free to rest a lot and continue to exercise with supervision.
- 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.

How to Successfully Break Your Fast

- Break your fast gradually. At this point you will need to exercise watchful self-control. Break your fast on a meal that is light and easy to digest (i.e., a pound of grapes, a shredded apple, watermelon, or steamed vegetables)
- When breaking a fast of ten days or more, the break-in period should be extended one day for every four days of fasting
- A fast of three days or more should never be broken by eating a normal meal (including animal proteins, bread, sugar, dairy, and/or processed foods) because these heavy foods put a severe strain and shock on the digestive organs which have been resting throughout the fast. Eating too heavily after a fast can produce serious discomfort (stomach cramps, nausea and weakness) and can nullify the physical benefits of fasting; it can also cause serious irreversible complications
- After breaking an extended fast, continue drinking fruit or vegetable juices because the stomach is continuing to detoxify
- During any fast exceeding two days, your stomach will shrink. Do not over-expand it again by overeating. If you have been prone to eat too heavily, guard against going back to this habit. If you train yourself to eat more lightly, your stomach will adjust itself accordingly
- While continuing to drink fruit or vegetable juices, add the following:
 - 1st-3rd day after the fast (increase amount of days for extended fast) — Eat fruits and raw/steamed vegetables only. Example meals for the first few days are a pound of fruit, a baked or boiled potato without butter, steamed vegetables, or a vegetable-only salad without oil-based dressing. Avoid bananas for the first few days; they have no juice in them and can easily cause constipation
 - Thereafter — You may return to heavier foods such as animal proteins, but maintaining a healthy diet after the fast will promote lifelong health and allow you to fast correctly in the future
- Take extra care in breaking a water fast. Begin with drinking fruit or vegetable juices and gradually ease into eating fruits and steamed vegetables
- It is important after a fast to begin to discern between real hunger and cravings so you do not feed your cravings

Important Medical Information

- **Years of fasting incorrectly can cause permanent physical damage to your body. These negative effects are not typically felt at a young age, but they will accumulate after years of fasting. In their zeal, some people have begun fasting in an extreme way before understanding how fasting physically affects the body; increasing your understanding and taking care of your body while both fasting and eating will ensure your ability to live the fasted lifestyle for many years to come.**
- For people who have struggled with eating disorders in the past, fasting should be done with wisdom and caution. Fasting should not be used as a motive for weight-loss and it is important to enter back into "normal" healthy eating after long fast.
- If you have a diagnosed illness and/or are taking prescription medicine, fasting should only be done under the direct supervision of a health practitioner
- Some people have trouble fasting and become extremely hungry, dizzy and nauseous because they have undiagnosed low blood sugar, so they should drink fruit and vegetable juices to help keep the blood sugar stable during short fasts. If the juice is too much sugar for your system, dilute it by 50% with water or drink a "green drink" (made by juicing carrots, celery, spinach and parsley)
- If you are having digestive trouble after breaking a fast (i.e., diarrhea), mix a cup of unsweetened applesauce with a cup of cooked brown rice. This will stop the diarrhea. Also, take digestive enzymes (inquire at your local health store) to aid your stomach's digestive transition

This Handout is for Informational Purposes Only

The information in this handout reflects only the limited opinions, experience and suggestions of the IHOP-KC Missions Base.

This handout is provided for informational purposes only and is not meant to substitute the advice provided by your doctor or other health care professional.

You should not use this information for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease, or prescribing any medication. Additionally, this information is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. These tips have been found helpful and successful, but they are no guarantee you will fast without experiencing any difficulties. You will need to do your own research, talk with health experts and experienced fasters, and continually ask the Lord for increased discernment and wisdom concerning fasting and healthy living.

Additional Resources on Fasting and Healthy Living

- *The Rewards of Fasting*, by Mike Bickle and Dana Candler
- www.freedomyou.com
- *Shaping History through Prayer and Fasting*, by Derek Prince
- *The Genesis Diet*, by Dr. Gordon Tessler
- www.billbright.com/howtofast/
- *Hunger for God*, by John Piper