

## FASTING

# How to Do a Biblical Fast

Sheri Onishi

## 1. What Is Biblical Fasting?

Biblical fasting can be defined as abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. Simply going without food because it is not available or for medical reasons is not biblical fasting. There must be a spiritual motivation to qualify a fast as biblical.

In his book “A Hunger for God,” John Piper writes, “Christian fasting, at its root, is the hunger of a homesickness for God. Christian fasting is not only the spontaneous effect of superior satisfaction in God, it is also a chosen weapon against every force in the world that would take that satisfaction away.”

## 2. Some Biblical Examples and Purposes of Fasting

- Jesus fasted to acknowledge His dependence and to gain spiritual strength through reliance on the Holy Spirit and God’s Word. He did this before He began His public ministry (Luke 4:1-2).
- Nehemiah fasted for confession, repentance and favor in the sight of the king to get permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:4).
- David humbled himself, asking God to intervene because of injustice (Psalm 35:13). In 2 Samuel 12:17-23, he fasted for healing and miraculous intervention.
- Mordecai and the Jews fasted upon hearing the news of Haman’s wicked plot for their extermination (Esther 4:3).
- The early church fasted while worshiping and committing their ministry to the Lord. They also sought the Lord through fasting for guidance and confirmation during the appointment of elders (Acts 13:2, 14:23).
- Jesus expected His disciples to fast, but He did not command it (Matthew 6:16).

### 3. Wrong Motivations for Fasting

- To be seen by others (Matthew 6:18). Piper writes, “The critical issue is not whether people know you are fasting but whether you want them to know so that you can bask in their admiration.”
- To be justified by God (Luke 18:9-14). In a parable to people “confident of their own righteousness” (New International Version), Jesus spoke of two men. One said, “I fast twice a week.” The other said, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Only one “went home justified before God.”
- To be commended to God (1 Corinthians 8:8). Food will not commend us to God; we are neither worse if we do not eat nor the better if we do. Fasting does not cause us to “earn” something from God, but it helps us to be more receptive to what He wants to do in and through us.

### 4. Right Motivations for Fasting

- Repentance.
- For spiritual strength against an enemy attack.
- To awaken a spiritual hunger for God that may be dulled because of “desires for other things” (Mark 4:19, NIV).
- To test and see what desires control us.
- To forfeit good things for the better and best.
- To express our ache for His return. Jesus said, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about” (John 4:32, NIV).
- To demonstrate our love and desire for God above all things (even above His gifts).
- To divide our bread with the poor. “To loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke” (Isaiah 58:6-7, NIV).

### 5. Types of Fasts

There are three types of fasts that can be described as “biblical”:

1. **Partial fasts** — Described in the book of Daniel, where for three weeks he abstained only from “delicacies” like meat and wine (Daniel 10:3).
2. **Complete fasts** — Water-only or juice fasting, especially when fasting for an extended period. Juice fasts will provide you with more energy than water-only fasts and still lead you into the humbling experience of denying your desire for solid, chewable food.
3. **Absolute fasts** — These are total fasts — no food (solid or liquid) and no water. Paul went on an absolute fast for three days following his encounter with Jesus (Acts 9:9). Moses and Elijah engaged in supernatural absolute fasts of forty days (Deuteronomy 9:9; 1 Kings 19:8). **An absolute fast should be undertaken with great care and only under the guidance of a physician.** Our bodies cannot go without water for more than three days.

## 6. Preparing for a Water-Only or Juice Fast

Beginners in fasting should start slow. Progressive steps help our bodies adjust to the drop in food intake. You can start by fasting for one meal or for one day.

### Before the Fast

Those planning for an extended fast (more than 14 days) should always consult a doctor beforehand. Prepare mentally and physically by cutting down on food intake one week before the actual fast and taking on a vegetarian diet to control cravings for food. Reduce intake of strong beverages like coffee, tea or soft drinks as well. Drink plenty of water.

### During the Fast

Spend the time that you would normally use for meals to pray and seek the Lord. Keep a journal on what the Lord has been showing you and teaching you.

Continue to drink plenty of water. Apple or watermelon juice are great morale boosters. Sleep early — the first few days of the fast are usually the most challenging. Persevere through this period. Consult your doctor about any severe headaches or bodily reactions.

### Ending the Fast

Do not break extended fasts abruptly. Start by taking small portions of fruits, vegetables and liquids. Pace yourself to return slowly to your normal diet in about a week.

Do not have a big celebration feast when breaking a fast! Your body may not be used to the sudden increased intake. Be cautious, and always consult your doctor if you are unsure of your physical condition.

## FASTING

# Prayer and Fasting

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God considers fasting important. The Bible contains 92 passages referring to it. Many of our heroes of the faith, including Moses, Elijah, Esther, Nehemiah, Daniel and Paul, fasted at crucial points in their journeys with God.

Fasting played an important role in the life and ministry of Jesus. After being anointed by the Holy Spirit, He was led into the wilderness to fast and pray for 40 days (Matthew 4:2). During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave specific instructions on how to fast (Matthew 6:16-18). Jesus knew the followers He addressed would fast.

But what is the purpose of fasting in the life of the believer today?

### Showing Humility and Repentance

One reason we fast is to demonstrate humility before the Creator of the universe. God responds when we diligently and wholeheartedly seek Him (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Sometimes this involves confessing and turning away from sin. This was the case with the Ninevites when Jonah reluctantly told them God was going to judge them (Jonah 3:5,10). They called a fast and turned away from their sinful patterns of behavior.

Fasting demonstrates humility by acknowledging our dependence on God. In Psalm 35, David laments his enemies' harsh treatment of him in contrast to how he cared for them when they were ill. He humbled his soul by fasting and praying for their recovery (Psalm 35:13).

### Seeking God's Face More Fully

A second reason we fast is to respond to God's love toward us. It is as if we are saying to God, "Because You are righteous and holy, and loved me enough to send Jesus to die for my sins, I want to get to know You more intimately." Jeremiah 29:13 says we will find God when we seek Him with all our hearts. So we may want to take extra time to seek and praise God by missing a meal or abstaining from food for a day or more.

When we deliberately set aside time for fasting, we show God we want to seek Him.

## Asking for Something You Desire

Sometimes we fast to demonstrate our sincerity to God concerning something we truly desire. Ezra proclaimed a fast to ask God to protect His people as they journeyed to Jerusalem from exile. God responded by delivering them from their enemies and ambushes along the way (Ezra 8:21,31).

Although fasting may show our sincerity, it does not guarantee we will receive what we desire. Maybe our request is not within God's will. Sometimes we ask with the wrong motives. David fasted for seven days when God struck with illness the child Bathsheba conceived by David. David repented of his adultery with Bathsheba and of the murder of her husband. He humbled himself, fasted and prayed, but the child still died (2 Samuel 12:15-18). Through fasting, we can demonstrate the sincerity and earnestness of our requests.

## Fasting to Know God's Will

Seeking God's direction is different from asking Him for something we desire. When the Israelites were in conflict with the tribe of Benjamin, they sought God's will through fasting. The entire army fasted until evening, and they asked God, "Shall we go up again to fight against the Benjamites, our fellow Israelites, or not?" (Judges 20:28, New International Version).

Acts 13:1-3 implies that church leaders were seeking God's direction for their ministry through prayer and fasting. The Holy Spirit responded by saying, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." In both instances, people fasted and prayed to determine God's will.

## Developing Discipline

An important benefit of fasting is that it promotes self-control through disciplining the body. When we say no to our natural appetite for food, we develop the will-power and discipline to say no to other fleshly desires (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Other reasons people in the Bible fasted include a need to be set free from demonic oppression (2 Chronicles 20:3), mourning (1 Samuel 31:13), healing the sick (Psalm 35:13), spiritual strength (Matthew 4:2) and the appointment of elders in the church (Acts 14:23).

Losing weight is not the emphasis when fasting for spiritual reasons.

## Fasting—Not Just for Biblical Times

Fasting is not limited to the believers in the Bible. Most of the church's Reformers, including Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Knox, fasted. Knox fasted and prayed so much that Queen Mary said she feared his prayers more than all the armies of Scotland.

John Wesley, the renowned English preacher, missionary and founder of Methodism, fasted twice weekly from dawn until late afternoon. Charles Finney, a revivalist of the 1800s, fasted regularly and would often go three days without eating when he felt any decline of spiritual power at his meetings.

Bill Bright, the co-founder and former president of Cru, made it his practice to fast and pray. He believed it played a vital role in what God did through him and the ministry of Cru.

Bright encouraged believers to fast, but he also warned of two common pitfalls:

1. We can become legalistic about fasting. It is essential to remember God loves us and is not displeased with us when we do not fast. We can take pride in our fasting. To avoid this problem we focus on God's character and all He has done for us.

Fasting is a commitment to seeking the Lord. It is not reserved for the self-righteous, but it is a privilege from which each of us can benefit.

## How to Fast

Most people go without food during a diet or when they're too busy to eat, but this isn't biblical fasting. So what is biblical fasting?

Our sincerity and attitude play important roles in biblical fasting.

Before beginning, ask yourself three questions:

1. Am I confident that my desire to fast is God-given?
2. What are my spiritual motivations or goals for this fast?
3. Am I harboring any desire to impress others?

When you are satisfied you have Godly motives, you're ready to begin.

But you still may not know how to begin the fast or how long it should last.

## A Tried and Tested Fast

This involves abstaining from all forms of food but not from water, and it commonly lasts 24 hours, from sunrise to sunrise.

According to The Foods and Nutrition Encyclopedia, “For healthy individuals, no harm results from short-term fasting.”

The average healthy person can go without food between 21 and 40 or more days before the body begins to eliminate vital tissue (starvation).

Consult your physician before your fast if any of the following apply to you:

- You are planning a fast lasting longer than three days.
- You are under the care of a physician for any kind of disease.
- You struggle with anorexia or bulimia.
- You are pregnant.

## Beginning the Fast

If you are fasting for the first time, you might begin by missing a meal or two. Over time, you can build up to a full day or more. Begin by refraining from solid food, but drink liquids. Water is the best, since soft drinks are not good for the digestive system. Coffee and tea can over-stimulate the nervous system.

Before beginning the fast, it is best to eat lightly and cut back on caffeinated drinks. However, during the first few days of the fast, it is common to experience headaches as the body withdraws from and removes caffeine.

## How to Spend Time You Would Have Spent Eating

Fasting is not just about what you give up, it is about what you do with the time you would have spent eating.

So set aside specific and significant time during your fast to worship and seek God. Plan where you'll do this so that your time can be unhurried and it helps you enjoy the Lord. Many people begin this time by repenting of any sins the Holy Spirit brings to mind and asking for God's forgiveness. This is essential to ensure that sin is not hindering your communication with God.

Then plan time to make your requests known to God and to seek His will. Take breaks to study Scripture passages you have chosen. Don't rush your fellowship with God.

Take time to listen. Keep a notebook and pen nearby to record the ideas, insights, directions and instructions He impresses on your mind. When you turn down the noise of everyday life by fasting, you can more easily hear God.

## Breaking the Fast

Breaking the fast may require as much discipline as beginning it. During the fast, your stomach contracts and your body's digestive and elimination systems rest. The longer you fast, the more time the digestive organs need to reactivate before functioning at full speed.

If you plan to fast only a day or two at a time, it is best to end the fast with a small glass of fruit juice as your first meal. Gradually introduce small amounts of easily digestible foods such as yogurt, soup, fresh fruit and cooked vegetables.

If your fast lasts longer than a few days, you should continue with juices for a day or more before gradually introducing more substantial foods like yogurt, soup and fruit. Be sure you introduce new foods in small quantities and chew well. You should stop eating as soon as you begin feeling full.

If fasting for only a few days at a time, ending the fast should be easier. If you have built up to and desire to fast longer, you should consult your physician and review a health book on fasting.

Remember, it is your attitude toward God and your walk with Him that is important, not how long you fast. God desires for you to love, obey, follow and enjoy Him. Deliberately abstaining from food is one way to demonstrate your commitment and sincerity in seeking Him.

# Alternative Fasting Methods With Chronic Illness

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08/27/2019 BY: MELISSA DAVISSON2 [COMMENTS](#)

My prayer and fasting journey has been a long time in the making. I could see how God was blessing my Christian friends when they fasted and I wanted that blessing too. Everything I found on biblical fasting referenced giving up food during a fast but I struggled with it because of my chronic illnesses. Each attempt left me feeling defeated.

In my twisted thinking, I thought it was a lie of Satan that fasting was for everyone. I figured it was a way the enemy manipulated us and made us feel guilty, unworthy, etc. when we couldn't fast "properly". Maybe if I was a super Christian I could fast. But I wasn't. I was just...me.

## Searching For Answers

One day during my Bible reading time, I came across a verse that I had not seen before. If you'd like to read more about that, you can click here: [The Bible Study That Changed My Life](#). God used this verse to open my eyes about fasting, my health issues, his desire for us, and the many lies of Satan I was believing.

I began to accept that biblical fasting was for everyone, even me. But there were times I had to take my medication with food and on a certain schedule. There were times I could eat certain foods and not others. So what would a godly fast look like for someone like me?

I turned to Google and Pinterest for testimonies and information on biblical fasting with chronic illness. Sadly, there was very little *biblical* information out there. I couldn't understand it. Surely I wasn't the only Christian with a chronic illness! So why wasn't anyone talking about it? Had the Devil *really* buried all of us in the shame and guilt of not being whole and healthy?

## God Meets You Where You Are At

I thought maybe I just didn't understand praying and fasting. Deciding to dig deeper, I turned to books by famous people, listening to sermons, and going to Bible studies all with the focus of biblical fasting. Again, there was very little

information out there for fasting with chronic illness and the need for alternative methods of biblical fasting.

Still, at a loss as to what to do, I began my own in-depth study on fasting and prayer. God blessed me with a revelation that broke the chains holding me back. His revelation showed me that my chronic illnesses were *not* because I was being punished and found unworthy. Everyone has something they deal with and my health issues were my reality. With God's help, I could learn to deal with them biblically. However, my reality would *not* change God's principles.

And then the biggie: the condition of my heart (not the state of my health) is what allows me to set aside something I desire and replace it with God. ***Nowhere in the Holy Bible does it say this must be food!*** Talk about a revelation!! Hallelujah!!

## The Spirit Is Willing

You remember how Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane ([Matthew 26:41](#)). He took the time he needed to be alone with Father God. Although Jesus desired to do his Father's will instead of his own (a key to fasting!!), he admitted that his spirit was willing but his body was weak. *That was how I felt every time I tried to fast in the past...my spirit was willing but my body was weak.* I don't mean it was unpleasant. I mean I would get *sick* (think one step forward, 2 steps back).

In my spirit, I believed I needed to try fasting again and this time I trusted that it would be different. After prayer, I started my fasting journey with something a little off-beat; I gave up my Kindle for a period of time and instead spent my "Kindle time" with God. I thought a fast like this would be easy-peasy. Sweet sister, it was hard but I did it! I was so overjoyed to finally be able to fast without my body betraying me. It felt like I had scaled the highest mountain!

## A "Proper" Fast

I shared my fasting victory with a close friend who promptly informed me that what I was doing was nice and all but it wasn't a "proper" fast (meaning God wouldn't honor it) because the type of fast I was doing was not recorded in the Bible.

Crushed and instantly defeated again, I wanted to give up. Would God *really* hold me back from one of his amazing gifts (fasting) when I had so little control over the way my body reacted?

## Why Are You Fasting?

That question kept circling in my mind and wouldn't leave me alone. It seemed so important to know not just *how* I could fast but *why* I wanted to fast in the first place. Was it to lose weight while I prayed...to get to know God better...to look like a good Christian girl...to be able to check off another check-box on my to-do lists?

Knowing my "why" enabled me to keep marching forward. It helped keep my focus where it needed to be and tune out the condemning voices around me (even those in my own head).

## My Alternative Fasting Methods

Below are a few of the alternative fasting methods God has given me over the years. Each one was for a time and a purpose. As my body needs changed God met me where I was at and showed me a different fasting alternative.

### The No Snacks Fast

Sounds easy enough, right? It wasn't for me. It was actually a struggle and might have been harder for me than if I had gone without food. I had a bad habit of eating like a bird; small portions all throughout the day.

For this type of fast, I forced myself to eat a "normal" meal with my family. I picked a period of time to fast; 24 hours, 3 days, 7 days and stuck with it. I didn't overthink it, just went with whatever felt right at the time I needed to fast.

When I felt the urge to graze outside of mealtimes, I grabbed my Bible and spent time with God instead.

## **Fasting From The Hours of 9 am to 3 pm**

This type of fast was what I followed for years. I have heard this called a Jewish fast but I am not sure if that is an accurate name or not. I've also heard variations of this such as fasting sun up to sun down or from after breakfast until dinner time (which can be a different time for everyone depending on your schedule).

During this fast, I had breakfast well before 9 am and drank water all day long. At noon I had juice and broth. Between the hours of 9-3, I spent much of my time and focus on God. I would eat a light snack at 3 pm and have a normal dinner with my family that evening.

## **No Preaching or Teaching Other Than Bible (And My Pastor)**

Although this could be for any period of time, typically, I chose this type of fast for 40 days at a time. Like the others, it wasn't easy. I would have friends send me messages like, "Hey, I found this great teaching on such and such. You should check it out!!" and I couldn't. I wouldn't explain myself ([Matthew 6:18](#)) but would tell them that I have made a note of it and as soon as I could I would check it out. I was careful to follow through ([Matthew 5:37](#)).

I still attended church so I did hear my Pastor's teaching. Mike and I still had our regular Bible discussions about what we were reading and learning. But those were the only "outside" influences I would allow.

The purpose of this type of fast was because I was being bombarded with voices from every side. Many of them were good, godly voices. However, a fair number of them were contradicting each other and confusion took root. Although not exclusively, I read or listened to something Christian (radio, blogs, TV, YouTube, friends) every moment of every day. I was finding that I was having trouble hearing my Lord's voice through all the noise. This type of fasting cleaned out the clutter.

## **Fasting From All Electronic Entertainment**

I was a bit shocked to realize that I have read my Kindle every single night for over 10 years. I am pretty sure my body forgot how to go to sleep without that

Kindle in my hands. When my health issues first prevented me from fasting food, this was the direction I chose to take.

It wasn't that big of a hardship for me to give up the TV, radio, social media, phone or laptop. But to give up my Kindle was a true sacrifice of love. And isn't that what pleases God? I don't think He would have thought much of my giving up the TV when it wasn't something that drew my time or attention.

I had to relearn how to spend time with God in the quiet and darkness of the night without falling asleep on him. After a while, I noticed that the nights fasting my Kindle were *the best* nights sleep!

## **No Processed Foods**

This type of fast was my physicians favorite. In fact, she began to implement this into her own life as she also had health issues but desired to biblically fast.

This wasn't a Daniel-type of fast. I had dietary restrictions I had to be conscious of so the Daniel fast didn't work for me.

I allowed myself to eat 3 meals a day but the food was food God created, not man. We didn't get knit-picky about it and examine every ingredient we used. It meant things like not running through the drive-thru for a quick breakfast sandwich but putting one together with homemade bread, eggs, and a meat of some sort. Or an egg salad sandwich on the run. Lunch was usually a salad and dinner was a salad and some type of meat.

In between meal times, I cleared my schedule and spent as much time reading, studying, and praying as I was able.

## **No Extra Sugar**

Sugar is my drug of choice and my worst enemy. For me to give up sugar for a period of time was truly another fast from my heart. This is very similar to the "no snacks" fast but during this fast, I could snack on carrots, celery, fruit, etc. If I made something that had sugar in it (like homemade bread), that was fine but no muffins drizzled in icing or sweet tea.

As the sugar cravings kicked in, I took it as an opportunity to spend time with God.

## It's About Obedience Not Sacrifice

God wants your obedience, not your sacrifice ([1 Samuel 15:22](#)). It doesn't matter to him what you fast. What matters to him is that you are willing to make the effort to set aside something you desire in the flesh for something only he can give you.

## Not All Fasting Is Created Equal

There are a few things I think are important to note.

1. Because it is God's way, fasting, in general, has many health benefits. Like I did, you will probably lose weight and feel better when you begin to put God before your pleasures. But that isn't the purpose for a *biblical fast*. If your goal isn't to draw closer to God but to lose weight and feel better, you might want to look into intermittent fasting instead.
2. Biblical fasting opens up the doors of heaven and you *will* be blessed. But don't let your focus be on what you get. Instead, stay focused on how you can bless God during your fast. How you can spend time with him, learning about him, learning from him...those things bless God greatly! Let your blessings, even your healing, be a by-product of your obedience and time spent with your Savior.
3. When we seek God about something specific during a fast, sometimes our answers are a bit delayed ([Daniel 10:12](#)). Don't let yourself always jump to the conclusion that God doesn't love you as much as he does someone else, or his answer is no, or...you all know where your mind goes. Accept that delayed answers happen but keep your focus on God where it needs to be.

What I have found in my own fasting journey is that if I am praying about something specific, it doesn't usually happen immediately but over time (maybe as my faith grows or maybe like Daniel it is a result of Satanic activity).

4. During a biblical fast be mindful of what you say and how you say it because it *will* make a difference.

## **My Recent Fast Brought About A Healing**

Keeping the above four things in mind, I'd like to share with you about the healing I received recently.

Last year I stubbed my foot. A few days into this injury I realized it was more than a sore toe. The pain was nasty and I suspected I broke something. I didn't go to the doctor because I figured there was nothing they could do except tape it, which I could do myself. Some days the pain was so bad I could hardly walk.

I would pray and fast for the pain to decrease. And it did almost every time. However, the pain always came back. One day during prayer, it dawned on me that I had been getting exactly what I prayed for...not that God would heal my foot but that the pain would decrease so I could get things done!

Changing my thinking, I began to fast and pray for healing. During this fast, I felt in my spirit that my foot had been healed. I just knew that I knew. The pain didn't go away immediately but became bearable for longer periods of time.

Not long after this, I found I was in pain again but in a different part of the same foot. I didn't understand it because I had been praying "correctly" this time. And I just knew that I had received God's healing!

Boy was the Enemy working hard to convince me that God healing my broken foot was all in my head and not real!

Finally, I went to a podiatrist. I found out that I had indeed broken a few toes and tore some ligaments...but they were healed! It turned out that the new pain was a separate issue that had *nothing* to do with breaking my toes or tearing the ligaments! Satan was a liar trying to trick me out of my healing!

I fully believe that if I would have given in and spoken about how I didn't receive my healing the findings at the doctor would have been different. Yes, I believe that the power of the spoken word is *that* strong.

## Your Weakness, His Strength

God says fasting is for all who desire to draw closer to him. A “proper” biblical fast is *anything* that allows you to replace what you want for a chance to draw closer to God. It is that simple. God doesn’t expect our life to be perfect and that includes our bodies.

Why? Because our weakness allows *his* strength and power to shine in our lives ([2 Corinthians 12:7-10](#)). He wants us, weaknesses and all.

## Let Holy Spirit Speak To Your Soul

If one of the fasting methods I used speaks to your soul, pray about it. Each of our bodies is different and so are our health issues. God might have you modify your fast to suit your individual situation. In the end, it might not look like mine (or anyone else’s). If so, I encourage you to go with it and believe that if you aren’t doing it in a way that is “right” for you, Holy Spirit will bring it to your attention and show you how to do it differently.

## What About You?

What method of fasting has God given you?

# 7 Good Alternatives for Fasting Besides Food

Choose Something That's a Meaningful Sacrifice

By

Kelli Mahoney

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Fasting is a traditional aspect of Christianity. Traditionally, fasting refers to abstaining from food or drink during a period of spiritual growth to become closer to God. It is sometimes also an act of penance for past sins. Christianity calls for fasting during certain holy times, though you can fast at any time as part of your spiritual observance.

## Considerations When Fasting as a Teenager

As a Christian teen, you may feel a call to fast. Many Christians try to emulate Jesus and others in the Bible who fasted when faced with important decisions or tasks. However, not all teenagers can give up food, and that's okay. As a teenager, your body is changing and developing rapidly. You need regular calories and nutrition to be healthy. Fasting is not worthwhile if it costs you your health and is in fact discouraged. Seek help if you struggle with anorexia or bulimia.

Before beginning a fast of food, talk to your doctor. He or she may advise you to fast for only a short period or will tell you that fasting is not a good idea. In that case, abandon a food fast and consider other ideas.

## What's a Bigger Sacrifice Than Food?

But just because you cannot give up food does not mean you can't participate in the fasting experience. It is not necessarily what item you give up, but more about what that item means to you and how it reminds you to stay focused on the Lord. For example, it might be a bigger sacrifice for you to give up a favorite video game or television show, rather than food.

## Choose Something That Is Meaningful

When choosing something to fast, it's important that it is meaningful to you. Many people "cheat" by choosing something that wouldn't ordinarily be missed. But choosing what to fast is an important decision that shapes your experience and connection with Jesus. You should

miss its presence in your life, and the lack of it should remind you of your purpose and connection to God.

If something on this list doesn't fit for you, then do some searching to find something you can give up that is challenging to you. It can be anything that is important to you, such as watching a favorite sport, reading or any other hobby you enjoy. It should be something that is a part of your regular life and that you enjoy.

## 7 Things You Can Give up Instead of Food

Here are some alternative items you can fast besides what you eat:

### Television

One of your favorite weekend activities may be binging on whole seasons of shows, or you may enjoy watching your favorite shows throughout the week. However, sometimes TV can be a distraction, and you can become so focused on your programs that you neglect other areas of your life, such as your faith. If you find television to be a challenge for you, then giving up watching television for a certain period of time can be a meaningful shift.

### Video Games

Like television, video games can be a great thing to fast. It may seem easy to many, but think about how many times each week you pick up that game controller. You may spend hours in front of the television or computer with a favorite game. By giving up playing games, you can instead focus that time on God.

### Weekends Out

If you are a social butterfly, then maybe fasting one or both of your weekend nights out may be more of a sacrifice. You can spend that time in study and prayer, focusing on doing God's will or getting the direction you need from Him. Additionally, you will save money by staying in, which you can then donate to the church or a charity of your choice, making your sacrifice even more meaningful by helping others.

### Cell Phone

Texting and talking on the phone are big deals to many teens. Fasting your time on the cell phone or giving up text messaging may be a challenge, but every time you think about texting someone, you'll definitely remind yourself to focus on God.

## Social Media

Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, SnapChat, and Instagram are a major part of daily life for millions of teens. Most check into sites several times a day. By banning these sites for yourself, you can get back time to devote to your faith and your connection to God.

## The Lunch Hour

You don't have to give up food in order to fast your lunch hour. Why not take your lunch away from the crowd and spend some time in prayer or reflection? If you have the opportunity to go off campus for lunch or have quiet places you can go, taking some lunches away from the group can keep you focused.

## Secular Music

Not every Christian teen listens only to Christian music. If you love mainstream music, then try turning the radio station to strictly Christian music or turning it off completely and spend the time talking to God. By having silence or soothing music to help you focus your thoughts, you may find you have a more meaningful connection to your faith.

In addition, here are a few more ideas:

- Fast from complaining (I sure wish this were more common.)
- Drink only water – no coffee, soda, etc.
- Pray each hour of the day for a specific intention
- Fast from television or internet use – instead, spend that time in prayer or spiritual reading
- Be extra cheerful during the day, and smile at everyone you meet
- Do extra household chores, or tackle some of the chores that you hate the most
- Refrain from eating out or having your favorite meal – instead, eat a nutritious meal that isn't your first choice
- Take a cold shower
- Give up music in the car
- Get out of bed right away, or get up a half hour earlier than usual

If you wish to know more about fasting, I have a number of books on prayer and fasting you can borrow. In addition, refer to this link for a personal guide on prayer and fasting from Bill Bright. He was president of Campus Crusade for Christ (now Cru ministries) and a champion of prayer and fasting. He and his wife, Vonnie, spearheaded the establishment of the National Day of Prayer when Ronald Reagan was President of the United States. He started the Jesus Film Project which has reached hundreds of thousands of peoples around the world. God used him mightily and I am convinced it was through his life of prayer (compared to a prayer life) and fasting which was key to his devotion to Christ.

<https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/personal-guide-to-fasting.html>