

# QUICKSTART GUIDE TO FASTING

*When you fast...*

**Matthew 6:16a**

*"Some have exalted religious fasting  
beyond all scripture and reason; and  
others have utterly disregarded it."*

**John Wesley**

*"It was not Christ's intention to reject or  
despise fasting...it was His intention to  
restore proper fasting."*

**Martin Luther**

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## **WHAT IS FASTING?**

Throughout scripture, fasting refers to abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. Elmer Towns, the co-founder of Liberty University, defines fasting as "a non-required spiritual discipline, where you can alter your diet for a spiritual reason and accompany the experience with prayer."

## **WHAT FASTING IS NOT**

Throughout history, men and women have used fasting for many different reasons, many of which aren't biblical. Fasting is never about gaining power as has been seen in hunger strikes used to manipulate individuals or governments to action. Fasting is also not a weight loss regimen or diet plan. Fasting in scripture always accompanies prayer, and is used as a way to connect with God for a particular season or with a particular purpose in mind.

## **AM I COMMANDED TO FAST?**

Fasting is a spiritual discipline. When Jesus addresses the topic of fasting in the Sermon on the Mount, it is in the direct context of prayer and giving. It is as if he is implying that the three are going to be a part of Kingdom devotion. Additionally, in that passage Jesus states, "When you fast," (Matt 6:6a), not "If you fast." It seems to be assumed that fasting should be a part of Christian devotion. Like other spiritual disciplines, fasting is not a requirement of following Jesus, but a tool at our disposal which can be leveraged for following Jesus.

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## HOW SHOULD I FAST?

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Generally speaking, we will focus on four common ways of fasting. A fifth way of fasting, the absolute fast, involves abstaining from food and water completely. Although there are examples of this in scripture (**Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9; Deut. 9:9**) it is not recommended that anyone participate in an absolute fast for more than three days and only after consulting a physician. Since Awaken is a movement of prayer and fasting covering 30 days, this type of fast is not advised.

## FOUR WAYS OF FASTING

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### 1. TOTAL FAST

A total fast is a fast that eliminates food but not water or other beverages. Some participants choose to drink simply water, while others will drink coffee, fruit drinks, or even boost or ensure. Your inclusion of certain liquids is between you and God. If you choose this particular fast, prayerfully consider the limits, and then stick to them. **Luke 4:2**

### 2. PARTIAL FAST

Sometimes referred to as a Daniel Fast, this fast eliminates certain foods, but not all food. You may choose to eliminate meat, or other foods you enjoy in an effort to turn your heart more deeply to God. **Daniel 1**

### 3. MINOR FAST

Sometimes referred to as a Jewish Fast, this fast requires you to abstain from food for a certain period of time. During certain festivals, the Jews would fast from sunup to sundown. If you choose this fast, you may decide to abstain from food for one day a week, one meal a day, or during certain hours.

### 4. COMFORT FAST

Also called a Soul Fast, this fast eliminates something other than food. Although strictly speaking, biblical fasting only refers to abstaining from food, this option can be beneficial if you have limitations due to your health or if you are aware that some other comfort has control over your life. In this particular fast, you may choose to abstain from electronics, social media, television or some other item. **1 Corinthians 7:5**

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## STARTING WELL

Now that we have discussed some biblical examples of fasting, let's look at some practical suggestions for starting well.

### 1. DETERMINE THE PURPOSE OF YOUR FAST

Begin by praying and asking God to help you with the specific reason for your fast. As a part of Awaken NWTN, we believe that God has asked us to pray and fast on behalf of every household in Obion County. We believe that God wants to bring revival and awakening to the lives of many in our region.

### 2. CHOOSE YOUR FAST

You will need to make some decisions regarding the type and parameters of your fast.

- Type of fast
- Total Fast
- Partial Fast
- Minor Fast
- Comfort Fast

Parameters of the fast (please fill in the blank with details)

- A portion of every day \_\_\_\_\_
- A full day every week \_\_\_\_\_
- A particular type of food \_\_\_\_\_
- A particular comfort \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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## 3. PLAN FOR YOUR FAST

### 1. PREPARE YOURSELF

- Check with your doctor. Make sure you are physically fit enough to engage in your chosen fast.

### 2. PREPARE YOUR BODY

- No matter what kind of fast you choose, it will require some adjustments to your body's schedule. Drink plenty of water and avoid the urge to overeat in the days leading up to your fast.

### 3. PREPARE FOR TEMPTATION

- Plan what you will do when you feel the urge to eat (or engage in the activities you are fasting from). What will you do when your family is eating dinner? What will you do when you feel hungry? Perhaps you can use that time to pray or have spiritual conversations with others around you.

### 4. PREPARE THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU

- Establish accountability. Typically fasting is an activity that is between you and God, and should be kept private. However there are some biblical examples of corporate or public fasting (**2 Chron. 20:1-4; Ezra 8:21-23, etc**). Awaken NWTN is a group fast calling our community to prayer and fasting for spiritual renewal. As a result there will be many people around you fasting in similar ways. Find one or two who can check in on you and hold you accountable to your commitments. You may also want to prepare your family so that their lives are disrupted as little as possible. You want to communicate to your children that fasting is a blessing from the Lord, not a burden to endure.

## 4. STICK WITH IT & EXERCISE GRACE

Quite simply you will face many opportunities to break your fast once you get started. Jesus would warn us against making false promises. In the same sermon where he discusses fasting, Jesus would teach his followers that their yes should be yes and our no should be no (**Matthew 5:37**). When you feel the urge to give up, spend some time in prayer and engage with an accountability partner.

All of that having been said, if you do give in to your hunger, do not let yourself quit. Dave Clayton, the author of the book *Revival Starts Here* states, "Fasting is an exercise in grace--so be sure to give yourself some." When you were learning to ride a bike for the first time or when you were figuring out how to throw a curve ball, or perform the perfect plie, you didn't give up just because you failed a few times at first. The same should be true for fasting. If you make a mistake and give in to your urges, don't beat yourself up. Instead, spend some time in prayer and start again!

Certainly, this document doesn't cover every possible aspect of fasting, but hopefully within these few short pages we have given you a guide that can propel you into the 30 days of prayer and fasting that is Awaken NWTN. Should you have additional questions, please don't hesitate to contact your local pastor, or email us at [info@awakennwtn.com](mailto:info@awakennwtn.com).

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