Fasting is Feasting

A HANDBOOK OF SELECTED ARTICLES ON THE PRACTICE OF FASTING

The Spiritual Discipline of Fasting
by Pastor Lance Witt.....1

Sharpen Your Affections with Fasting
by David Matthis.....5

Fasting for Beginners by David Matthis.....8

Fasting That Exposes and Redirects Our Hunger by John Piper.....12

Fasting Guidelines and Information.....14

PREFER TO LISTEN?
Check out this helpful article from John Piper at Desiringgod.org:
http://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/why-do-christians-fast

THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF FASTING

By Pastor Lance Witt

An Outdated Oddity?

When I was a kid growing up in church, I heard hundreds of sermons, sat through hundreds of small group lessons, and participated in dozens of programmes at my church. Throughout all of those years saturated in "church," I do not remember my pastor one time ever doing a message on fasting. I do not ever remember a small group lesson on fasting. I don't ever remember our church being called to a time of prayer and fasting as we sought God on some important decision.

By default, I grew up thinking that fasting was something they did in the Old Testament that was sort of like animal sacrifices. We just don't do it anymore. And I was fine with that. The idea of going extended periods of time without eating didn't sound like my idea of fun.

An Assumed Practice!

But, then we read a passage like Matthew 6:16-18 (NIV):

> *"**When you fast**, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But **when you fast**, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men 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."*

This passage comes right in the middle of Jesus' teaching on prayer and giving. In this sermon, Jesus uses phrases like: "When you give" (v. 2), "When you pray" (v. 5), and "When you fast" (v. 16). Jesus assumes that his audience will give, will pray, and will fast. Fasting is not an option. It is not an oddity. Fasting, according to Jesus, is a *given*. In fact, fasting is mentioned more times in the Bible than baptism!

In the Bible, we observe the people of God fasting for a variety of reasons:

- They were facing a crisis

- They were seeking God's protection and deliverance
- They had been called to repentance and renewal
- They were asking God for guidance
- They were humbling themselves in worship

The Danger in the Discipline

But there is an inherent danger in fasting. It is the same danger that is found in the practice of any spiritual discipline. We can turn fasting into an end unto itself, rather than a means to an end. It can become merely an external practice without an internal passion. It can be reduced to a habit without heart. We see an example of this in Luke 18:12, where Jesus tells the story of a Pharisee who bragged to God in prayer that he fasted twice a week. Pharisees habitually fasted twice a week, usually on the 2nd and 5th days of the week. These two days happened to be the major days for the Jewish market. That meant the city was packed with farmers, merchants, and shoppers. Therefore, these days of public fasting would have the largest audiences. Jesus condemned the practice of fasting when it was done in such a way as to receive public adulation.

We have an ability to take that which is sacred, holy, and meant to draw us closer to the Father, and turn it into a merely mechanical, religious drill that we use to impress others of our spirituality. What was intended to draw us to God now actually distances us from God because we have perverted it. And God notices. He prompted the prophet Zechariah to ask the people and the priests of Israel, "During those seventy years of exile, when you fasted and mourned in the summer and at the festival in early autumn, *was it really for Me that you were fasting*?"

(Zechariah 7:5 NLT Italics mine)

A Time of Feasting

- Fasting is not so much about food as it is about focus.
- Fasting is not so much about saying no to the body as it is about saying yes to the Spirit.
- Fasting is not about doing without, it is about looking within.
- Fasting is an outward response to an inward attitude and cry of the soul.

When John Wesley spoke of fasting, he said "First, let it be done unto the Lord with our eye singly fixed on Him. Let our intention herein be this, and this alone, to glorify our Father which is in Heaven."

When we decide to set aside time to fast, here is what I think would please the heart of God. Let's talk about this time of spiritual discipline not as a day of fasting, but a day of feasting – feasting on Jesus

There is an orphanage in India where the staff and the children all fast every Friday. And you know what they call it? They call it their day of feasting on Jesus. And do you know what they do during their day of feasting? They pray for the American church. Now, that is humbling.

A Call to Fast

In the Old Testament Israel was called to fast as a nation before God:

1. **Fasting starts with the spiritual leaders.** Joel starts off his urgent call to a fast by saying, "Hear this, you elders." (Joel 1:2)

2. **Fasting is often associated with a sense of spiritual desperation.** Joel 2:12 says, "Turn to me now, while there is still time." Notice the sense of urgency and desperation.

3. **Fasting is a call to return to God.** (Joel 2:13) Israel's first need, like that of the prodigal son, was just to come home to the Father. God doesn't talk about the people's need for better plans, programmes, or strategies. He is simply saying to them: You have been unfaithful to me. Come home.

> Fasting helps to express, to deepen, to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything...to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God.
>
> *Andrew Murray*

4. **Fasting is not about the externals.** In Joel 2:13, God says, "Don't tear your clothing in grief, instead tear your hearts." It is entirely possible to go without food and not have a true fast.

5. **Fasting is the response of a broken heart.** Why does Joel say, "Come with weeping, fasting, and mourning"? (2:12) Because repentance is the appropriate response when you have strayed. And, God is responsive. "He is gracious and merciful...not easily angered" (2:13). Somehow, God is drawn to the empty, broken, needy, and weak. As Jim Cymbala says, "God is attracted to weakness."

6. **Fasting is the humble response to immense responsibility.**
Joel calls a solemn assembly. In verse 15 he says, "blow the trumpet…announce a time of fasting" and he urges everyone to get there — the elders, the children, the babies; he even says to get the bride and groom! Why? Because God's name and reputation were at stake (2:17). The people of Israel were being urged to enter a time of fasting, with the direct result that they would preserve God's reputation and glorify His name. That is an immense responsibility!

Plug into God's Power

Fasting is not a means of seeking God's
blessings as much as it is a means of
seeking God.

Fasting is not a test for super saints,
it is not a means of twisting God's arm,
and it is not a magical formula for getting through to God.

Fasting is feasting on the Lord.
Looking to him for comfort, power,
strength, guidance, forgiveness, and
hope.

We have this incredibly powerful tool called prayer. Prayer is the tool that God has given us to use on all the disrepair in our lives, in our church, in our communities, in our country to apply it to our problems, concerns, relationships, and responsibilities. Please use the experience of fasting to restore your focus and revive the power of prayer in your life.

TWO CAUTIONS

1. Remember that fasting is not "earning" an answer to prayer. God cannot be blackmailed by human effort. God wants to answer our prayers and He answers out of grace. Fasting simply prepares us for God's answer.

2. Fast only if your health allows it at this time. If you are able **only** to do a partial fast - do it in faith and God will honour your intentions.

SHARPEN YOUR AFFECTIONS WITH FASTING

By David Matthis

Fasting has fallen on hard times — at least, it seems, among our overstuffed bellies in the American church. I speak as one of the well-fed.

Sure, you'll find your exceptions here and there. Some pockets even prize the countercultural enough to steer their vehicles into the ditch of asceticism. But they are vastly outnumbered by the rest of us veering toward the opposite shoulder. The dangers of asceticism are great — surpassed only by those of overindulgence.

Our problem might be how we think of fasting. If the accent is on abstinence, and fasting is some mere duty to perform, then only the most iron-willed among us will get over the social and self-pampering hurdles to actually put this discipline into practice.

But if we are awakened to see fasting for the joy it can bring, as a means of God's grace to strengthen and sharpen Godward affections, then we might find ourselves holding a powerful new tool for enriching our enjoyment of Jesus.

What Is Fasting?

Fasting is an exceptional measure, designed to channel and express our desire for God and our holy discontent in a fallen world. It is for those not satisfied with the status quo. For those who want more of God's grace. For those who feel truly desperate for God.

"Fasting is for those who want more of God's grace. For those who feel truly desperate for God."

The Scriptures include many forms of fasting: personal and communal, public and private, congregational and national, regular and occasional, partial and absolute. Typically, we think of fasting as "a Christian's voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes" (Don Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 160).

We can fast from good things other than food and drink as well. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, "Fasting should really be made to include abstinence from anything which is legitimate in and of itself for the sake of some special spiritual purpose." But normal Christian fasting means privately and occasionally choosing to go without food (though not water) for some special period of

time (whether a day or three or seven) in view of some specific spiritual purpose.

According to Whitney, fasting's spiritual purposes include:

- strengthening prayer (Ezra 8:23; Joel 2:13; Acts 13:3)
- seeking God's guidance (Judges 20:26; Acts 14:23)
- expressing grief (1 Samuel 31:13; 2 Samuel 1:11–12)
- seeking deliverance or protection (2 Chronicles 20:3–4; Ezra 8:21–23)
- expressing repentance and returning to God (1 Samuel 7:6; Jonah 3:5–8)
- humbling oneself before God (1 Kings 21:27–29; Psalm 35:13)
- expressing concern for the work of God (Nehemiah 1:3–4; Daniel 9:3)
- ministering to the needs of others (Isaiah 58:3–7)
- overcoming temptation and dedicating yourself to God (Matthew 4:1–11)
- expressing love and worship to God (Luke 2:37)

While the potential purposes are many, it is that last one which may be most helpful to focus our thoughts about fasting. It encompasses all the others and gets at the essence of what makes fasting such a mighty means of grace.

Whitney captures it like this: "Fasting can be an expression of finding your greatest pleasure and enjoyment in life from God" (176). And he quotes a helpful phrase from Matthew Henry, who says that fasting serves to "*put an edge upon devout affections*."

Jesus Assumes We'll Fast

While the New Testament includes no mandate that Christians fast on certain days or with specific frequency, Jesus clearly assumes we will fast. It's a tool too powerful to leave endlessly on the shelf collecting dust. While many biblical texts mention fasting, the two most important come just chapters apart in Matthew's Gospel.

> "Jesus doesn't say 'if you fast,' but 'when you fast.'"

The first is Matthew 6:16–18, which comes in sequence with Jesus's teachings on generosity and prayer. Fasting is as basic to Christianity as giving to others and asking from God. The key here is that Jesus doesn't say "if you fast," but "when you fast."

Second is Matthew 9:14–15, which Richard Foster says may be "the most important statement in the New Testament on whether or not Christians should fast today" (*Celebration of Discipline*, 53). Jesus's answer is a resounding yes.

Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees

fast, but your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast." (Matthew 9:14–15)

When Jesus, our bridegroom, was here on earth among his disciples, it was a time for the discipline of feasting. But now that he is "taken away" from his disciples, "they will fast." Not "they might, if they ever get around to it," but "they will." Which is confirmed by the pattern of fasting that emerged right away in the early church (Acts 9:9; 13:2; 14:23).

Put an Edge on Your Feelings

What makes fasting such a gift is its ability, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to focus our feelings and their expression toward God in prayer. Fasting walks arm in arm with prayer — as John Piper says, she is "the hungry handmaiden of prayer," who "both reveals and remedies."

> "Fasting, like the gospel, isn't for the self-sufficient. It's for the poor in spirit."

She reveals the measure of food's mastery over us — or television or computers or whatever we submit to again and again to conceal the weakness of our hunger for God. And she remedies by intensifying the earnestness of our prayer and saying with our whole body what prayer says with the heart: I long to be satisfied in God alone! (*When I Don't Desire God*, 171)
That burn in your gut, that rolling fire in your belly, demanding that you feed it more food, signals game time for fasting as a means of grace. Only as we voluntarily embrace the pain of an empty stomach do we see how much we've allowed our belly to be our god (Philippians 3:19).

And in that gnawing ache of growing hunger is the engine of fasting, generating the reminder to bend our longings for food Godward and inspire intensified longings for Jesus. Fasting, says Piper, is the physical exclamation point at the end of the sentence, "This much, O God, I want you!" (*Hunger for God*, 25–26).

Will You Fast?

More could be said (like check with your doctor about any health concerns), but this spiritual discipline is simple enough. The question is, Will you avail yourself of this potent means of God's grace?

Fasting, like the gospel, isn't for the self-sufficient and those who feel they

have it all together. It's for the poor in spirit. It's for those who mourn. For the meek. For those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. In other words, fasting is for Christians.

It is a desperate measure, for desperate times, among those who know themselves desperate for God.

FASTING FOR BEGINNERS

By David Matthis

Chances are you are among the massive majority of Christians who rarely or never fast. It's not because we haven't read our Bibles or sat under faithful preaching or heard about the power of fasting, or even that we don't genuinely want to do it. We just never actually get around to putting down the fork.

Part of it may be that we live in a society in which food is so ubiquitous that we eat not only when we don't need to, but sometimes even when we don't want to. We eat to share a meal with others, to build or grow relationships (good reasons), or just as a distraction from responsibility.

And of course, there are our own cravings and aches for comfort that keep us from the discomfort of fasting.

Not So Fast

Fasting is voluntarily going without food — or any other regularly enjoyed, good gift from God — for the sake of some spiritual purpose. It is markedly counter-cultural in our consumerist society, like abstaining from sex until marriage.

If we are to learn the lost art of fasting and enjoy its fruit, it will not come with our ear to the ground of society, but with Bibles open. Then, the concern will not be whether we fast, but when. Jesus assumes his followers will fast, and even promises it will happen. He doesn't say "if," but "when you fast" (Matthew 6:16). And he doesn't say his followers might fast, but "they will" (Matthew 9:15).

"Fasting is markedly counter-cultural in our consumerist society, like abstaining from sex until marriage."

We fast in this life because we believe in the life to come. We don't have to get it all here and now, because we have a promise that we will have it all in the coming age. We fast from what we can see and taste, because we have tasted and seen the goodness of the invisible and infinite God — and are desperately hungry for more of him.

Radical, Temporary Measure

Fasting is for this world, for stretching our hearts to get fresh air beyond the pain and trouble around us. And it is for the battle against the sin and weakness inside us. We express our discontent with our sinful selves and our longing for more of Christ.
When Jesus returns, fasting will be done. It's a temporary measure, for this life and age, to enrich our joy in Jesus and prepare our hearts for the next — for seeing him face to face. When he returns, he will not call a fast, but throw a feast; then all holy abstinence will have served its glorious purpose and be seen by all for the stunning gift it was.

Until then, we will fast.

How to Start Fasting

Fasting is hard. It sounds much easier in concept than it proves to be in practice. It can be surprising how on-edge we feel when we miss a meal. Many an idealistic new fast-er has decided to miss a meal and only found our belly drove us to make up for it long before the next mealtime came.

Fasting sounds so simple, and yet the world, our flesh, and the devil conspire to introduce all sorts of complications that keep it from happening. In view of helping you start down the slow path to good fasting, here are six simple pieces of advice. These suggestions might seem pedantic, but the hope is that such basic counsel can serve those who are new at fasting or have never seriously tried it.

1. Start small.

Don't go from no fasting to attempting a weeklong. Start with one meal; maybe fast one meal a week for several weeks. Then try two meals, and work your way up to a daylong fast. Perhaps eventually try a two-day juice fast.

A juice fast means abstaining from all food and beverage, except for juice and water. Allowing yourself juice provides nutrients and sugar for the body to keep you operating, while also still feeling the effects from going without solid food. It's *not* recommended that you abstain from water during a fast of any length.

2. Plan what you'll do instead of eating.

Fasting isn't merely an act of self-deprivation, but a spiritual discipline for seeking more of God's fullness. Which means we should have a plan for *what positive pursuit to undertake* in the time it normally takes to eat. We spend a good portion of our day with food in front of us. One significant part of fasting is the time it creates for prayer and meditation on God's word or some act of love for others.

Before diving headlong into a fast, craft a simple plan. Connect it to your purpose for the fast. Each fast should have a specific spiritual purpose. Identify what that is and design a focus to replace the time you would have spent eating. Without a purpose and plan, it's not Christian fasting; it's just going hungry.

3. Consider how it will affect others.

Fasting is no license to be unloving. It would be sad to lack concern and care for others around us because of this expression of heightened focus on God. Love for God and for neighbor go together. Good fasting mingles horizontal concern with the vertical. If anything, others should even feel more loved and cared for when we're fasting.

So as you plan your fast, consider how it will affect others. If you have regular lunches with colleagues or dinners with family or roommates, assess how your abstaining will affect them, and let them know ahead of time, instead of just being a no-show, or springing it on them in the moment that you will not be eating.

Also, consider this backdoor inspiration for fasting: If you make a daily or weekly practice of eating with a particular group of friends or family, and those plans are interrupted by someone's travel or vacation or atypical circumstances, consider that as an opportunity to fast, rather than eating alone.

4. Try different kinds of fasting.

The typical form of fasting is personal, private, and partial, but we find a variety of forms in the Bible: personal and communal, private and public, congregational and national, regular and occasional, absolute and partial.

In particular, consider fasting together with your family, small group, or church. Do you share together in some special need for God's wisdom and guidance? Is there an unusual difficulty in the church, or society, for which you

need God's intervention? Do you want to keep the second coming of Christ in view? Plead with special earnestness for God's help by linking arms with other believers to fast together.

5. Fast from something other than food.

Fasting from food is not necessarily for everyone. Some health conditions keep even the most devout from the traditional course. However, fasting is not limited to abstaining from food. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "Fasting should really be made to include abstinence from anything which is legitimate in and of itself for the sake of some special spiritual purpose."

If the better part of wisdom for you, in your health condition, is not to go without food, consider fasting from television, computer, social media, or some other regular enjoyment that would bend your heart toward greater enjoyment of Jesus. Paul even talks about married couples fasting from sex "for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer" (1 Corinthians 7:5).

6. Don't think of white elephants.

"Without a purpose and plan, it's not Christian fasting; it's just going hungry."

When your empty stomach starts to growl and begins sending your brain every "feed me" signal it can, don't be content to let your mind dwell on the fact that you haven't eaten. If you make it through with an iron will that says *no* to your stomach, but doesn't turn your mind's eye elsewhere, it says more about your love for food than your love for God.

Christian fasting turns its attention to Jesus or some great cause of his in the world. Christian fasting seeks to take the pains of hunger and transpose them into the key of some eternal anthem, whether it's fighting against some sin, or pleading for someone's salvation, or for the cause of the unborn, or longing for a greater taste of Jesus.

FASTING THAT EXPOSES AND REDIRECTS OUR HUNGER

Written from A Hunger for God: Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer, by John Piper, available here for free.

Fasting is not a way to earn God's favour, prove our seriousness, or impress other people. Food, rest, sport, entertainment and technology are gifts of God, to be received with thanksgiving. Yet good gifts can quietly become substitutes for God. Christian fasting is a deliberate turning aside from a legitimate pleasure so that we can seek Christ with greater attention and say, in practice, that he is better than his gifts.

What Fasting Can Reveal

John Piper argues that fasting exposes what normally stays hidden. When food, scrolling, television, sport viewing, gaming, coffee or another familiar comfort is removed, we may discover irritability, anxiety, loneliness, boredom, resentment, or an instinct to escape. The fast has not created these things; it has brought them into the light.

That exposure is not a reason for despair. It is an invitation to bring our actual hearts to Jesus. Instead of immediately soothing ourselves with another distraction, we can confess our need, ask for the Spirit's help, and receive Christ again as the Bread of Life. Fasting asks a searching question: when an ordinary comfort is unavailable, where do I go for satisfaction?

Do Not Merely Remove; Replace

A Christian fast is not simply an exercise in going without. If we skip a meal but fill the time with busyness, entertainment or self-congratulation, we have missed its purpose. If we stop using social media but simply replace it with streaming, sport, news or gaming, our appetite may only have changed direction.

Before your fast begins, decide how the space it creates will be used to seek Jesus. When hunger or restlessness comes, let it become a prompt to pray: "Lord Jesus, you are better than this gift; satisfy me in yourself." Open Scripture, worship, pray for others, confess sin, or sit quietly before God. The ache is not the goal; communion with Christ is.

A Pastoral Caution

Do not choose a fast merely to deprive yourself. Without time to pray and turn your longing towards Jesus, the discomfort of fasting can leave you proud, resentful, preoccupied with food, or reaching for another pleasure to numb what has surfaced. Choose a fast that creates realistic space for prayer and make a simple plan for that space before you begin.

Food fasting is not wise or safe for everyone. Those who are pregnant or breastfeeding, have a history of eating disorders, have diabetes or another medical condition, or take medication affected by food intake should seek appropriate medical advice and may be better served by a non-food fast.

Planning Your Fast

- What good gift will I set aside, and for how long?
- What am I asking God to do in me, in our church, or in the lives of others?
- When will I pray or read Scripture in the time or attention this fast releases?
- What desire, irritation or substitute comfort might this fast reveal, and how will I bring it to Christ rather than simply replace it?

As hunger or longing returns, let it become prayer*: "This much, O God, I want you."*

Source: Adapted from John Piper, A Hunger for God: Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer (Crossway, 2013), especially the Preface and Introduction, pp. 13-26.

Fasting Guidelines and Information

Types of fast

Many people think fasting means a strict water fast. Some people even try to follow the model of some biblical heroes—no food or water, which can be dangerous, and miss the point of fasting.

There is no single required pattern for fasting. A traditional fast is abstaining from food for a spiritual purpose; abstaining from another good gift can also help focus prayer, especially where health or family responsibilities make food fasting unwise. Choose a practice that is humble, realistic and directed towards seeking God:

- One meal: Miss one breakfast or lunch, using some or all of that time to pray and read Scripture. This is often a sensible starting point**.**

- Dinner-to-dinner fast: Eat dinner one evening, abstain from food until dinner the following evening, and drink water. This gives a roughly 24-hour fast while fitting ordinary family rhythms.

- Partial or "Daniel" fast: For a set period, eat simply - for example fruit, vegetables and plain food - while abstaining from richer foods and treats. The aim is not a special diet but an undistracted seeking of God.

- Liquids or juice fast: Abstain from solid food while taking water and/or suitable liquids. This may suit some people for a short fast, but health needs should be taken seriously.

- A particular food or drink: Abstain from coffee, sweets, alcohol, fizzy drinks, snacks or another regular enjoyment, allowing each desire for it to call you back to prayer.

- Media and entertainment: Abstain from television, streaming, social media, news browsing, sport viewing or gaming for a day or for the week, and intentionally give some of the released attention to Jesus.

Physically preparing for a fast that lasts 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.
- 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 in terms of the duration of the fast.
- 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. If you have sugar sensitivities or problems (e.g. diabetes), consult your doctor before attempting this (or any other) fast.
- A water-only fast has been undertaken by many people. We would not encourage this without strong medical supervision, particularly in the case of young people. Depending on your weight and metabolism, you can go forty days on water alone.

Helpful Hints for Your Fast

- Drink plenty of water, you'll need more than usual, and this will keep hunger at bay.
- It is wise to abstain from strong stimulants such as caffeinated and sugary drinks during a fast, including the artificial sweeteners found in diet drinks. Also, avoid soy protein drinks, which have been known to cause health problems during a fast.
- If you are on a juice fast, 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 also good, but they 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, beetroot, or green vegetable combinations are excellent as well. Fresh fruit and vegetable juices can be made in a juice extractor or purchased ready-made (be sure to buy juices without any added sugars). Some of the benefits of 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.

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 handful 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 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 or even death.
- 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 eating 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 fruit 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 fruit 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. 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.
- Pregnant or nursing mothers should never fast all food and/or drink, as fasting could be very dangerous to their baby's development and health, and their own personal health. Pregnant or nursing mothers could engage in types of fasting such as giving up certain kinds of food. However, women who are nursing or pregnant must always maintain a balanced diet.
- People who have struggled with eating disorders in the past should undertake any fasting with wisdom and caution.
- If you have a diagnosed illness and/or are taking prescription medicine, fasting should only be done under the direct supervision of a doctor or healthcare professional.
- 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 contains too much sugar for your system, dilute it by 50 percent with water or drink a "green drink" (made by juicing carrots, celery, spinach, and parsley). If these or any symptoms persist, you should stop fasting and seek immediate professional help from a doctor or healthcare professional.
- If you are having digestive trouble after breaking a fast (e.g, diarrhea), mix a cup of unsweetened applesauce with a cup of cooked brown rice. This should stop the diarrhea.

This Handout Is for Informational Purposes Only

The information in this handout reflects only the limited opinions, experience, and suggestions and is not meant to substitute the advice provided by your doctor or other healthcare professional.