

Fasting Q&A from Nov 2008 Connection magazine with Jentezen Franklin:

How do I begin? What can I do to prepare for my fast?

Before beginning a fast, think it through. Write down a plan so that you do not waiver or start justifying your appetite during the fast. Make a verbal commitment to the Lord. Start your fast with a committed heart.

Can I have salt, pepper, seasonings, milk, whole grains, soy products, eggs, protein drinks, vitamins or butter?

The general guidelines for each fast can be found in the "Types of Fasts" section. However, fasting is a private discipline. It is not something that is meant to be unattainable. Decide what is feasible for you to do and make the effort. If you are on a full fast and just cannot consume broth without salt and pepper, that's OK. Do what you can and put it in God's hands . . . just do your best.

What can children fast?

I've found the best way to show your children the power of fasting is to lead by example. If they want to participate in fasting or if you want to have a family fast, consider giving up desserts. Or soft drinks. Or one item of food that would be a sacrifice to each of you. Now if they want to do without broccoli and they don't even like broccoli - giving it up wouldn't be a sacrifice for them. Just lead by example and they will understand. In addition to giving up an item of food, you could also give up television as a family and spend that time reading and discussing Bible stories.

What if I have a medical condition?

Consult your doctor before starting any fast. Decide together what is possible. If your health condition prohibits you from fasting food, try fasting something else that would be a sacrifice or distraction for you and replace that time concentrating on prayer and Bible study.

What if I start and can't finish out my fast . . . have I fasted for nothing?

Seeking God through prayer and fasting is never a waste of time. When you make the effort, God takes notice. Just determine within your heart that you will make an even better effort next time. Or maybe you need to try finishing up with a partial fast.*

I forgot and ate something; do I need to start again?

No, think of fasting as a marathon, rather than a sprint. Don't give up! If you fall down, get up and keep trying. Conquering "king stomach" is difficult, but you'll make it.

What type of fast are you going on? Do I have to do the same fast?

Fasting is a private and personal discipline. Consider the types of fasts outlined in this publication and select one that works for you. You don't have to go on the same type of fast as someone else to see God's hand at work. Just do your best.

Do I have to fast food? What about TV, sports, etc.?

Fasting food is the traditional type of fast that is outlined in Scripture. However, if you are unable to fast food for health reasons, feel free to give up something else that might have control in your life or be preventing you from experiencing spiritual growth. Replace that time with prayer and study of God's word.

Do I continue to exercise while fasting?

Moderate exercise is good. But it is best to always consult a doctor about fasting and exercise. If you are on a complete fast, you may not have the energy needed to maintain a high level of exercise.

What if I have a manual labor job?

If you have a job that requires you to expend a lot of physical energy, you may want to consider a partial fast that allows you to receive enough nutrition to perform your job.

Can my husband and I be intimate during our fast?

There is a scriptural reference for abstaining from sex during times of fasting in I Corinthians 7:2-5 and especially verse 5. Here is the breakdown: v.3- the husband is to "render" to his wife the affection (sexual relations) due her and likewise the wife also to her husband. v.4- The husband does not have authority over his body and neither does the wife, but rather the marriage partner has the authority over the partner. v.5 So do not deprive one another (of sexual relations) EXCEPT WITH CONSENT, for a time . . . that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer. So the answer is yes, scripture allows this and even provides for this depriving or going without for the purpose of fasting and prayer, BUT this is only to be done by mutual consent. Both have to be on board to fast from sexual relations . . . for fasting is to be honorable before the Lord.