

DECLARING A FAST

Text: Joel 2:15-17

Key Word: Fasting

Key Thought: We Need to Declare a Holy Fast among the People of God

There are so many conflicting messages being promoted in Churches across our nation as well as the world that we need to take time to seriously decide what God is telling us. We do not need to see these messages as conflicting with each another. **It is most likely that God is declaring different focuses on different areas because there are differing needs.** Each church as well as each city and province and nation have specific areas to address.

I believe that Cornwall and surrounding area need to reach a new level of obedience to the Word of God. It is time to raise the standard. It's not that God has ever lowered His standard. It's simply that we have lowered our expectations and obedience of it. The Church needs to return to the high standards that God has ALWAYS required of us.

This will never come about without a radical turning away from ungodly things that grip our soul. This type of message is in total opposition to our fleshly desires that continually want to be gratified. God's people need to fall in love with Him all over again. **Our desires have been feeding our carnal nature more than most of us would like to admit.**

I have seen things that bring about a temporary change in people. But there is only one thing that will be successful for both the present and the future if we want to live a life that is pleasing to the LORD. **We must stop feeding this growing monster that the Bible calls our flesh or our carnal nature.** In doing so it will weaken and eventually have little or no effect upon us.

One of the most effective ways to do this is to enter a God-Ordained Fast. It will never be effective if we do it just to follow a new fad. It must be established from God's heart to our heart. Do not enter a time of fasting simply because someone else is doing it and seeing results. Have God place the desire deep within your heart in order to have the power to fulfill His purpose and gain His provision.

What Should We Clearly Understand When it Comes to Biblical Fasting?

I. THE POWER OF FASTING (Isaiah 58:6)

II. THE PURPOSE OF FASTING (Isaiah 58:7)

III. THE PROVISION OF FASTING (Isaiah 58:8)

I. THE POWER OF FASTING (Isaiah 58:6)

Three times in the book of Joel God's people are told to declare a time of fasting (Joel 1:14; 2:12,15). I tend to believe that it takes a consistent prompting from God in order for us to see the need of fasting. In other words, we need to recognize that the problems we face cannot be adequately solved with man's wisdom and power. We must become convinced that only the power of God can break through to bring about a glorious victory.

There used to be a yoke on display on the front yard of the old Cornwall jail recently. It reminded me of the need to break forth and overcome oppression that has gripped many people's lives. It is one thing to set people free from the yoke that binds them, but it is another thing to keep them from returning to it. I believe this is why the Church needs to be called to a time of fasting and prayer. The prophet Isaiah made it clear as to the power that can be obtained through fasting.

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: 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

First of all, let's look at the root word which is used for "*fasting*." The Greek word for fasting is "*nesteia*" (*nes-tâ-ä*) -- a compound of "*ne*" (a negative prefix) and "*esthio*" which means "*to eat*." So the basic root meaning of the word simply means "*not to eat*" or "*an abstinence of food*."

But what does this "*not eating*" food mean? Why did the Israelites "not eat?" We find a clue in Leviticus 16:29. This verse says that fasting is synonymous with "*afflicting one's soul*." We gain some insight here about how the Hebrews viewed fasting. **Fasting is more than just "afflicting one's body."** It is "*afflicting one's soul*." In other words, **fasting in the Hebrew mind is something my soul (intellect, emotions, will) participates in.**

Fasting is denying my normal desires and needs. It is denying not only my own body, but also my own wants. It is a way of saying that food and my desires are to be secondary. **Fasting is "afflicting one's soul" -- an act of self-denial.** But it is not only an act of self-denial and here is where the monks and hermits went wrong.

Biblical fasting is "not eating" with a spiritual goal in mind. How do we know this? Because Biblical fasting always occurs together with prayer in the Bible -- **ALWAYS. You can pray without fasting, but you cannot fast (Biblically speaking) without praying.** Biblical fasting is deliberately abstaining from food for a spiritual reason, goal, or purpose. Thayer's and Strong's Lexicons both tell us "**the fast, accordingly, occurred in the autumn (on the Day of Atonement), ἡ χεῖμεριος ὥρα, when navigation was usually dangerous on account of storms, as was the case with the voyage referred to.**"

I. THE POWER OF FASTING (Isaiah 58:6) (Contd.)

“Fasting is calculated to bring a note of urgency and [persistence] into our praying, and to give force to our pleas in the court of heaven . . . As spirituality waned and worldliness flourished in the churches, the power and gifts of the Spirit were withdrawn.”

Arthur Wallis
“God’s Chosen Fast”

"Fasting helps to **express**, to **deepen**, and to **confirm** the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything -- **to sacrifice ourselves** -- to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God."

Andrew Murray

To begin loosening others we must first experience a loosening in our own lives. Our body, soul and spirit must come under the Lordship of Christ. We can never help someone else be loosened if we ourselves are bound. **We seldom require anyone to sacrifice in an area that we have never overcome ourselves.** Biblical fasting has the power to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke from both the one praying as well as the person(s) being prayed for.

A. Nine Types of Bible Fasts (not exhaustive)

The Samuel Fast — to let the oppressed go free (1 Samuel 7:6)

The Widow’s Fast — to share our bread with the hungry (1 Kings 17:16)

The Elijah Fast — to break every yoke (1 Kings 19:4,8)

The Esther Fast — for protection against evil (Esther 4:16; 5:2)

The Ezra Fast — undo heavy burdens (Ezra 8:23)

The Daniel Fast — for health and healing (Daniel 1:8)

The Isaiah Fast — loosen the bands of wickedness (Isaiah 58:6)

The John the Baptist Fast — for effective testimonies (Luke 1:15)

The Apostle Paul Fast — for spiritual enlightenment (Acts 9:9)

II. THE PURPOSE OF FASTING (Isaiah 58:7)

“Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?”

Isaiah 58:7

Fasting must reach a greater level than simply the spiritual level. We have all heard the expression that someone is so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good. For years I struggled with that thought because **it is wrong! I believe that we must always intend to make our spiritual maturity affect our natural responses and growth.**

Once our bodies are in subjection to the will of God, we will soon get our eyes refocused upon the needs of those that are around us. Perhaps the best way to explain this part is to tell what Biblical Fasting is NOT. **Biblical fasting is NOT . . .**

A. A Physical or Psychological Discipline -- God never tells people to fast as a purely physical discipline, (i.e., dieting for the purpose of making the body beautiful or for some other physical benefit). I'm not saying that dieting is wrong -- only that this purpose is not found in the Bible. Dieting may or may not be helpful to you personally, but the Bible never encourages "fasting" for that reason alone. **God never encourages fasting solely for discipline or self-denial reasons.** When the Bible uses the term "fasting" **IT HAS SPIRITUAL GOALS** in mind -- something very different than Weight Watchers and others that can improve one's health.

B. A Manipulative Tool -- **Sometimes fasting is viewed as an attempt to twist God's arm or to win His approval.** But God doesn't respond to pressure. One group of people in the book of Acts tried to get God on their side by manipulative fasting. But God did not hear their prayer and their plan did not work.

"In the morning some of the Jews made a plan to kill Paul, and they took an oath not to eat or drink anything until they had killed him. They went to the leading priests and the older Jewish leaders and said, 'We have taken an oath not to eat or drink until we have killed Paul'"

Acts 23:12,14

Fasting did not always move the hand or heart of God. Using fasting in a manipulative way was done by the people in Jeremiah's day too. God said,

"Although they fast, I will not listen to their cry; though they offer burnt offerings and grain offering, I will not accept them. I will destroy them with the sword, famine, and plague"

Jeremiah 14:12

II. THE PURPOSE OF FASTING (Isaiah 58:7) (Contd.)

Biblical fasting is NOT (Contd.):

B. A Manipulative Tool (Contd.) – We must never think of fasting as a hunger strike designed to force God's hand and get our own way! We don't need to strong arm God. God is good (Nahum 1:7) and eager to answer our prayers. He is generous (James 1:5) and eager to give us 'good things' (Matthew 7:11). Don't use fasting to try to push God into a corner. Maybe God would rather let you starve and join Him in heaven!

C. A Hypocritical Religious Exercise -- By Jesus' time fasting had become a very important part of the Jewish life. Perhaps *overly important* would be a better way of saying it. Based on Luke 18:12a, we know the Pharisees fasted twice a week. The Talmud tells us that this was on the 2nd and 5th day (Monday and Thursday). Why those days? **According to the Pharisees it was because Moses went up on Mt. Sinai to get the Law on the 5th day and returned on the 2nd.** At least that's what they said and believed.

But if you look closely into Jewish history, you find another possible reason for the Pharisees fasting on Monday and Thursday. **Market day in the city of Jerusalem was on the 2nd and 5th day!** Everyone from the countryside came to town on those days. It was on these two days that the Pharisees chose to hold their fasts. They would walk through the streets with their hair dishevelled; they would put on old clothes and cover themselves with dirt; they would cover their faces with white chalk in order to look pale; and they would dump ashes over their head as a sign of their humility! Fasting had become a "look at how spiritual I am" exercise. It was an open declaration of hypocrisy.

Biblical fasting is NOT a **physical discipline**. It is NOT a **manipulative tool**. It is NOT **hypocrisy**.

III. THE PROVISION OF FASTING (Isaiah 58:8-14)

“Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

9. “Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.”

Isaiah 58:9

Our God is the God of abundance and of grace. He never runs out of His supply. The treasury of heaven is overloaded with provisions. Yet that does not necessarily mean that we will receive of this abundance. God has placed several conditions for us to seriously take note of.

A. Condition # 1

“If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk,”

Isaiah 58:9b

B. Condition # 2

“And if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.”

Isaiah 58:10

C. Condition # 3

“If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD’s holy day honorable and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,

14. Then you will find your joy in the Lord and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Isaiah 58:13,14

III. THE PROVISION OF FASTING (Isaiah 58:8-14) (Contd.)

Since fasting is an act of obedience, our heart must be right when we sense the need to fast unto the Lord. The act is not as important as the heart of the individual involved in the act. As we approach God properly, we will find His overabundant blessing flowing into our lives.

What Should We Clearly Understand When it Comes to Biblical Fasting?

I. THE POWER OF FASTING (Isaiah 58:6)

II. THE PURPOSE OF FASTING (Isaiah 58:7)

III. THE PROVISION OF FASTING (Isaiah 58:8)

C:\WPWin(2021)\Sermons.22\Rapture Ready\Joel 2_15.17.wpd

Date: Mar 6/22

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: My Life is an Offering - D; Seek Ye First - D

DECLARING A FAST

Text: Joel 2:15-17

Key Word: Fasting

Key Thought: We Need to Declare a Holy Fast among the People of God

What Should We Clearly Understand When it Comes to Biblical Fasting?

I. THE POWER OF FASTING (Isaiah 58:6) - Joel 1:14; 2:12, 15; Leviticus 16:29

Nine Types of Bible Fasts (not exhaustive)

The Samuel Fast — to let the oppressed go free (1 Samuel 7:6)

The Widow's Fast — to share our bread with the hungry (1 Kings 17:16)

The Elijah Fast — to break every yoke (1 Kings 19:4,8)

The Esther Fast — for protection against evil (Esther 4:16; 5:2)

The Ezra Fast — undo heavy burdens (Ezra 8:23)

The Daniel Fast — for health and healing (Daniel 1:8)

The Isaiah Fast — loosen the bands of wickedness (Isaiah 58:6)

The John the Baptist Fast — for effective testimonies (Luke 1:15)

The Apostle Paul Fast — for spiritual enlightenment (Acts 9:9)

II. THE PURPOSE OF FASTING (Isaiah 58:7)

Biblical Fasting is NOT:

A. A Physical or Psychological Discipline

B. A Manipulative Tool - Acts 23:12,14; Jeremiah 14:12; Nahum 1:7; James 1:5; Matthew 7:11

C. A Hypocritical Religious Exercise - Luke 18:12a

III. THE PROVISION OF FASTING (Isaiah 58:8-14)

A. Condition # 1 - Isaiah 58:9b

B. Condition # 2 - Isaiah 58:10

C. Condition # 3 - Isaiah 58:13,14

7 Basic Steps to Successful Fasting and Prayer . . .

How to Begin Your Fast

How you begin and conduct your fast will largely determine your success. By following these seven basic steps to fasting, you will make your time with the Lord more meaningful and spiritually rewarding.

STEP 1: Set Your Objective

Why are you fasting? Is it for spiritual renewal, for guidance, for healing, for the resolution of problems, for special grace to handle a difficult situation? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically.

Through fasting and prayer we humble ourselves before God so the Holy Spirit will stir our souls, awaken our churches, and heal our land according to 2 Chronicles 7:14. Make this a priority in your fasting.

STEP 2: Make Your Commitment

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus implied that all of His followers should fast ([Matthew 6:16-18](#); [9:14,15](#)) For Him it was a matter of *when* believers would fast, not *if* they would do it. Before you fast, decide the following up front:

How long you will fast - one meal, one day, a week, several weeks, forty days (Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts.)

The type of fast God wants you to undertake (such as water only, or water and juices; what kinds of juices you will drink and how often)

1. What physical or social activities you will restrict
2. How much time each day you will devote to prayer and God's Word
3. Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

7 Basic Steps to Successful Fasting and Prayer . . .

STEP 3: Prepare Yourself Spiritually

The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin will hinder your prayers. Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:

1. Ask God to help you make a comprehensive list of your sins.
2. Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness ([1 John 1:9](#)).
3. Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you ([Mark 11:25](#); [Luke 11:4](#); [17:3,4](#)).
4. Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you. Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit according to His *command* in Ephesians 5:18 and His *promise* in ([1 John 5:14,15](#)).
5. Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Master; refuse to obey your worldly nature ([Romans 12:1,2](#)).
6. Meditate on the attributes of God, His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others ([Psalm 48:9,10](#); [103:1-8](#), [11-13](#)).
7. Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart ([Hebrews 11:6](#)).
8. Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit ([Galatians 5:16,17](#)).

STEP 4: Prepare Yourself Physically

Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision.

Physical preparation makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so that you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer.

1. Do not rush into your fast.
2. Prepare your body. Eat smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high-fat and sugary foods.
3. Eat raw fruit and vegetables for two days before starting a fast.

7 Basic Steps to Successful Fasting and Prayer . . .

While You Fast

Your time of fasting and prayer has come. You are abstaining from all solid foods and have begun to seek the Lord. Here are some helpful suggestions to consider:

1. Avoid drugs, even natural herbal drugs and homeopathic remedies. Medication should be withdrawn only with your physician's supervision.
2. Limit your activity.
3. Exercise only moderately. Walk one to three miles each day if convenient and comfortable.
4. Rest as much as your schedule will permit.
5. Prepare yourself for temporary mental discomforts, such as impatience, crankiness, and anxiety.
6. Expect some physical discomforts, especially on the second day. You may have fleeting hunger pains, dizziness, or the "blahs." Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches. Physical annoyances may also include weakness, tiredness, or sleeplessness.

The first two or three days are usually the hardest. As you continue to fast, you will likely experience a sense of well-being both physically and spiritually. However, should you feel hunger pains, increase your liquid intake.

STEP 5: Put Yourself on a Schedule

For maximum spiritual benefit, set aside ample time to be alone with the Lord. Listen for His leading. The more time you spend with Him, the more meaningful your fast will be.

Morning

1. Begin your day in praise and worship.
2. Read and meditate on God's Word, preferably on your knees.
3. Invite the Holy Spirit to work in you to will and to do His good pleasure according to [Philippians 2:13](#).

7 Basic Steps to Successful Fasting and Prayer . . .

4. Invite God to use you. Ask Him to show you how to influence your world, your family, your church, your community, your country, and beyond.
5. Pray for His vision for your life and empowerment to do His will.

Noon

6. Return to prayer and God's Word.
7. Take a short prayer walk.
8. Spend time in intercessory prayer for your community's and nation's leaders, for the world's unreached millions, for your family or special needs.

Evening

9. Get alone for an unhurried time of "seeking His face."
10. If others are fasting with you, meet together for prayer.
11. Avoid television or any other distraction that may dampen your spiritual focus.

When possible, begin and end each day on your knees with your spouse for a brief time of praise and thanksgiving to God. Longer periods of time with our Lord in prayer and study of His Word are often better spent alone.

A dietary routine is vital as well. Dr. Julio C. Ruibal - a nutritionist, pastor, and specialist in fasting and prayer - suggests a daily schedule and list of juices you may find useful and satisfying. Modify this schedule and the drinks you take to suit your circumstances and tastes.

5 a.m. - 8 a.m.

Fruit juices, preferably freshly squeezed or blended and diluted in 50 percent distilled water if the fruit is acid. Apple, pear, grapefruit, papaya, watermelon, or other fruit juices are generally preferred. If you cannot do your own juicing, buy juices without sugar or additives.

10:30 a.m. - noon

Fresh vegetable juice made from lettuce, celery, and carrots in three equal parts.

2:30 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Herb tea with a drop of honey. Avoid black tea or any tea with caffeine.

7 Basic Steps to Successful Fasting and Prayer . . .

6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Broth made from boiling potatoes, celery, and carrots with no salt. After boiling about half an hour, pour the water into a container and drink it.

Tips on Juice Fasting

12. Drinking fruit juice will decrease your hunger pains and give you some natural sugar energy. The taste and lift will motivate and strengthen you to continue.
13. The best juices are made from fresh watermelon, lemons, grapes, apples, cabbage, beets, carrots, celery, or leafy green vegetables. In cold weather, you may enjoy a warm vegetable broth.
14. Mix acidic juices (orange and tomato) with water for your stomach's sake.
15. Avoid caffeinated drinks. And avoid chewing gum or mints, even if your breath is bad. They stimulate digestive action in your stomach.

Breaking Your Fast

When your designated time for fasting is finished, you will begin to eat again. But how you break your fast is extremely important for your physical and spiritual well-being.

STEP 6: End Your Fast Gradually

Begin eating gradually. Do not eat solid foods immediately after your fast. Suddenly reintroducing solid food to your stomach and digestive tract will likely have negative, even dangerous, consequences. Try several smaller meals or snacks each day. If you end your fast gradually, the beneficial physical and spiritual effects will result in continued good health.

Here are some suggestions to help you end your fast properly:

1. Break an extended water fast with fruit such as watermelon.
2. While continuing to drink fruit or vegetable juices, add the following:
First day: Add a raw salad.
Second day: Add baked or boiled potato, no butter or seasoning.
Third day: Add a steamed vegetable.

7 Basic Steps to Successful Fasting and Prayer . . .

3. *Thereafter:* Begin to reintroduce your normal diet.
4. Gradually return to regular eating with several small snacks during the first few days. Start with a little soup and fresh fruit such as watermelon and cantaloupe. Advance to a few tablespoons of solid foods such as raw fruits and vegetables or a raw salad and baked potato.

A Final Word

STEP 7: Expect Results

If you sincerely humble yourself before the Lord, repent, pray, and seek God's face; if you consistently meditate on His Word, you will experience a heightened awareness of His presence ([John 14:21](#)). The Lord will give you fresh, new spiritual insights. Your confidence and faith in God will be strengthened. You will feel mentally, spiritually, and physically refreshed. You will see answers to your prayers.

A single fast, however, is not a spiritual cure-all. Just as we need fresh infillings of the Holy Spirit daily, we also need new times of fasting before God. A 24-hour fast each week has been greatly rewarding to many Christians.

It takes time to build your spiritual fasting muscles. If you fail to make it through your first fast, do not be discouraged. You may have tried to fast too long the first time out, or you may need to strengthen your understanding and resolve. As soon as possible, undertake another fast until you do succeed. God will honor you for your faithfulness.

I encourage you to join me in fasting and prayer again and again until we truly experience revival in our homes, our churches, our beloved nation, and throughout the world.

7 Basic Steps to Successful Fasting and Prayer . . .

How to Experience and Maintain Personal Revival

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any unconfessed sin in your life.
2. Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you. Make restitution where God leads.
3. Examine your motives in every word and deed. Ask the Lord to search and cleanse your heart daily.
4. Ask the Holy Spirit to guard your walk against complacency and mediocrity.
5. Praise and give thanks to God continually in all ways on all days, regardless of your circumstances.
6. Refuse to obey your carnal (worldly) nature ([Galatians 5:16,17](#)).
7. Surrender your life to Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. Develop utter dependence on Him with total submission and humility.
8. Study the attributes of God.
9. Hunger and thirst after righteousness ([Matthew 5:6](#)).
10. Love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind ([Matthew 22:37](#)).
11. Appropriately receive the continual fullness and control of the Holy Spirit by faith on the basis of God's *command* ([Ephesians 5:18](#)) and *promise* ([1 John 5:14,15](#)).
12. Read, study, meditate on, and memorize God's holy, inspired, inerrant Word daily ([Colossians 3:16](#)).
13. Pray without ceasing ([1 Thessalonians 5:17](#)).
14. Fast and pray one 24-hour period each week. Prayerfully consider becoming one of the two million Christians who will fast for forty days before the end of the year 2000.
15. Seek to share Christ daily as a way of life.
16. Determine to live a holy, godly life of obedience and faith.
17. Start or join a home or church Bible study group that emphasizes revival and a holy life.

TO GET YOU STARTED

*Ezra 8:21-23; 10:6 Exodus 34:28
Nehemiah 1:4 Deuteronomy 9:9,18
Esther 4:16 2 Samuel 12:16,17
Job 33:19,20 Matthew 4:2; 6:16; 9:15
Psalm 69:10; 102:4 Acts 13:3; 14:23
Isaiah 58:6 1 Corinthians 7:5
Daniel 9:3,20-23; 10:3 2 Corinthians 11:27,28
Joel 2:15 Jonah 3:5,10*

As we look at the Bible, it becomes evident that fasting was practised more often than Christians usually practice it today. In fact, among most American Christians fasting is entirely neglected. I want to challenge you today to begin to practice the discipline of fasting. If you accept the challenge of God's Word to fast, I would like to provide some guidelines for you as you begin to make this a more regular part of your Christian life. The Lord will reward your efforts at fasting. Here are some individual guidelines for fasting:

Reach a personal conviction on the subject through careful Bible study. -- Get into the Word on your own. See what the Bible really says about fasting. Check the things that have been said here, read the Scripture references listed below, and go deeper.

A physician's note: Make sure you are medically able to fast before attempting it.

Begin with short fasts and gradually move to larger periods of time if you desire. If you've never fasted before, you need to start slow. Don't start with a three day fast!

Be prepared for some dizziness, headache, or nausea in the early going. Most of our bodies have never gone without food for longer than a few hours.

Break a prolonged fast gradually with meals that are light and easy to digest. Trying to gorge yourself following a fast will only make you sick and will leave you with an unpleasant memory of fasting.

Enter with a positive faith that God will reward those who fast with the right motives. -- God says that He will: "*When you fast, your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you*" (Matthew 6:18).

Mix your fast with prayer, time in Scripture reading, singing, or devotional reading. Remember: fasting is not an end in itself. Seek the Lord, not the experience of fasting.

Keep checking your motives concerning your fasts. Hypocrisy and spiritual pride can easily creep in. There is a reward for fasting, but only fasting done with the right motives (Matthew 23:28).