

40 DAYS of PRAYER and FASTING

BY MILES MCPHERSON

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Miles Ahead Ministries
2448 Historic Decatur Rd. #105
San Diego, CA. 92106
Phone: 619.226.7625
Fax: 619.223.3863
www.milesahead.com

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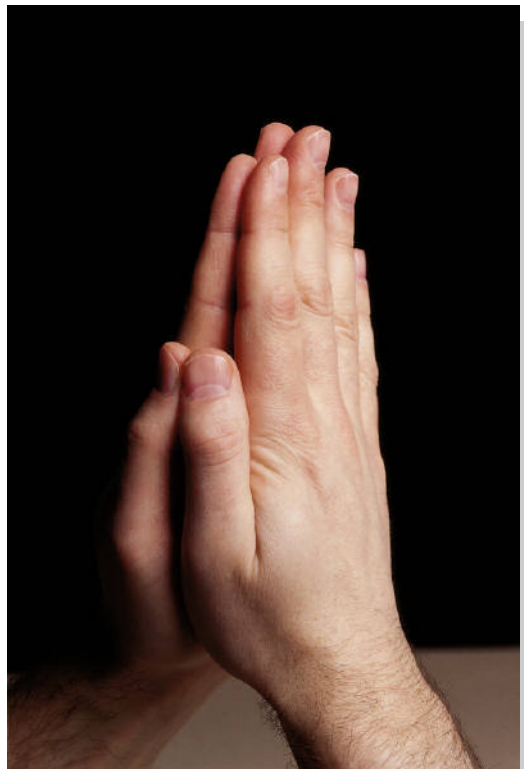
Introduction

I have read many times the story in Matthew 4 about Jesus fasting for 40 days and 40 nights. Each time I study this story, I think to myself, "Is that really possible? How could someone fast for 40 days? Why would someone want to fast for 40 days?"

I began to pray because I clearly knew that I should only fast if God was calling me to fast for 40 days. I prayed that night for the Lord to confirm it. I was ready for changes in my personal walk with the Lord as well as in my ministry. The Lord confirmed the fast, so I stepped out in faith and fasted for 40 days.

My intention for writing the booklet is to encourage you to fast and pray for one day, one week, or 40 days. I have outlined ways to help you prepare for our fast, what to do during your fast and what to do when you end your fast. I hope this information will be helpful to you and will encourage you to pray and fast regularly.

Your friend,
Miles McPherson



What is Fasting?

To fast simply means to voluntarily abstain from eating and/or drinking for an extended period of time.

Biblical fasting is a discipline of voluntarily denying one's self of the basics of eating in order to be available for prayer and communion with the Lord. Since it is an ultimate act of self denial, you are simply entering into an intense training in righteousness.

You can fast for one day, one week, or just one meal. You can fast from one type of food or from all foods. You can fast or abstain from solid foods or all foods and liquids. It is during this time of abstinence from food that you are to spend time seeking the Lord in Bible study, prayer and meditation.

The discipline of fasting is designed to separate you from your perceived life support so you can focus exclusively on the Lord, your actual life support. Fasting is the one discipline Jesus promised would bring about supernatural results.

Fasting just one time will be equivalent to having one good workout in the gym. You may feel great for a while, but you will experience new lasting effects in the long term.

I would encourage you to view fasting as a discipline that you will learn and improve upon your whole life.

Why Fast?

Listed below are some of the reasons why people in the Bible fasted:

In times of war: Judges 20:26

Repentance: Jonah 3:5 and Daniel 6:18

When facing danger: Ezra 8:21, 23

Courage and wisdom: Esther 4:3, 16 and 9:31

In times of grief: 1 Samuel 31:13 and 1 Chronicles 10:12

In times of distress: 2 Samuel 1:12

Ultimate denial of the flesh: Matthew 4:2

Spiritual power: Mark 9:29

Wisdom: Acts 14:23

Set aside self for holiness: 1 Corinthians 7:5

Answered prayer: Acts 10:30-31

Mourning: Daniel 10:1-3

Special revelation: Exodus 34:27-28

Spiritual recuperation: 1 Kings 19:1-9

As you can see, there are many reasons why people fast, and all of them were good ones. Some wanted wisdom and power, while others were repenting of their sins. But there was one aspect of the fasting experience that each had in common: A personal encounter with the living God.

As you begin to consider reasons for your fast, you will come up with several, but there is one that will over ride all the other reasons: to have a powerful, life-changing encounter with the living God. Never confuse your fasting goals with the most foundational reason to fast – to meet with God. All other reasons could cause you to miss the biggest blessing of your fasting experience.

Why Food?



What is the number one thing you trust in for your survival, your very existence? What is the one thing, above everything else, that you can't do without, not only for days but even hours? What is the one thing that will give you an "attitude" if you don't receive it, when and how you want it? What do you spend hours preparing for and is the center of your social and recreational life? What is the one thing that is "a given" in your daily schedule, such "a given" that you would never question skipping it for any serious length of time?

Well, you might have realized by now that the answer is food.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you." "Seek ye first," not second, not third or fourth, the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, not food. The kingdom of God is His absolute rule in your life.

Jesus is giving clear instruction that we should, before anything else, seek His Kingdom, His control, and His authority over our lives. Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." Again, it says "Delight yourself in the Lord," not Twinkies. If food is a higher priority to you than God, you are practicing idolatry.

Preparing For Your Fast

Take time to confess your sins, before and during your fast, knowing that He is faithful and just to forgive you and cleanse you of all unrighteousness (1John 1:9). Remember, fasting is a time for cleansing. The Bible says in 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

It will also be important to establish proper spiritual goals. I have already stated that, having a life-changing encounter with God should be the number one goal of your fast. It will be very important that you keep this in the forefront of

your mind throughout the fast. But, as you pursue Christ-likeness, there will be specific milestones that you might need to achieve.

Therefore, it will be helpful to develop a list of prayer requests along with Bible verses that you will offer to God throughout your fast.

Important Steps To Take During Your Fast

1. Establish THE PLACE And Time To Meet With God

In 1 Samuel 3:1-9, when Samuel first heard the word of the Lord, he did not understand it. Three times God called him and three times Samuel ran to Eli, his spiritual mentor. Finally, after the third time, Eli realized that it was God calling Samuel. It was at that time that Eli told him to go to THE PLACE where he previously heard God's voice and say "speak Lord, your servant listens."

THE PLACE is more than a physical location where you will go to sit and listen for the voice of God. It is THE PLACE of rest and peace of mind. It is THE PLACE where your mind can be renewed, your heart changed, your emotions prepared, and your spirit behind. It need to be THE PLACE where there is no phone to ring; THE PLACE where neither friends nor family will come and disturb you.

Be equipped with your Bible, paper and pen when you go to THE PLACE.

In Habakkuk 2:4, the Lord tells Habakkuk to write the vision down and write it plainly, that he who reads can run with it. He told him to write it in plain and simple language. If you can't write down what you believe God is saying, you really don't know what He is saying.

2. Keep A Journal – Plan Ahead – Be Consistent



Be sure to always be prepared to take notes in a journal where you can keep a record of what the Lord has said to you. It would be a shame to enter into this intensely close fellowship with the Lord, hear His voice, then forget what He said. Your fast is a special time set aside for the Creator of the universe. Be prepared to keep your appointments with Him. Plan ahead and cancel whatever you need to in order to be there with Him.

3. Preparation Of Your Physical Body

It is important to prepare your physical body for your fast. You will begin by decreasing the size of your food intake as you prepare to abstain from food.

This will help your body adjust more readily. Outlined in the appendix are additional ideas on how to prepare your body for the fast. A fast also has a cleansing effect on your physical body. Your body will gradually rid itself of toxins as you prepare for and go through the fast.

4. **What To Expect**

During this period of preparation, you will realize that, in most cases, your hunger pains go away as quickly as they come. Because you are eating fruit and vegetables, which are made up of mostly water, you will not feel full as though you had a big meal. This is the beginning of your new diet. You will also begin to sense a stronger presence of the Lord. You will find yourself moving slower, speaking less, and you will become more reflective. As the Bible says in James 1:19, “You will be slower to speak, quicker to listen and slower to anger.”

5. **Check Yourself Before You Wreck Yourself**

Your motives for conducting a fast will play a large role in the goals you establish. I have talked to several people who have expressed a hesitation to fast because they thought they would be doing it for selfish reasons. Some wanted to lose weight to become more attractive or they wanted to fast just to get a blessing.

6. **Selfish Or Blessing?**

Using this same logic, ask yourself this question: “Why do you pray, read your Bible or go to church?” It’s to be obedient to what God calls us to do and to be blessed! The Lord has been graciously dealing with you since your sinful beginning. The only reason “you love Him is because He first loved you” (1 John 4:10). Your fasting will not and cannot make Him love you any more than He already does. You are not going to trick or force Him into blessing you against His will.

Ephesians 1:3 tells us there are blessings in heaven with your name on them, waiting to be claimed. You are foolish not to claim them. God will bless you into submission. If you are still worried about having your selfish motives, take time to pray and surrender your motives to Him.

You can fake spirituality sitting in the pew, singing in the choir or reading your Bible, but it is very difficult to fake it during a fast. The entire purpose of fasting is to perfect your attitude and heart thus purifying your motives.

The Bible calls Satan the “Deceiver,” “liar” and “father of lies.” He has an incredible ability to disguise his deceptions in what appears to be well thought out logic, common sense or biblical truth. These excuses can also be a form of hypocrisy couched in a disguise of false humility. Think about it. The last thing Satan wants you to do is fast and seek God. He will tell you your motives to fast and pray are wrong. What would be the greatest sin? To allow Satan to successfully use reverse psychology on you by tricking you into not seeking God, and at the same time secure a body that you are not happy with? Or is it better to seek God, lose weight, look and feel better all at the same time?

I had a similar concern. My worst nightmare during my fast was losing too much weight. I eventually lost over 20 pounds and went down to 157 pounds. By the end of my fast, losing weight was no longer an issue. God changed my attitude as I grew closer to Him through my fasting. I encourage you to take a step of faith and commit your fast unto the Lord.

Enduring

To Eat or Not To Eat is Not The Question

As you continue to fast, you will realize that you don’t experience hunger pains as often as you thought you would. Without a preoccupation with food, you will be surprised at your ability to be sustained for a number of days without eating food and how you will take advantage of your time to seek Jesus more diligently. There is no magic in simply missing meals in the name of spirituality. The important thing to remember is to hear God speak and obey what you hear.

Prayer Life During The Fast

There is a question you will need to answer. When you are fasting, will you seek Him, give Him a listening ear and the quality time He deserves? He will constantly separate you from dependence on the world.

Consequently, your time alone with Him may become more frequent than you originally planned, and needless to say, your prayer life will greatly improve. How appropriate that Jesus and Moses spent extensive time in the desert alone with God. It is ironic that the Hebrew name for desert is madbar, meaning “to speak.”

You will hear His voice throughout the day in a powerful way. Wisdom will cry out to you in the streets. As the stars in heaven declare the glory of God, so every corner will reveal to your willing soul the mysteries of His Kingdom that have been withheld from the rulers of this age (Proverbs 8:1-3, Psalm 19, and 1 Corinthians 2:7). You will hear Him when you are driving, talking on the phone or

counseling a friend. Expect to hear Him loud and clear.

Fighting Doubt and Fighting The Good Fight

During your fast, one of your biggest enemies will be your mind and your memory. Your mind and emotions will constantly work together to bring order to your world, order according to what you have been taught order to be. Eating at certain times each day has been part of your life training. Fasting will make no sense to your mind. In Matthew 14:22-32, when Peter was walking on the water, he found himself in the middle of a miracle, something that did not make sense to his mind. When Peter's mind revealed to him the supernatural nature of what he was doing, it convinced him that it was impossible, based on what his mind knew to be normal. Consequently, Peter sank, believing logically what his mind told him, rather than what the Spirit convinced him to believe by faith.

There will be times that your mind will realize how far out on a limb your faith has taken you and you will be faced with a decision: Do you give up or keep moving forward?

Galatians 5:24 tells us that the flesh is at war against the Spirit. It cannot be trained or negotiated with. The flesh must die. It must be crucified. Always remember, faith goes all the way. God has not given you the Spirit of fear but one of Sonship, by which we call Abba Father (Romans 8:15).

When you feel as though you want to give up, you must ask yourself a few questions. Is the pain you are experiencing worth the prize you are pursuing? IS the prize you are pursuing worth the pain you are enduring? If you do give up, where and to what will you go back to?

In John 6:66 the disciples were asked by Jesus if they wanted to go back to their old lifestyle. Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of life."

Social Tensions

A frequently asked question about fasting is: "Should you tell people that you are fasting?" Since fasting is a discipline of self denial and consecration unto the Lord, constant discussion about it will be a distraction. People will bombard you with countless questions about your health, offer you suggestions about your diet, and tell you horror stories about the dangers of fasting. This type of input during your fast will be a major distraction.

For maximum benefit, it would be best for you not to tell anyone about your fast. Jesus was against the religious leaders drawing attention to themselves by giving people the impression they were suffering for the Lord (Matthew 6:16-18). The religious leaders did this in an attempt to puff themselves up and obviously defeated the purpose of their fasting.

If your fast lasts only one to seven days, it will be easy to conceal it. As time goes by and you begin to lose a considerable amount of weight, it will become more difficult to avoid questions about your appearance. For the purpose of maintaining privacy, it will be important to maintain an acceptable outward appearance: do not look dehydrated, wear clothes that fit and keep yourself well groomed.

Eventually there will be those who find out that you are fasting, but you can turn this situation into an edifying one. There is a balance between drawing attention to yourself and giving glory to God. You have to decide when and how to discuss it, because your testimony can be used to encourage others to fast.

You should "...be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

Here are a few tips on keeping your fast a secret and finding additional time alone with Jesus.

- Avoid people as much as possible.
- Avoid meals with groups of people.
- Spend as much time alone in prayer and solitude.
- Explain to your family in advance what you are doing.
- Request those who find out about your fast not to discuss it with anyone.

After Your Fast

Ending your fast properly is just as important as beginning your fast properly. Just as you prepared yourself to begin a fast, you must prepare yourself to stop or break your fast, Here are a few questions you can ask yourself as you end your fast:

What are the key lessons learned?

What new habits or disciplines do you want to keep?

What new dietary rules will you follow?

What foods will you begin eating and not eat anymore?

What dreams and visions have you seen pertaining to your personal walk with the Lord or your ministry?

Get In The "Fast Lane"

Before you end your fast and establish a regular eating schedule, it will be important to set aside time to get in the "Fast Lane" on a regular basis. This is vital if you are going to apply and live out the lessons learned during your fast.

1 Corinthians 11:24-28 says that Paul "fasted often." But why? You must view fasting as a new way of life, not just a vacation from the old way. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says "The old is gone and the new has come."

Fasting regularly will help you maintain a level of discipline and spirituality that is necessary to hold the ground surrendered by Satan.

Regular fasts will keep the flesh in submission and serve as a reminder as to who is in charge of your life. I encourage you to choose a regular fasting schedule to follow.

There are those who have chosen to fast one 24 hour period per week. Others fast sun up to sun down, one day per week. You must pray and design a format that you feel God wants for you, a system that you can be faithful to and consistent with.

Physically

Controlling your eating habits when you end your fast will be important. After you fast, you will feel good about yourself, that you deserve “a break today”, tomorrow and the next day. Remember, the abuse of food, not food itself, was the root of many evils. If you allow food to take its place back on the throne of your heart, you are allowing bad habits to take root and push God father from the center of your heart than He was before you began your fast.

Once you begin to eat again, if you are not careful, you will feel uncomfortable. Your stomach will feel bloated and full. Introduce solid food slowly. There is a very good chance you will experience stomach aches and diarrhea from the shock on the digestive system.

Emotionally

Satan will be working to take back the ground he has surrendered over to the Lord and he will use your emotional vulnerability to accomplish his goals.

When my fast ended, I went into a spiritual and emotional depression which was a time of discouragement. I felt as though I had just thrown away everything I had prayed and fasted for. Depression can be worse if you don't eat wisely once you break your fast.

This reminds me of the story in 1Kings 18-19, when Elijah is challenged by the 450 prophets of Baal who all followed Jezebel in a most vile and immoral religion. God confronts and defeats them through one man, Elijah. But after this great spiritual victory, Elijah finds himself running for his life from one woman, Jezebel. She had threatened his life and he felt all alone. He became incredibly discouraged and asked God to end his life. Elijah experienced a supernatural and spiritual high, followed by an emotional low. You very well could experience this same type of roller coaster ride.

Appendix

Types Of Fasts

One day fast: End your food consumption on Friday evening and begin eating on Sunday morning. All day Saturday drink only water, fruit juices and vegetable broth.

Two to three day fast: Two to three times per week skip one or two meals and spend that time in prayer and Bible reading.

Seven to ten day fast: Every three months fast seven to ten days. Enter into this fast in the same way you do the 40 day fast.

How To Prepare Your Body Before The Fast Begins

Day One – You should start to cut back your solid food intake so your digestive system can gradually adjust to your new low caloric intake. Fresh fruits and vegetables should be consumed throughout the day. Limit meals, grains, starches and breads to one meal. Limit your liquid intake during your meals. Wait at least 15 minutes after you finish eating to begin drinking fluids. Drink only fruit and vegetable juices. This will help digestion. Since your body is approximately 70 percent water, you should drink approximately 64 ounces of water throughout the day. This will help in the cleansing process. Get in the habit of carrying around a water bottle to sip water throughout the day.

Days two and three – Begin consuming only raw fruits and vegetables. Again, drink as much water as possible, approximately 64 ounces throughout the day.

Use a juicer to make your own juice from raw fruit and vegetables. Store the juice you make and drink it throughout the day. Herb teas with a half of a teaspoon of honey is also advisable. Raw vegetable broth is helpful in maintaining your overall health during your fast.

Body Care Ideas

Go for walks outside and take deep breaths of fresh air. Exercise as much as you feel you can do. You may grow weak as the fast progresses and it is important not to over do it when you exercise.

Dry brush body massage: An appropriate brush can be bought at a health food store. Brushing the body will help get rid of unwanted dead skin and will help the skin to breathe. This should be followed by a hot bat with Epson's salt added to the water.

It is important to get fresh air and sunshine and not lay in the bed. Your body needs

the increased circulation of blood and oxygen in order to properly cleanse itself.

Daily Schedule During The Fast

Morning

Breakfast
Daily Bible Study
Dry Brush massage your skin and take hot/cold shower
Walk/light exercise

Mid-Morning

Glass of fresh fruit juice
Prayer time

Mid-Afternoon

Cup of herb tea
Rest in bed, if possible

Evening

Dinner of vegetable juices and vegetable broth
Dry Brush massage your skin and take hot/cold shower
Bed Time
Prayer and Bible reading

Ending Your Fast

When breaking your fast, continue to drink the usual fruit and vegetable juices and broth everyday, along with 64 ounces of water. Remember to chew your food slowly and completely.

Day One – Consume only fruit juice and vegetable broth in portions smaller than usual.

Days Two and Three – Begin to eat raw cooked vegetables, soups and salads. Eat apples for between meal snacks.

Day Four – Add boiled or baked potatoes.

Day Five – Consume two meals with grain and starches.

Day Six – Add one meat source (chicken, turkey or fish) to grain, starch and vegetables.

Days Seven and Eight – Add another meat portion, but no red meat.

Day Nine – This can be your first day of regular eating.

Now that you have experienced both spiritual and physical cleaning, you should now follow a proper diet that will provide new levels of energy with minimal stress to your body.

Vegetable Broth Recipe

Place 1 cup of any four vegetables in 1.5 quarts of water and cook for about 30 minutes. Turn off heat and let vegetables stand in the water for another half hour. Strain and serve.

Vegetables can include: potatoes, celery, carrots, beet tops, turnips and turnip tops, parsley, and cabbage. Chop, slice or shred these vegetables and place immediately into the water.

All nutritional and dietary information has been provided by John Lutz, Owner of the Power Nutrition health food store located in San Diego, CA. John is a certified diet and weight control consultant as well as personal trainer.

For more information on food supplements and dietary information you should contact:
John Lutz – Power Nutrition
619 528-8707
10435 San Diego Mission Road
San Diego, CA. 92108