

Here are some additional thoughts on fasting that may help direct your practice:

The following is adapted from Adele Calhoun's *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*

Fasting is not for appearances.

It does not make anyone pious or holy, and it does not earn points with God (Matthew 6:16; Luke 18:9-14). Fasting is not a magical way to manipulate God into doing our will; it's not a way to get God to be an accomplice to our plans. Neither is fasting a spiritual way to lose weight or control others. Fasting clears us out and opens us up to intentionally seeking God's will and grace in a way that goes of the examples tradition for fast for a at times of mourning and national needed strength or mercy to persevere beyond normal habits of worship and prayer. While fasting, we are one on one with God, offering him the time and attentiveness we might otherwise be giving to eating, shopping or watching television.

Guidelines for Fasting from Food

- Don't fast when you are sick, traveling, pregnant or nursing. People with diabetes, gout, liver disease, kidney disease, ulcers, hypoglycemia, cancer and blood diseases should not fast.
- Don't fast if you are in a hurry and are fasting for immediate results regarding some decision. Fasting is not magic.
- Stay hydrated. Always drink plenty of water and fluids.
- If you are new to fasting, begin by fasting for one meal. Spend the time with God that you would normally be eating.
- Don't break your fast with a huge meal. Eat small portions of food. The longer the fast, the more you need to break the fast gently.

What to Do in the Time Set Apart for Fasting

Bring your Bible and a glass of water during your fast. Relax and breathe deeply. Place yourself in the presence of God. Offer yourself and your time to God by repeating Samuel's words "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." Or simply say, "Here I am." Spend some time worshiping God for his faithfulness. Thank him for where he has come through for you. Psalm 103:1-5 also provides a starting point for praise. Bring your desires to God. Ask him if this desire is in line with his will and his word for you and the church. Be still and listen. Offer your desires and prayers to God.

To deepen your understanding of how Jesus denied himself and embraced suffering and death for you, consider the following:

- When the fasting is difficult, share your thoughts and feelings with Jesus.

What does Jesus say to you?

- Tell Jesus what it means to you to share and fellowship with him in his sufferings.

- Talk to Jesus about what his self-denial means to you.