

3 Myths of Fasting and the Truth That Disperses Them

Every January, I've watched countless people embark on their fasting journeys, proclaiming how the three-, 21- or 40-day fast was going to change their lives forever. Within days, their enthusiasm vanished and many abandoned the call of fasting completely. Here are some common fasting myths that ultimately cause heartache:

Myth #1: Spiritual fasting is about food. If eating a watermelon the size of a toddler is considered your morning snack, you probably aren't fasting. Sadly, I remember overeating fruits and vegetables while on a so-called Daniel Fast. However, fruit binging is not spiritual fasting. If you are setting up a buffet of every fruit and vegetable known to man or juicing twenty-seven times a day, it probably isn't a spiritual fast. You can't be focused on God much if you are constantly cleaning your juicer of pulp or cutting up the next fruit and veggie buffet. *Fasting is not about food. Selah.*

Myth #2: Accidental eating ends a fast. I can't count the times I've forgotten I was fasting and taken a bite of something scrumptious. As you taste the food, you never think, *'Oops! I'm fasting; I'll just set the rest of that down and go back to prayer.'* No, you take a bite and think, *'Oh no! I'm fasting! I can't recover from this! I might as well start stuffing my face with the entire fridge.'* Whatever was accidentally bitten into will be devoured in seconds. One bite of food doesn't have to derail your fast. Please see Myth #1.

Myth #3: The longer the fast, the more spiritual I will be. Fasting is about quality, not quantity. I am saddened at how many Christians shun the idea of fasting one meal as they embark on another strenuous, but fruitless, forty-day fast. The *quality* of the fast is much more life changing than the

longevity. I could fast one meal and watch God move more powerfully in my life than most do in forty days. Why? Relationship. *I fast by means of my relationship with God; not for a relationship with God.*

You might be wondering, "How can I fast powerfully and see God move on my behalf?"

Here are some pointers that transformed my prayer life:

Start with a relationship and developed prayer life with God.

Have some maturity in your walk. Don't start a 21-day fast while still learning how to love God. Get to know the one you're praying to! Fasting is an intimate act of a believer who knows his or her God. Consider jumping into a three-day fast only after you have mastered one meal.

Partner with God. Let God know you are joining with Him on behalf of yourself, others or a situation. Prayer and fasting moves you into your rightful place as a joint heir, and you begin to hear the heartbeat of God.

Make confident declarations! Start to courageously declare who God is and what you believe He will do in your life! Begin to speak the Word: *'God, You are faithful! You are my healer! Your plans for me are prosperity and health! You are **my** God!'* And then, believe your words!

Be willing to pay a price. Realize that fasting will cost you, and choose to volunteer. Fasting involves laying down your life and taking a risk. It is not for the faint of heart and it isn't supposed to be. God will sustain you and give you strength, but your efforts are needed.

When I look back on my life and realize how I'd made fasting and prayer a bondage, I yearn to see those chains broken off of others. I thought fasting was a deep ritual; that if I finally did it *the right way*, I could experience God. Instead, I was missing such a powerful opportunity.

Spiritual fasting is a gift—God is not taking food away from me. He isn't bearing down on me, showing me how many things I need to give up to have Him. It's a gift to get so close to the heart of God that you don't want to eat. My mind has been transformed in such a dramatic way that I now realize I don't *have* to fast, but I *get* to fast with Him.

I urge you ... no, I *implore* you, to start slowly. Start with fasting just one meal. Yes, one meal. Not forty days to be more like Jesus. God is not impressed by your numbers. He's motivated by your relationship with the Him. He is the one who activates your prayers and fasting.

In Isaiah 58:8-9, the benefits of fasting beautifully unfold:

"Then your light shall break forth as the morning, and your healing shall spring forth quickly, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your reward. Then you shall call, and the Lord shall answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, Here I am."

Darkness might be permeating every area of your life, but with the *activated power of God through fasting, light bursts forth!* Nothing can hide from His glorious brilliance! His salvation breaks through, and our wounds are healed! Righteousness wins. Justice comes. God surrounds your steps and paves the way, bringing light to your path! While you fast, your enemy only sees God *surrounding* you with His righteousness, justice and glory!

Start the New Year right! Develop an intimate relationship with God, and then when you fast, His light and salvation will burst into your life, His righteousness and glory will surround you and you will hear the Lord say, **'Yes, I am here.'**

Excerpt from Heather Eschenbaum's book, Fasting Is Not About Food. Heather has been the Director of The House of Hope and Healing for the last 12 years and teaches at the World Revival School of Ministry.