

**REMEMBER TO ALWAYS CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE ATTEMPTING  
ANY KIND OF FASTING**

## 10 Types of Fasting during LENT

There is one Scripture reference that is common to each of these fasts and that is Isaiah 58:6-8 which speaks of God's chosen fast. The elements of this passage are indicated below.

As you read these various types, you may notice that the purpose of fasting is similar to another fast type or that they can be grouped together.

While these fasts, mentioned below, are found in the Bible, you can also read **Elmer L. Towns** book called Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough. It is an excellent book with loads of details for you!

### The Samuel Fast

**Background:** When the Ark of the Covenant was returned from captivity, Samuel led God's people in a fast to celebrate its return and to pray for Israel's deliverance from the sin that allowed the Ark to be captured in the first place.

**Key Verse:** 1 Samuel 7:6 *And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.*

**Purpose of Fasting:** Isaiah 58:6 is a verse about revival and soul-winning, about prayer to be used of God to deliver people out of spiritual darkness into God's kingdom. This fast is to

- recognize and acknowledge your bondage to sin,
- pray for God's presence among His people, and,
- ensure God's leaders are in place

### The Widow's Fast

**Background:** Elijah was sent by God to a poor, starving widow so she could provide food for Elijah. How ironic! Her obedience resulted in food for her survival as well as Elijah's.

**Key Verse:** 1 Kings 17:16 *And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.*

**Purpose of Fasting:** Isaiah 58:7 *Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?* This fast is to meet the needs of others in caring for them physically with food, clothing, and housing.

### The Ezra Fast

**Background:** King Artaxerxes, king of Persia, had given Ezra, the priest, permission to rebuild their city, Jerusalem. Despite having permission from King Artaxerxes, Israel's enemies opposed them. Ezra had already proclaimed to the king that the God of Israel would protect them so when his enemies came against them, the only thing Ezra could do was proclaim a fast for God's direction and protection.

**Key Verse:** Ezra 8:23 *So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.*

**Purpose of Fasting:** [Isaiah 58:6](#) ...to undo the heavy burdens... A fast for problem-solving and to lift the load and barrier that keeps us from walking joyfully with the Lord.

## The Esther Fast

**Background:** Jewish Queen Esther risked her life in appearing before the pagan king Ahasuerus (Xerxes) of Persia. Her people were threatened with destruction by the king though he didn't know she was also Jewish. Prior to her appearance before the king, she and her attendants along with her cousin Mordecai and all the Jews present in Shushan fasted three days and nights before God for His protection.

**Key Verse:** [Esther 4:16](#); [5:2](#) ...gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: ... she obtained favour in his sight...

**Purpose of Fasting:** [Isaiah 58:8](#) the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward. For God to show His glory as He delivers His children from the evil one.

## The Elijah Fast

**Background:** When Elijah fled to escape from queen Jezebel's threat to kill him, he deliberately went without food as he sought the LORD to take his life rather than let Jezebel kill him. After he spent the night under the juniper tree, an angel touched him saying, *arise and eat*. Twice the angel provided a cake and water for Elijah. This food was the sustenance he needed for the journey ahead.

**Key Verse:** [1 Kings 19:4,8](#) But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness...he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights...

**Purpose of Fasting:** [Isaiah 58:6](#) ...ye break every yoke. This fast is to break the chains of emotional problems that seek to control our lives and returning control to God.

## The Daniel Fast

**Background:** Daniel and his three friends were held captives in Babylon and instructed to eat the pagan food of the king. Daniel requested that the four of them be allowed to eat only vegetables and water for ten days to see if they be more alert and with wisdom and understanding than those who ate the king's rich food.

**Key Verse:** [Daniel 1:8](#) Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank...

**Purpose of Fasting:** [Isaiah 58:8](#) ...thine health shall spring forth... To gain a healthier life or for healing. To seek God's direction, purpose, and vision.

## The Disciple's Fast

**Background:** The disciples had attempted to cast out a demon from a young boy but were unable to. Jesus said that this kind comes out by prayer and fasting. While many times we can cast out demons without prior fasting, there are times when demons are more resistant to leaving and thus the need to spend time fasting will result in successfully casting out demons.

**Key Verse:** [Matthew 17:21](#) this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

**Purpose of Fasting:** [Isaiah 58:6](#) ...to loose the bands of wickedness... The bands of wickedness can refer to sin, addictions, bondage, guilt, wrongdoing, violence, acquisition of wealth through wicked means, deceit, fraud. This fast is to free ourselves and others from all wickedness.

## The Saint Paul Fast

**Background:** When Saul of Tarsus met Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, he was struck blind as he was on his way to persecute Christians in Damascus. Jesus could not allow Saul's plan to continue and therefore stopped him from carrying them out.

While Saul was blind and had no clue what was going to happen to him, his thoughts about Jesus changed. He went without food for three days as he prayed for direction and purpose. After his eyesight was restored, his life took a whole new direction as he sought to serve Jesus Christ who saved him from his sin.

**Key Verse:** Acts 9:9 *And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.*

**Purpose of Fasting:** Isaiah 58:8 *Then shall thy light break forth as the morning...* To allow for a clear perspective and direction for crucial decisions.

## The John the Baptist Fast

**Background:** John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus, was called by God to take on the Nazarite vow from his birth. He was to have neither wine nor strong drink. This lifestyle set John apart for his mission of being the forerunner of Jesus.

**Key Verse:** Luke 1:15 *For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.*

**Purpose of Fasting:** Isaiah 58:8 *...thy righteousness shall go before thee...* For our witness and testimony to influence others as we share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## The Jesus Fast

**Background:** After Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert for 40 days and nights as he was tempted by the devil. Jesus overcame the devil's temptations through the Word of God, *It is written*, as He refuted Satan's temptations.

**Key Verse:** Matthew 4:2 *And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.*

**Purpose of Fasting:** Matthew 4:1-2; 11 *...behold, angels came and ministered unto him.* For spiritual power and victory over temptation, the flesh, and the devil.

## Times of Fasting in the Old Testament

There are a few times when fasting in the Old Testament is mentioned outside of the fasts indicated in the above section.

The term "fast" refers to self-denial or abstaining from eating food. We read in 1 Samuel 1:7 of the time when Hannah was so distressed that *"she wept and did not eat food"*.

There was another time when King Ahab was upset that he couldn't buy Naboth's vineyard that he *"would eat no food"*, 1 Kings 21:4. Personally, I'd say he was pouting.

Fasting was a natural expression of grief. David fasted when he was grieved over Abner's death, 2 Samuel 3:35.

There are many Scripture references that refer to fasting as "afflicting" one's soul or body. We see this in 2 Chronicles 7:14 with the use of the word "humble thyself".

David also fasted when his son by Bathsheba was sick. His purpose was to turn away God's wrath for his sin but God is more just than that. He could not allow David's sin to go unpunished. When his son died, David abruptly ended his fast since there was no more reason to seek God to heal him.

## Fasting in the New Testament

Fasting in the New Testament times had become a widely practiced discipline. The Pharisees were quite well-known for their fasting as they liked to let everyone know they were going without food.

The disciples of John the Baptist regularly fasted and Jesus also had a 40 day absolute fast prior to the start of His ministry.

Though Jesus was challenged by the Pharisees and by John the Baptist's disciples because His disciples did not fast, Jesus defended their reason for not fasting. He said there would be plenty of time for them to fast after He was no longer with them, Matthew 9:14-15. Jesus taught His disciples that when they do fast, they should not be hypocritical as the Pharisees. They were not to "advertise" that they were fasting through their facial expressions or demeanour. After Jesus' ascension to heaven, fasting in the New Testament church was regularly practiced, especially when ordaining apostles or men for special ministry, Acts 13:1-3; 14:23. The spiritual leaders, such as Paul, Barnabus, and others, regularly spent time in prayer and fasting. In fact, when Paul had to defend his ministry, he listed 'fasting' as a regular ministry discipline, 2 Corinthians 6:4-5; 11:23-27.

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