



Fasting

Chapter 25

How to Fast Properly

- What can we do to make fasting a joyful experience?

Since the time of Adam, God's people have fasted to help them draw near to Him and to worship Him. Jesus showed the importance of fasting by His own example (see Luke 4:1–4). Through latter-day revelation we learn that the Lord still expects His people to fast and pray often (see D&C 88:76).

Fasting means to go without food and drink. Occasional fasting is good for our bodies and helps our minds become more active.

The Savior taught us that purposeful fasting is more than just going without food and drink. We must also concentrate on spiritual matters.

We Should Pray When We Fast

Prayer is a necessary part of fasting. Throughout the scriptures, prayer and fasting are mentioned together. Our fasting should be accompanied by sincere prayer, and we should begin and end our fasting with prayer.

We Should Fast with a Purpose

Fasting can have many purposes. We can overcome weaknesses or problems by fasting and praying. Sometimes we may wish to fast and pray for help or guidance for others, such as a family member who is ill and needs a blessing (see Mosiah 27:22–23). Through fasting we can come to know the truth of things just as did the prophet Alma in the Book of Mormon. He said: “I have fasted and prayed

For teachers: You may want to divide class members or family members into groups of two to four people and give each group an opportunity to discuss ways to make fasting a joyful experience. Then work together to make a list of everyone's ideas—perhaps on the board or on a large piece of paper.

many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit” (Alma 5:46).

We can fast to help others embrace the truth. Fasting can help comfort us in times of sorrow and mourning (see Alma 28:4–6). Fasting can help us become humble and feel closer to our Heavenly Father (see Helaman 3:35).

Our purpose in fasting should not be to impress others. The Lord counseled:

“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast.

“Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

“But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast” (Matthew 6:16–18).

We should be cheerful when we fast and not advertise our fasting to others.

- How does our attitude influence our experience when we fast?

The Fast Day

One Sunday each month Latter-day Saints observe a fast day. On this day we neither eat nor drink for two consecutive meals. If we were to eat our evening meal on Saturday, then we would not eat or drink until the evening meal on Sunday.

All members who are physically able should fast. We should encourage our children to fast after they have been baptized, but we should never force them. The fast day is a special day for us to humble ourselves before the Lord in fasting and prayer. It is a day to pray for forgiveness from our sins and for the power to overcome our faults and to forgive others.

On fast Sunday, members of the Church meet together and partake of the sacrament. They strengthen themselves and one another by bearing testimony in fast and testimony meeting.

- How have you benefited from sharing your testimony in fast and testimony meeting? How have you benefited from hearing others share their testimonies?

Fast Offerings

- Why do we contribute fast offerings?

When we fast each month, the Lord asks us to help those in need. One way we do this is by giving through the proper priesthood authority the money we would have spent on food for the two meals. We should give as generously as we are able. Through our fast offerings we become partners with the Lord in administering to the needs of our less-fortunate brothers and sisters.

We Are Blessed When We Fast

- What blessings can we receive when we fast properly?

Isaiah, an Old Testament prophet, wrote of the Lord's rich promises to those who fast and help the needy. We are promised peace, improved health, and spiritual guidance. Isaiah tells us of the blessings that come when we fast: "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am" (Isaiah 58:8–9).

Fasting improves our lives and gives us added strength. It helps us live other principles of the gospel because it draws us nearer to the Lord.

Fasting Teaches Self-Control

Fasting helps us gain strength of character. When we fast properly, we will learn to control our appetites and passions. We are a little stronger by having proved to ourselves that we have self-control. If we teach our children to fast, they will develop the spiritual strength to overcome greater temptations later in their lives.

Fasting Gives Us Spiritual Power

When we fast wisely and prayerfully, we develop our faith. With that faith we will have greater spiritual power. For example, Alma (a Book of Mormon prophet) tells the story of meeting again with the sons of Mosiah many years after their miraculous conversion. He felt great joy when he learned that they had strengthened their faith and had developed great spiritual power. They had gained this power because “they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation” (Alma 17:3).

The sons of Mosiah had been preaching for 14 years to the Lamanites. Because the sons of Mosiah had fasted and prayed, the Spirit of the Lord increased the power of their words. This gave them great success in their missionary work. (See Alma 17:4.)

The Savior has said to those who fast properly, “Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:18).

- How can fasting increase our spiritual power to resist temptations? to receive revelation? to do righteous acts?

Additional Scriptures

- Luke 2:37; Alma 45:1 (worshipping God through fasting)
- Isaiah 58:3–11 (proper fasting)
- Mosiah 27:19, 23 (fasting for the sick)
- 3 Nephi 27:1–3; Exodus 34:27–28 (fasting for revelation and testimony)
- Alma 6:6; 17:9 (fasting for those who do not know God)
- Acts 13:2–3 (fasting for selection of Church officers)
- Mosiah 4:26 (retaining a remission of our sins as we help those in need)