

Fasting: A Comprehensive LDS Cheat Sheet

What It Is | How to Do It | Why It Works | Scriptural Power | Health Benefits | World Religions Compared

WHAT IS FASTING?

Definition: Voluntary abstinence from food AND water for ~24 hours, combined with earnest prayer
"Fasting without prayer is just going hungry." — Parley P. Pratt

LDS OFFICIAL PRACTICE

DURATION: Two consecutive meals (~24 hours)
WHAT: No food AND no water (when health permits)
WHEN: First Sunday of each month (Fast Sunday)
START: After Saturday dinner → End Sunday dinner
INCLUDES: Fast & Testimony Meeting + Fast Offerings

WHO SHOULD FAST:

✓ All able members monthly

EXEMPTIONS:

- ✗ Children under 8
- ✗ Diabetics, pregnant/nursing mothers
- ✗ Anyone whose health would be at risk
- Fast doesn't require endangering your health*

Fast Offerings vs. Tithing

Tithing	Fast Offerings
10% of income	Voluntary amount
Church operations	Poor relief ONLY
General level	Local bishop

WHY WE FAST

- Draw closer to God** — Body quiet, Spirit speaks
- Subdue the natural man** — Mosiah 3:19
- Seek blessings** — Healing, guidance, answers
- Care for the poor** — Isaiah 58 law of the fast
- Strengthen testimony** — Alma 5:46

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES

40-Day Fasts

Moses (Deut 9:9): "Neither did eat bread nor drink water" — received Ten Commandments
Elijah (1 Kgs 19): Traveled to Horeb, heard "still small voice"
Jesus (Matt 4): Before ministry, resisted Satan's temptations

Other Biblical Fasts

Esther — 3 days, saved Jewish nation
David — Regularly fasted (Ps 35:13)
Daniel — Partial fast, received visions
Anna — "Fasting and prayers night and day"
Apostles (Acts 13:2-3) — Holy Ghost directed while fasting

Book of Mormon Power

"They had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God." — Alma 17:2-3

Alma 5:46: "I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true."

ISAIAH 58: THE LAW OF THE FAST

Wrong Fast: Fasting while continuing in sin, for show

Right Fast: "Loose the bands of wickedness... deal thy bread to the hungry... bring the poor to thy house"

BLESSINGS PROMISED:

- Light breaks forth as the morning
- Health springs forth speedily
- "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer"
- "The Lord shall guide thee continually"

"THIS KIND GOETH NOT OUT"

Matthew 17:21: When disciples couldn't cast out demon, Jesus said: "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

Principle: Some spiritual challenges require the additional power unlocked through fasting.

HEALTH BENEFITS (SCIENCE)

AUTOPHAGY (2016 Nobel Prize)

Body's cellular cleaning process — activated at 24-48 hours

- Removes damaged cells
- Regenerates new, healthy cells
- May protect against cancer, neurodegeneration

METABOLIC BENEFITS:

- Improved insulin sensitivity
- Blood sugar regulation
- Lower cholesterol & triglycerides
- Reduced blood pressure

BRAIN HEALTH:

- Increases BDNF (brain growth factor)
- Enhanced mental clarity
- May protect against Alzheimer's

MIT STUDY (2018): 24-hour fast dramatically improves intestinal stem cell regeneration

FASTING IN WORLD RELIGIONS

Religion	Duration	Food	Water
LDS	24 hrs monthly	No	No
Judaism (Yom Kippur)	25 hours	No	No
Islam (Ramadan)	Dawn-sunset daily	No	No
Catholic	2 days/year	Reduced	Yes
Orthodox	180+ days	Vegan	Yes
Hindu	Varies	Varies	Often yes
Buddhist (monks)	Daily after noon	No	Yes

JEWISH YOM KIPPUR: 25 hrs, no food/water, plus no bathing or leather shoes. Closest to LDS practice.

MUSLIM RAMADAN: Month-long; fast dawn-sunset, break each evening. Communal emphasis.

ORTHODOX: 180+ days/year of modified fasting (vegan diet), not total abstinence.

CATHOLIC: Only Ash Wednesday & Good Friday required; partial fast (reduced eating).

BUDDHIST: Buddha rejected extreme fasting; monks simply don't eat after noon.

What Makes LDS Fasting Unique?

- Complete fast** — food AND water
- Monthly rhythm** — regular spiritual discipline
- Direct poor relief** — offerings help local poor
- Lay clergy** — no enrichment from donations
- Revelation focus** — fasting for answers, power

HOW TO FAST EFFECTIVELY

BEFORE:

- Hydrate well day before
- Eat balanced meal (not excessive)
- Identify specific PURPOSE
- Pray about intentions

DURING:

- Earnest, focused prayer
- Scripture study
- Ponder, record impressions
- Service to others

AFTER:

- Break with light foods
- Drink water slowly
- Record impressions
- PAY FAST OFFERINGS

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Fasting without prayer (just hungry)
- ✗ Making a show of it (Matt 6:16-18)
- ✗ Fasting when health at risk
- ✗ Skipping fast offerings
- ✗ Negative attitude — should be joyful!

JESUS ON HOW TO FAST

"When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance... But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." — Matthew 6:16-18

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- What:** No food + water for 24 hours + prayer
- When:** First Sunday monthly + as needed
- Why:** Revelation, power, care for poor
- Power:** "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting"
- Health:** Autophagy, stem cells, mental clarity
- Attitude:** Joyful, secret, with purpose
- Isaiah 58:** "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer"