

# Fasting

In Richard Foster's book Celebration of Disciplines there is some great advice and insights on how to start and work up to longer fasts. Below is a few quotes from pages 57-60.

"Begin with a partial fast of twenty-four hours' duration; many have found lunch to lunch to be the best time. This means that you would only miss two meals (dinner and breakfast the next day). Fresh fruit juices are excellent to drink during the fast. Attempt this once a week for several weeks. In the beginning you will be fascinated with the physical aspects of your experience, but the most important thing to monitor is the inner attitude of the heart." (Foster CoD 57)

"Most fasts are normally only twenty-four hours long. You should drink only water, but use healthy amounts of it. Many feel distilled water is best. If the taste of water bothers you, add one teaspoon of lemon juice. You will probably feel some hunger pangs or discomfort before the time is up. That is not real hunger; your stomach has been trained through years of conditioning to give signals of hunger at certain hours." (Foster CoD 57)

"In many ways the stomach is like a spoiled child, and a spoiled child does not need indulgence, but needs discipline. Martin Luther says '...the flesh was wont to grumble dreadfully.' You must not give in to this 'grumbling.' Ignore the signals or even tell your 'spoiled child' to calm down and in a brief time the hunger pangs will pass. If not, sip another glass of water and the stomach will be satisfied. You are to be the master of your stomach, not its slave. If family obligations permit it, devote the time you would normally use eating to meditation and prayer. Break your fast with a light meal of fresh fruits and vegetables and a good deal of inner rejoicing." (Foster CoD 57)

"After having achieved several fasts with a degree of spiritual success, move on to a thirty-six-hour fast (during which you would miss three meals). With that accomplished, it is time to seek the Lord as to whether he wants you to go on a longer fast. Three to seven days is a good time period and will probably have a substantial impact on the course of your life." (Foster CoD 58)

"Before commencing an extended fast, some are tempted to eat a good deal to 'stock up.' That is most unwise; in fact, slightly lighter than normal meals are best for the day or two before a fast. You would also be well advised to abstain from coffee or tea three days before beginning a longer fast. If the last meal in the stomach is fresh fruits and vegetables, you should have no difficulty with constipation." (Foster CoD 60)

"The first three days are usually the most difficult in terms of physical discomfort and hunger pangs. The body is beginning to rid itself of the toxins that have built up over years of poor eating habits and it is not a comfortable process. This is the reason [you may experience] a coating on the tongue and bad breath. Do not be disturbed by these symptoms; rather be grateful for the increased health and well-being that will result. You may experience headaches during this time, especially if you are an avid coffee or tea drinker. Those are mild withdrawal symptoms that will pass although they may be very unpleasant for a time." (Foster CoD 59)

"By the fourth day the hunger pangs are beginning to subside, but you may have feelings of weakness and occasional dizziness. The dizziness is only temporary and caused by sudden changes in position. Move more slowly and you will have no difficulty. The weakness can come to the point where the simplest task takes great effort. Rest is the best remedy. Many find this the most difficult period of the fast." (Foster CoD 59)

"By the sixth or seventh day you will begin to feel stronger and more alert. Hunger pangs will continue to diminish until by the ninth or tenth day they are only a minor irritation. The body will have eliminated the bulk of toxins and you will feel good. Your sense of concentration will be sharpened and you will feel as if you could continue fasting indefinitely. Physically this is the most enjoyable part of the fast." (Foster CoD 59)

"Anywhere between twenty-one and forty days or longer, depending on the individual, hunger pangs will return. This is the first stage of starvation and the pangs signal that the body has used up its reserves and is beginning to draw on the living tissue. The fast should be broken at this time." (Foster CoD 59)

"An extended fast should be broken with fruit or vegetable juice, with small amounts taken at first. Remember that the stomach has shrunk considerably and the entire digestive system has gone into a kind of hibernation. By the second day you should be able to eat fruit and then milk or yogurt. Next you can eat fresh salads and cooked vegetables. Avoid all salad dressing, grease and starch. Extreme care should be taken not to overeat. It is good during this time to consider future diet and eating habits to see if you need to be more disciplined and in control of your appetite." (Foster CoD 60)