

## Fasting is done with the heart as well as the stomach.

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Fasting is something that must be done by the heart as well as by the stomach. The nursing or pregnant woman should not follow the strict fast. She should fast according to the spirit. The sick person may need to relax their fasting in order to keep ticket well. That person should fast according to the spirit.

This is not hard to do - if you want to do it.

If you need to have meat, then pan fry a hamburger patty, without salt-and-pepper - and as the medicine that it is for your body.

If you are out and you get a hamburger because you needed for your body, then don't get it with your favorite toppings. Or perhaps if you really love hamburgers, you should get fish.

If you eat cheese, then don't eat pizza which is cheese on steroids. If you eat yogurt, eat plain yogurt, and not with the flavorings that you normally love to eat.

If you eat fish, eat simple fish, but not trout almandine.

I have a funny story, at least it was to me. Someone told me they needed yogurt for their stomach, and I blessed it. Then I asked them "do you love that yogurt that has the preserves at the bottom?" This person said with great relish "Oh yes!" I told this person "Then just eat plain yogurt!" This person's face fell, but this "fasting way" of eating yogurt was good for this person's soul.

A nursing mother or pregnant mother is not a bad Orthodox Christian or bad catechumen because she is eating foods that are normally not eaten during a fast period. Neither is someone who has some health problem and must eat foods that are normally considered to be not even during fasting periods

A nursing or pregnant mother is eating foods that her body needs so that she can feed the child that she loves. She shows her love for God by eating the foods that her body needs and considering them to be more medicine than food.

All of the things that I said above, certainly apply when a person (man or woman) is eating alone. When you're alone you are your own master and you can eat what you want. The things you choose to eat then show *how much* you value fasting.

Sometimes the family dynamic is difficult because one of the family members does not want to fast or is even anxious about fasting, or is angry about it. Sometimes person needs to make accommodations when they are not alone. This on this seems to be the case often with women whose husbands don't want to fast, but it sometimes occurs with there are men who want to fast and women do not want to. The person who wants to fast, or at least says that they want to fast can tell if they are eating non-fasting foods for a good reason versus just because of their passion by observing their behavior when the person who has trouble with fasting is not around. If they eat non-fasting foods when the person

is not around, then they are obeying their stomach and not the church. They can also tell if they are following the spirit of the fast if when they make non-fasting food, they eat a bunch of it because it's tasty. It's often harder to show restraint need a little bit of something the not eat anything at all. Are you serious about fasting, or are you not serious? A person who expects you to eat non-fasting food around them will not really care if you eat a little bit versus a lot.

When we have trouble following advice, it is because of two reasons. Either the advice is asking us to do something that is way beyond our capacity, or because of our pride we don't want to follow advice. A person must be careful to try to discern the difference. There are spiritual fathers who tell spiritual children to do things that are ridiculous and impossible – for instance there are men that are stupid enough to tell a married couple to abstain from sexual relations because of their idea about sexual relations. This has broken up many marriages. The rule here, by the way, is that a woman's body belongs to her husband and a husband's body belongs to his wife. If a person can abstain from sexual relations that is fine and good, but what about their partner? It is a mockery of fasting to say that I don't want to do this when the partner is not strong enough and falls into sin.

As is the case with anything else in life, fasting requires preparation and organization.

if your husband does not get angry or is not offended by you not eating meat, then don't eat meat. If he is offended then you must use discernment. It is hard to eat a small piece of meat, smaller than we would normally like. It is hard if we want to put condiments on our hamburger to not put any condiments on a hamburger. it is hard to eat broccoli without butter when butter is available, but there's no reason to put butter on it when we are fasting, we can do without it. Even if you feel that you must eat some non-fasting foods to appease your husband, you can do it in a "fasting way". Perhaps you love wine with a particular dish. Decline when your husband asked if you'd like a glass of wine . If we are alone and we do not fast then we are fooling ourselves about being discerning. I was faced with a problem similar to years years ago and my mother just did not understand. We didn't eat anything that was not fasting and she was hugely offended, so we started eating her foods, but whereas I would normally take two or three more helpings of meat, I ate a small amount of meat. that was the best fasting I ever did, because I wanted more meat. Priest Seraphim Holland