



# FASTING



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# 1.

## WHEN, NOT IF

### 1. FOOD IS GOOD!

Food is a gift from God!

*But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. (1 Corinthians 8:8)*

*For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving. (1 Timothy 4:4)*

Food is given for strength and satisfaction.

### 2. GLUTTONY IS BAD!

Gluttony is the excessive and ongoing act of eating and/or drinking. Gluttony abuses our natural desire for nourishment.

Gluttony is an over-indulgence and an overconsumption of food.

Pope Gregory in the 6th Century listed the famous **7 Deadly Sins**: Lust, Gluttony, Greed, Sloth, Wrath, Envy, and Pride.

*Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. (Philippians 3:19)*

*Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. (Ezekiel 16:49)*

*For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty. (Proverbs 23:21)*



# 1.

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### 3. FASTING IS PART OF THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE.

Important people in the Bible practiced fasting: Moses, David, Elijah, Esther, Daniel, Anna, Paul, and Jesus, to name just a few.

We were created to fast. Think about it: if you sleep 8 hours a day, then you are sleeping for one third of your life. If you live 75 years, that's 25 years asleep, or 9,125 days. When you sleep, you are fasting. That's why morning meals are called breakfast — it's when you break your fast.

Fasting is abstaining from food for spiritual reasons.

*“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.”*  
(Matthew 6:16)

Jesus said *when*, not *if*, we fast. He modeled fasting and expected His followers to do the same.

# 2.

## FOUR REASONS TO FAST

### 1. IT HELPS US OVERCOME THE CALAMITIES OF LIFE.

Esther fasted when faced with danger.

*“Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!” (Esther 4:16)*

Ezra fasted for protection.

*So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer. (Ezra 8:23)*

Jehoshaphat fasted in the time of the invasion of the confederate armies of Canaanites and Syrians.

*And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. (2 Chronicles 20:3)*

### 2. IT RENEWS OUR CONNECTION WITH GOD.

Jesus said that His disciples would fast when He left.

*But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days. (Mark 2:20)*

When we fast, we get our hunger back for the presence of God.

*“The absence of fasting is the measure of our contentment with the absence of Christ.” (Piper 2013)*

*“If we don’t feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because we have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because we have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Our soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.” (Piper 2013)*

# 2.

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## 3. IT EMPOWERS US TO FULFILL GOD'S CALLING IN OUR LIVES.

Jesus's fast:

*And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. (Matthew 4:2)*

Anna's fast:

*And this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. (Luke 2:37)*

Cornelius's fast:

*So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing." (Acts 10:30)*

Prophets and teachers' fasts.

*As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said . . . (Acts 13:2)*

Most of the people in the Old Testament fasted in a crisis. All the recorded fastings in the New Testament have to do with calling.

We should not fast only during problems, but also for our purpose.

## 4. IT DEFEATS THE FLESH AND THE DEVIL.

Once, the disciples of Jesus could not cast out a demon. Jesus said:

*However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. (Matthew 17:21)*

Fasting is the preparation for temptation.

Fasting is a spiritual fight. That is why most of the battle during fasting is mental, not physical.

# 3.

## TYPES OF FASTS

### 1. AN ABSOLUTE FAST (NO FOOD AND NO WATER)

Moses went on a dry fast (it was supernatural). Don't try this at home!

*So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 34:28)*

The city of Nineveh fasted for 3 days.

*And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. (Jonah 3:7)*

Paul went on a 3 day dry fast.

*And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. (Acts 9:9)*

*Caution:* This should not be undertaken for over 3 days, and it should only be done if you have a clear directive from the Lord and are in good health.

### 2. A NORMAL FAST (NO FOOD, WATER ONLY)

*...being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. (Luke 4:2)*

### 3. A PARTIAL FAST (ABSTAINING FROM CERTAIN FOODS)

*I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. (Daniel 10:3)*

A partial fast could mean abstaining from meals on a set day or abstaining from certain kinds of foods. This is commonly referred to as the Daniel fast (no meat, no sweets, no dairy. Soup only, fruit and vegetables only).

# 3.

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## 4. A NON-FOOD FAST (ABSTAINING FROM OTHER THINGS)

For those of us with a medical condition, the non-food fast is the safest way to practice this spiritual discipline.

Daniel didn't anoint himself!

*I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. (Daniel 10:3)*

Abstaining from sex.

*Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (1 Corinthians 7:5)*

*And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives." (Exodus 19:15)*

Abstaining from unholy things such as foods, items, places, people, and practices.

*And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." (Joshua 3:5)*

*So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem. (Genesis 35:4)*

## 5. A CORPORATE FAST

Private fast (done in secret).

*"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. (Matthew 6:16)*

Public fast (proclaimed by leaders).

Samuel called a nation to a fast (1 Samuel 7:6).

Esther called a nation to a fast (Esther 4:16).

Ezra proclaimed a fast (Ezra 8:21–23).

King of Nineveh declared a fast (Jonah 3:5).

Disciples fasted and ministered to the Lord (Acts 13:2–3).

# 4.

## HOW TO FAST

### 1. START WITH A CLEAR GOAL.

Why are you *fasting*? Do you need direction, healing, restoration of your marriage or family issues? Are you facing financial difficulties?

Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance.

Be specific.

### 2. PREPARE SPIRITUALLY.

Confess your sins to God.

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of weakness.

Forgive all who have offended you and ask forgiveness from those you may have offended.

Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ and reject the worldly desires that try to hinder you.

### 3. DECIDE WHAT TO FAST.

Are you fasting food? Food and water? Or are you fasting from something that isn't food, like social media or television?

### 4. DECIDE HOW LONG TO FAST.

Most can easily fast for one to three days, but you may feel the grace to go longer, even as much as 21 to 40 days. Use wisdom and pray for guidance.

Beginners are advised to start slow.

# 4.

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## 5. WHAT TO EXPECT?

**Persistent hunger.** Hunger is a common side effect of any fast. Avoiding water can make you feel even hungrier, since water helps increase satiety.

**Tiredness.** If you don't eat food or drink water, your body won't have enough fuel. You'll likely feel fatigued, dizzy, and weak.

*My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh is feeble from lack of fatness. (Psalm 109:24)*

**Irritability.** As the hunger builds up, you're bound to feel cranky.

*This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. (Leviticus 16:29)*

Fasting exposes unhealthy relationships with food and our flesh. We comfort our negative emotions through eating. Emotions surface and they are forced to go to the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

**Headaches.** Restricting caffeine and nutrients, especially carbohydrates, can lead to headaches.

**Poor focus.** When you're tired and hungry, it can be difficult to concentrate at school or work.

## 6. REPLACE EATING WITH READING AND PRAYER.

*So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. (Deuteronomy 8:3)*

Fasting brings about miraculous results. You are following Jesus's example when you fast. Spend time listening to praise and worship music. Pray as often as you can throughout the day. Get away from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mindset on seeking God's face.

Watch, listen, and read truths about fasting during fasting.

## 7. HOW TO END

Don't overeat when the time comes to end your fast.

Begin eating solid food gradually; eat small portions or snacks.

# 5.

## WAY OF HUMILITY

### 1. FASTING IS A BIBLICAL WAY OF HUMILITY.

David humbled his soul with fasting.

*When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach.*  
(Psalm 69:10 ESV)

*But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer would return to my own heart.*  
(Psalm 35:13)

Ezra humbled himself with fasting.

*Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions.* (Ezra 8:21)

Ahab humbled himself with fasting.

*So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning.* (1 Kings 21:27)

*And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house."* (1 Kings 21:28–29)

### 2. FASTING RELEASES THE FAVOR OF GOD.

*Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble.*  
(Proverbs 3:34)

If we don't humble ourselves, we will be humbled.

If we humble ourselves, God will give us grace (favor).



# 6.

## TRADING A BOWL FOR A BLESSING

### 1. THE FIRST TEMPTATION WAS WITH FOOD.

*Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1)*

The first temptation of Israel was with food.

*And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." (Exodus 16:3)*

The first temptation of Jesus was with food.

*Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." (Matthew 4:4)*

### 2. FASTING IS TRADING THE BOWL FOR A BLESSING.

*And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright. (Genesis 25:34)*

*Esau had to fast to maintain his birthright. Jacob fasted to get a birthright.*

*Fasting is choosing the eternal over temporary—the spiritual over physical.*



# 6.

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## 3. FASTING INCREASES SPIRITUAL WEIGHT, NOT SPIRITUAL WORTH.

During fasting, we lose physical weight, but gain spiritual weight.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1)*

Fasting is a rational response to God's mercy, not an attempt to receive it.

Fasting is presenting the body as a living sacrifice to God.

Fasting enables us to not be squeezed into the mold of this present age.

Fasting helps us discover God's perfect will.

# 7.

## RECIPE FOR REVIVAL

*If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*  
(2 Chronicles 7:14)

### GOD'S RECIPE FOR REVIVAL:

1. Fast (God's way of humbling yourself).
2. Pray.
3. Seek God's face.
4. Turn from evil ways.

Everything starts with "If my people humble themselves." Prayer, seeking, and turning from wicked ways follows.

Fasting has a domino effect on our prayer, giving, and holy living.

### GOD'S RESPONSE:

1. I will hear from heaven.
2. I will forgive their sin.
3. I will heal their land.

# 8.

## THREEFOLD CORD

*Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:12)*

### 1. WE FACE THREE TEMPTATIONS

*For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. (1 John 2:16)*

Devil's trio: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of life.

#### **Eve's temptation**

*So when the woman saw that the tree was **good for food**, that **it was pleasant to the eyes**, and **a tree desirable to make one wise**, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:6)*

#### **Sodom's sins**

*Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had **pride, fullness of food**, and **abundance of idleness**; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. (Ezekiel 16:49)*

#### **Jesus's temptation** (Matthew 4:3–9)

Lust of the flesh: Command these stones to be made bread

Lust of the eyes: Showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory

Pride of life: Throw Yourself down.

These three temptations are an attempt to save yourself, glorify yourself and prove yourself.



# 8.

continued

## 2. WE HAVE THREE WEAPONS

Giving defeats greed.

Prayer defeats pride.

Fasting defeats lust.

## 3. NOT EASILY BROKEN

When we combine these three spiritual cords together, we become “not quickly broken.”

Prayer, giving, and fasting binds our flesh.

Prayer, giving, and fasting builds our spirit.

Prayer, giving, and fasting births breakthrough.

*Cornelius was praying, fasting and giving alms, and then an angel showed up and a breakthrough came to his house. So Cornelius said, “Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God.’” (Acts 10:30–31)*

# 9.

## FROM CURRENT TO CALLED

*As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. (Acts 13:2-3)*

### 1. FASTING IS SERVING THE LORD.

A minister of the Lord must learn to minister to the Lord.

*And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." (Luke 10:39-40)*

Fasting increases sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

Fasting is not making God talk, but making me hear.

### 2. FASTING IS ABOUT SEPARATION TO THE LORD.

Fasting is as much about what you are separating yourself to as what you are separating from.

*Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. (2 Timothy 2:21)*

*And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." (Joshua 3:5)*

### 3. FASTING ALLOWS THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SEND US.

Before Paul was sent by the Holy Spirit, he was separated to the Holy Spirit.

There is our current work and there is our called work. The work that God has called us to will come with confirmation and commission.

# 10.

## HEALTH BENEFITS OF FASTING<sup>1</sup>

Although there are many spiritual benefits to fasting, there are also a variety of practical health benefits to reap from the practice of abstaining from food.

I've included a few of the many studies that demonstrate how fasting is of benefit to your health in a variety of ways.

Before beginning any fast, you should consult a medical doctor in regards to your personal health.

### 1. FASTING PROMOTES BLOOD SUGAR CONTROL BY REDUCING INSULIN RESISTANCE

One small study included three men who had had type 2 diabetes for 10–25 years. With medical supervision, the men fasted every other day or 3 days a week. Within a month, all of the men were able to stop taking insulin, and in less than a year, they were able to cut down on or stop other diabetes medications.<sup>2</sup>

Fasting could be of benefit to those who struggle with blood sugar issues.

### 2. FASTING PROMOTES BETTER HEALTH BY FIGHTING INFLAMMATION

In another study, participants were able to drink water but not allowed to eat between noon and 3 p.m. At 3 p.m. on both days, blood was drawn to test white blood cell levels. White blood cells, which typically indicate inflammation, were dramatically reduced.

This goes to show that partaking in this practice can be extremely beneficial to many that suffer with inflammation in the body.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Link, Rachael. "8 Health Benefits of Fasting, Backed by Science." Healthline, Healthline Media, 30 July 2018, [www.healthline.com/nutrition/fasting-benefits](http://www.healthline.com/nutrition/fasting-benefits).

<sup>2</sup> "Can You Fast If You Have Diabetes?" WebMD, WebMD, [www.webmd.com/diabetes/fasting-diabetes](http://www.webmd.com/diabetes/fasting-diabetes).

<sup>3</sup> Berger, Matt. "How Intermittent Fasting Can Help Lower Inflammation." Healthline, 22 Aug. 2019, [www.healthline.com/health-news/fasting-can-help-ease-inflammation-in-the-body?c=716767331340](http://www.healthline.com/health-news/fasting-can-help-ease-inflammation-in-the-body?c=716767331340).

# 10.

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## 3. FASTING MAY ENHANCE HEART HEALTH BY IMPROVING BLOOD PRESSURE, CHOLESTEROL LEVELS

The Bible instructs in Proverbs 4:23 to “guard your heart,” for everything you do flows from it. This speaks of sin as we know, but it is important to also care for the physical health of our heart in our walk with God. One study revealed that eight weeks of alternate-day fasting reduced levels of “bad” LDL cholesterol by 25%.<sup>4</sup>

If the practice of fasting is turned into a lifestyle, these results could improve the overall quality of your life; however, consult a medical doctor before beginning a fast.

## 4. FASTING MAY BOOST BRAIN FUNCTION AND PREVENT NEURODEGENERATIVE DISORDERS

Although studies for the brain have not been extremely developed yet, there is some evidence that fasting is beneficial for helping prevent brain disorders.

One study in mice showed that practicing fasting for 11 months improved both brain function and brain structure. Because fasting may also help relieve inflammation, it could also aid in preventing neurodegenerative disorders.<sup>5</sup>

## 5. FASTING AIDS WEIGHT LOSS AND BOOSTS METABOLISM

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit . . . and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)

We must care for the weight and health of our physical body in order to serve God longer while we are still in these temporary tents. One review showed that whole-day fasting could reduce body weight by up to 9% and significantly decrease body fat over 12–24 weeks.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> KA, Bhutani S;Klempel MC;Berger RA;Varady. “Improvements in Coronary Heart Disease Risk Indicators by Alternate-Day Fasting Involve Adipose Tissue Modulations.” Obesity (Silver Spring, Md.), U.S. National Library of Medicine, pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20300080/.

<sup>5</sup> Z, Li L;Wang Z;Zuo. “Chronic Intermittent Fasting Improves Cognitive Functions and Brain Structures in Mice.” PloS One, U.S. National Library of Medicine, pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23755298/.

<sup>6</sup> PM, Tinsley GM;La Bounty. “Effects of Intermittent Fasting on Body Composition and Clinical Health Markers in Humans.” Nutrition Reviews, U.S. National Library of Medicine, pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26374764/.

# 10.

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## 6. FASTING INCREASES A GROWTH HORMONE WHICH IS VITAL FOR METABOLISM, WEIGHT LOSS AND MUSCLE STRENGTH

The growth hormone plays a huge role in healthy muscle and how our body collects fat. Fasting can increase the hormone levels in your body causing a quicker metabolism and weight loss.

As you fast, you will also begin to see that it may help maintain steady blood sugar and insulin levels throughout the day.<sup>7</sup>

## 7. FASTING COULD DELAY AGING AND EXTEND LONGEVITY

Our desire as Christians should be to serve God as long as we can while we are on this earth.

Studies in regards to this subject are currently limited to animals. However, in one study, rats that fasted every other day experienced a delayed rate of aging and lived 83% longer than rats that didn't fast.<sup>8</sup>

## 8. FASTING MAY AID IN CANCER PREVENTION AND INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHEMOTHERAPY

The studies in this area are not as prevalent, but the ones done on animals and cells show promising results for those who make a practice of abstaining from food.

A cell study showed that exposing cancer cells to several cycles of fasting was as effective as chemotherapy in delaying tumor growth and increased the effectiveness of chemotherapy drugs on cancer formation.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Lanzi R;Luzi L;Caumo A;Andreotti AC;Manzoni MF;Malighetti ME;Sereni LP;Pontiroli AE; "Elevated Insulin Levels Contribute to the Reduced Growth Hormone (GH) Response to GH-Releasing Hormone in Obese Subjects." *Metabolism: Clinical and Experimental*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10484056/.

<sup>8</sup> Goodrick CL;Ingram DK;Reynolds MA;Freeman JR;Cider NL; "Effects of Intermittent Feeding upon Growth and Life Span in Rats." *Gerontology*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/7117847/.

<sup>9</sup> Lee, Changhan, et al. "Fasting Cycles Retard Growth of Tumors and Sensitize a Range of Cancer Cell Types to Chemotherapy." *Science Translational Medicine*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 7 Mar. 2012, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3608686/.



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