

Good day reader

Please allow me a few words on the topic of fasting and prayer.

Christ said that His servants would fast. In Matthew 6 Jesus teaches by giving instructions on WHEN you give, WHEN you pray and WHEN you fast. Thus, in Jesus' teachings these 3 are duties for every Christian.

I was only exposed to fasting much later in my life and from personal experience can assure you it is powerful and was a blessing to me. Listening to other's experiences made it evident that it was also a huge blessing to them.

Fasting reaps great rewards—both physical and spiritual. Properly used, it will draw you closer to God, show you His will, bring guidance, and provide direction, help, strength and deliverance. Try it and you will experience it yourself why fasting is such an essential tool in a Christian's growth and overcoming.

I am not going to give you a complete lecture on fasting. There are many good books on the topic like Jentezen Franklin's book "Fasting". You can also find information on websites like <http://www.jentezenfranklin.org/fasting/> and <http://www.ccci.org/training-and-growth/devotional-life/7-steps-to-fasting/index.htm> to name but two.

But what is a fast? Is it starving yourself? Is it missing one meal—or more than one? Is fasting an obsolete Old Testament ritual—or an effective tool for Christian growth? Fasting is primarily the act of willingly abstaining from some or all food, drink, or both, for a period of time. A fast may be total or partial concerning that from which one fasts, and may be prolonged or intermittent.

There are many examples of it in God's Word. They reveal the true nature of fasting.

- Moses fasted for forty days and forty nights, twice back-to-back, without food or water; the first, immediately before he received the tablets on the mountain with God. And the second, after coming down, seeing the Israelites practicing idolatry, and breaking the tablets in anger. (Deuteronomy 9:7-21).
- King David fasted when the son of his adulterous union with Bathsheba was struck sick by God, in punishment for the adultery and for David's murder of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite. Nevertheless, the son died, upon which David broke his fast (2 Samuel 12:15-25).
- King Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast throughout Judah for victory over the Moabites and Ammonites who were attacking them (2 Chronicles 20:3). Note: This is an incredible story.
- The prophet Joel called for a fast to avert the judgment of God.
- The people of Nineveh, in response to Jonah's prophecy, fasted to avert the judgment of God (Jonah 3:7).
- The Jews of Persia, following Mordechai's example, fasted because of the genocidal decree of Haman. Queen Esther declared a three-day fast for all the Jews prior to risking her life in visiting King Ahasuerus uninvited (Esther 4).
- Saul, later Paul, did not eat or drink anything for three days after he converted on the road to Damascus.
- Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights while in the desert, being tempted by Satan to turn stones into bread and eat them, among other temptations. (Matthew 4:2, Luke 4:2).
- The prophetess Anna, who proclaimed the baby Jesus to be the Messiah, prayed and fasted regularly in the Temple (Luke 2:37).
- David used fasting as an act of humbling his soul (Psalm 35:13).
- The church in Antioch were worshipping the Lord and fasting when the Holy Spirit told them to send Barnabas and Saul for work (Acts 13:2).
- Paul and Barnabas appointed elders with prayer and fasting (Acts 14:23).

Here are a few practical items to effective fasting:

How to Begin:

Start with a clear goal. Be specific. Why are you fasting? 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 mind set on seeking God's face.

Preparing 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 (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3-4). Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ and reject the worldly desires that try to hinder you (Romans 12:1-2).

Deciding What to Fast:

The type of fasting you choose is up to you. You could go on a full fast in which you only drink liquids, or you may desire to fast like Daniel, who abstained from sweets and meats, and the only liquid he drank was water. Remember to replace that time with prayer and Bible study.

Deciding How Long:

You may fast as long as you like. Most can easily fast from 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.

What to Expect:

A day or so before beginning your fast, cut back on the amount of food you eat. Gorging yourself before a fast is unwise. You may experience headaches, due to a lack of caffeine and sugars (especially if you are a heavy coffee, tea or soda drinker). Cut back on these beverages ahead of time. You may also experience light-headedness and bad breath. Keep in mind that your body will be eliminating built-up poisons; drinking plenty of water before beginning and during your fast will help. And naturally, you will have hunger pains. Limit your activity and exercise moderately. Take time to rest.

Fasting is rarely convenient. You must set aside the time to do it. At times, it may be necessary to perform your daily duties. You may have to work. But the most profitable fast would occur during free time. Wasting the time you spend fasting—by not studying, praying or meditating—reduces the fast to a mere hunger strike. If fasting for a particular reason, be sure to review all scriptures that apply.

Have the proper appearance:

Remember what Christ said in Matthew 6:16-18. Bathe or shower as you would normally do. Comb your hair. Dress and act normally. Brushing teeth is permissible. No one should be able to tell by your appearance that you are fasting—only God should know.

How to End:

Don't overeat when the time comes to end your fast. Begin eating solid food gradually; eat small portions or snacks.

This is a very cryptic introduction to fasting, but I want to encourage you to try it. Take a leap of faith with God and put your trust in Him to deliver what he promised in the Bible.

Peace be on you!
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