

## Biblical Fasting

### *Biblical Fasting - Is fasting necessary for today's Christian church?*

Biblical fasting is a spiritual discipline which was encouraged by Jesus, Himself, while He was on earth. When questioned as to why the Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist fasted while Jesus disciples did not, Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast" (Matthew 9:15).

Jesus was indicating that fasting would become a necessity when, the bridegroom (Jesus) was taken away. While Jesus, who was God manifested in human form, was still on earth, His followers enjoyed a close fellowship and friendship with Him. Jesus bestowed power and authority on them to the extent that they had limited power to preach, heal the sick, and cast out devils. Similarly, when Jesus sent them out to minister to the populace, He instructed them to take few provisions. "Then Jesus asked them, 'When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?' 'Nothing,' they answered. He said to them, 'But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one'" (Luke 22:35-36).

Jesus was teaching that after His departure, the entire dynamic would change and the disciples would need a different type of preparation and provision. Fasting was to be a vital part of this new preparation. The new covenant is based on the truth that we have received everything in Christ, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

Nevertheless, we cooperate with the Spirit in the working out of our salvation with much prayer, meditation, and the study of God's Word. In addition to all these spiritual practices, Christians should also employ the humbling discipline of fasting.

### ***Biblical Fasting - Is there a proper method to fasting?***

Biblical fasting, unlike fasting for medical or health reasons, must be done with an attitude of seriousness and sincerity. When we fast, we willingly deprive the body of nourishment and the pleasurable taste of food. The body requires food for sustenance; therefore our hearts and minds must be totally focused and directed towards God so that He may be the full source of our strength during our period of fasting.

Fasting must also be done in an attitude of humility. It is not necessary for others to know we are fasting; it is directed towards God. "But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matthew 6:17-18).

In addition to our attitudes towards God and our stance before man, our motives must also be correct. We should fast in order to further the building up of God's kingdom by seeking to minister to others. The prophet Isaiah received from the Lord the acceptable motives for our fasts: "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter -- when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?" (Isaiah 58:6-7).

Fasts may last for varying lengths of time -- one day, three days, seven days, and more. We should prayerfully seek the Lord about the length of our fast. Fasting should have an object in mind; we should have a clear idea of the need and purpose. One of the most pressing reasons for Christian fasting may be revival -- "Will you not revive us again..." (Psalm 85:6).

### ***Biblical Fasting - What are the benefits of Christian fasting?***

Biblical fasting brings us into a closer union with God. While our bodies are being deprived for the purpose of drawing near to God, He has promised in return to draw near to us. This is a spiritual certainty. As we decrease, the Spirit increases. As individuals we are strengthened and renewed. "...Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16).

While this verse applies to our eternal destiny, the principle applies to our daily sojourn; as we humble and deprive our bodies through fasting, our spiritual man is made stronger and our senses more acute. This principle served the apostles well during the early church days. Their decisions were made through fasting and prayer; God gave them instructions and directions. "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 13:2-3).

Wicked kings, destined for destruction, received mercy from humbling themselves and fasting (1 Kings 21:29). The entire city of Nineveh, including animals, fasted upon hearing the pronouncement of judgment from the prophet Jonah -- and God spared them (Jonah 3:10). Jesus received divine preparation for His earthly ministry while fasting and enduring temptation. Moses waited upon God forty days and received the divine revelation of God's commandments.

While we await the return of the bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ, fasting exemplifies our attitude of spiritual hunger -- the promise is that we will be satisfied. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

***WHAT DO YOU THINK?*** - We have all sinned and deserve God's judgment. God, the Father, sent His only Son to satisfy that judgment for those who believe in Him. Jesus, the creator and eternal Son of God, who lived a sinless life, loves us so much that He died for our sins, taking the punishment that we deserve, was buried, and rose from the dead according to the Bible. If you truly believe and trust this in your heart, receiving Jesus alone as your Savior, declaring, "Jesus is Lord," you will be saved from judgment and spend eternity with God in heaven.

# **10 Tips For Fasting**

Fasting is a common practice in Christianity. When Jesus was talking with His disciples He taught them about fasting. It was expected that His disciples would fast (Matthew 6:16-18). Here are some tips for fasting.

## **1. Plan Your Fast**

The Bible has examples of one-day, three-day, seven-day and forty-day fasts (Judges 20:26, Esther 4:16, 1 Samuel 31:13 and Matthew 4 respectively). You should enter your fast with prayer and a specific plan for how long you will fast.

There are various types of fasts as well. Some people fast with only water for short periods, while others maintain multi-week fasts with juice and broth maintaining a strict liquid diet. Both are valid. You simply need to decide what is right for your body and your purposes.

Part of planning your fast should be to educate yourself on different types of fasts and reasons to fast. It is also important to know how to break your fast properly. This becomes more critical the longer your fast lasts.

## **2. Consider Your Schedule**

While a fast, by nature, is inconvenient, it should be an inconvenience to you—not to those around you. You should not obligate your family to skip Christmas dinner because of your fast. This takes away the personal nature of fasting.

### **3. Tell Only the People You Must**

Your spouse will need to know you are fasting. Beyond that, you would be better off not telling many people that you are fasting. Most won't understand. Fasting can also become a source of pride and boasting as you spread the news to more and more people.

Telling your pastor can be a help both to you and to him. It will be an encouragement for him to pray more specifically for you during this time. And you will know that someone is praying for your spiritual and physical well being.

### **4. Wean Yourself Off Caffeine**

Several days before your fast begins, you should start weaning yourself off caffeine. Some people experience unbearable headaches 2 to 3 days after ceasing to drink caffeinated products. During your fast you will already be acutely aware of your stomach. There is no need to add a second discomfort if it can be avoided.

### **5. Avoid Media**

Disconnecting from TV, radio, newspapers and the Internet can help you stay focused on your purpose for fasting. You will be less tempted by the constant bombardment of advertising as you become physically and emotionally challenged. Avoiding media will give you more time to focus on the Lord and His Word.

## **6. Disconnect from people**

Fasting is not necessarily a vacation, though dedicating time off and away from people during your fast can help you get the most benefit out of this precious time. Leave your email and cellphone behind. If possible, find someone who can cover your responsibilities at work and ministry. Many people fast and still carry on their normal daily activities. But if you can get away, it will give you more time in quietness and stillness with the lord.

## **7. Beware of Your Emotions**

Some people experience vast mood swings during a fast. One moment they are totally focused on God and the next they are wallowing in pity. Knowing that this is likely to happen will help you react properly. Learning to refocus on God and His goodness during this tough emotional time will help when your fast is over and you experience similar emotions.

## **8. Rest**

Laziness is a problem that the Bible speaks against, but most of us today suffer from being too busy and not getting the rest we need. If you disconnect from the media and other people you will have extra time allowing you to get a full night's sleep. During your fast you will be forced to slow down since you won't be needing long meal breaks. A fast will reveal to you that you have too many activities and busyness in your day-to-day routine.

## **9. Stay Physically Active**

You should take time to rest but this does not mean you should do nothing. Enjoy a walk in God's creation . Outside of His Word, His creation is one of the best ways that God has revealed Himself to us.

## **10. Be Still and Focus on God**

Fasting is a time to study God's Word, meditate and pray. To help with this, plan a specific bible passage or topic you want to study during your fast. Look for verses you want to memorize and meditate upon. Fasting by Jesus and the disciples was always accompanied by prayer. Spend time talking to God and allowing Him to reveal Himself to you in His Word.