

Prayer and Fasting

Principles and Practices

(Selected Texts)

Fasting and the Bible

Principles

1. There is more to fasting than just abstaining from food—fasting is about our relationship with Christ, it is a spiritual exercise with a focus, a Christ –centered purpose seeking spiritual results that honor and glorify Christ (see Isaiah 58:1ff; Matt 6:16-18; Ezra 9:1-10)
2. Fasting is a help to our life of prayer (John 15; 1 Thess 5:17; Neh 1:8-10)
3. Fasting is expected and taught to be a practiced discipline of the faith (Matt 6:16-18; 9:14-15)
4. Fasting was associated with grief and mourning (1 Sam 1:7-8; 31:13)
5. Fasting was associated with seeking God’s renewed presence and sustaining strength and salvation from enemies, danger and temptation (Ex 34:28; Matt 4:1-11; Lk 4:2; 2 Chron 20:3-4; Esther 4:16;)
6. Fasting goes along with knowing and doing God’s will (Judges 20; Acts 14:23)
7. Fasting is related to power and fruit through ministry (1 Kings 13:1-22; Isa 58:1-12; Acts 13:1-4; Matt 4:2ff)
8. Fasting is linked with worship and adoration of the Father (Luke 2:37; Zechariah 7:5)

Practices

1. The Bible distinguishes between several kinds of fasts: normal (all food but not water, Matt 4:2), partial (dietary limitation, Dan 1:12), absolute, (no food or liquids, Ezra 10:6), supernatural (Deut. 9:9)
2. In Scripture fasts were private (Matt 6:16-18), congregational (Joel 2:15-16; Acts 13:1-4), regular and occasional fasts (Lev 16:29-31; Matt 9:15)
3. Biblical fasts lasted—one day, 14 days, 40 days, 3 days, 7 days (see Judges 20:26; Acts 9:9; 1 Sam 31:13; Dan 10:3-13)

Practical Tips

Bill Bright’s 7 Basic Steps to Successful Fasting and Prayer—

- a. Set your Objectives—search motives, set goals, prayer points, humble yourself before God (2 Chron 7:14)
- b. Ask the Spirit to show you the kind of fast—length, focus, kind, limitations on activity, God’s Word
- c. Prepare Spiritually—list sins, confess, repent, seek forgiveness, make restitution, filled with the Spirit, surrender, meditate on God and His word, pray with expectation, be prepared for Spiritual opposition

- d. Prepare Physically--gradually move into a long fast, eat smaller meals avoid high fat, sugar, eat raw veggies and fruits before fast. When Fasting—avoid drugs if possible—even natural herbal remedies, limit activity, exercise moderately, walk for exercise, rest, expect headaches, impatience, physical discomforts, keep liquids flowing—juices, herbal teas, broth,
- e. Put yourself on a schedule—worship, read the word, pray, surrender to God’s purposes and activity, pray for vision, take walks, pray during meals, seek His heart in unceasing prayer, avoid TV, meet with others to pray, pray with spouse and family
- f. End Your Fast Gradually—replace water with fruit juice, broths, soups, utilize small snacks, etc.
- g. Expect Results—a fast is not a spiritual cure all—keep relationship centered!