

Fasting

The question has been asked by so many for so long, "Why should we fast?" The reason we fast is because in some special cases ordinary prayer is not enough. There are situations where an unusual degree of prayer, with added fasting, is the only help when the situation won't respond to anything else.

The purpose of fasting is to give ourselves wholly to God so He might have complete freedom with us. God has chosen fasting as one of the means to reach Him. He calls upon us to deny ourselves at times so He may have our full attention to give us answers and directions, which we would not otherwise obtain.

Fasting has always been a mainstay of the Christian Church. The Bible commands it when trouble arises (Joel 2:12-32). Moses, David, Elijah, Daniel, Paul and Christ himself testified to the impact fasting had, coupled with all the other spiritual weapons in their lives. While Moses fasted on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 34: 28) he wrote the words of the covenant; Jonah after his fiery sermon of repentance to Nineveh proclaimed a fast and the entire city was spared.

The efficiency of fasting cannot be denied. Many say it's superstition; but, in fasting is power which was given to the Church to cast out demons. Our Saviour said on one occasion "...this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting..." (Matthew 17:14-21). In many cases the ordinary preaching of the word will not avail, and ordinary prayer will not suffice. There must be an unusual faith, and to get this there must be an unusual degree of prayer and fasting.

Fasting is the Lord's prescription on spiritual depth and control. Fasting will drive out the most unmanageable devil. Not only is it spiritual efficacious in bringing one closer to the Master, but it also results in better physical health--God's aim is to develop the total man. By fasting we get our brains more clear as well as our stomachs. We allow our hearths to rest more fully upon the Saviour.

We fast for (7) seven reasons:

1. For Personal Cleansing - In spite of our commitment to Christ we sin. We begin to make general confession to little sins. Soon we lose our sensitivity to little sins and become spiritually careless. Deep cleansing gives God the time to bring to light the hidden man in us. It is painful, but is needful for His power in our lives.
2. Fasting Develops a sense of Oneness with God - We take Him for granted many times. Fasting deepens the fellowship and causes the heart to shun wayward desires.
3. Fasting Helps us to Understand God's will - He will reveal His Will. Far too many times we make decisions and then hope that God will bless them. Is there any wonder why our lives get so entangled? I don't believe that it is God's will that we live by trial and error. He will instruct us the way to go (Psalms 32:8).
4. We Fast to Gain Strength Over Temptation - When we fast the flesh is made to say NO until it yields to the control of the Spirit -- then we are full.
5. We Fast to Release Others who are Spiritually enslaved - God's people are shackled with fear, bitterness, resentment, worry, and jealousy. They pray yet nothing happens. God calls us to fast and pray on behalf of these.
6. We fast to Express Whole Heartedness - Lord, I mean to go through! It indicates willingness to sacrifice anything to attain what we seek in Him. Fasting is not a hunger strike designed to force the Lord's hand. Fasting does not change God: but, it changes man. A purification takes place in man.
7. Fasting is good for the body because the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. It demands the best of care. Among other things, it clears the mind. A clear mind is essential to the desire for oneness and direction.

In preparing to fast I ask the question I must ask, "What is my spiritual objectives?" "Is my desire to fast from God?", "Are my motives pure?"

Purpose Of Fasting

1. Fasting disciplines the body and makes it a useful instrument to God (I Cor. 9:27)
2. Fasting determines our victory over fleshly desires (Phil. 3:19).
3. Fasting builds your faith and removes your helplessness in solving problems (Matt. 17:21).
4. Fasting builds your inner spirit (diminishes the power of flesh over you) (Matt. 6:33).

When Should We Fast

1. Fast during periods of distress (Jud. 20:26)
 - a. When a nation is faced with a civil war, (Israel faced war against Benjamin, and before fierce battle with Philistines) (I Sam. 7:6).
 - b. When people face great stress (Hannah wept and did not eat because she was childless)
 - c. Fast as a natural expression of grief (David at Abner's death, and in Psa. he expressed sorrow thru fasting (2 Sam. 3:35 Psa. 35:13).
2. Fast when facing spiritual decisions
 - a. Christ (in human sense) prepared himself spiritually to serve God by fasting (40 days and nights) (Matt. 4:2)
 - b. The will of God is made known through fasting and prayer (early church of Antioch sought God for direction to go east or west in the ministry (Acts 13:2).
 - c. Prayer and fasting secure divine guidance when facing spiritual decisions.

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How Will Fasting Help You

1. Naturally: More and more people are discovering the health benefits that may be derived from fasting. In fact, numerous articles and books have been written describing the physical cures and healing that have reportedly been the results of fasting.

While it is true that saints do not smoke, drink, or become addicted to barbiturates and drugs, the most of us tend to over eat. Saints, too often eat too much of the wrong foods. We also have poor eating habits, that is eating heavily late at night before retiring; consequently, it is little wonder that our systems respond favorably to a periodical rest.

2. Spiritually: Fasting sharpens ones "fine tuning" to the things of the spirit. It sharpens ones spiritual awareness, enabling him to better recognize the presence and leading of the Holy Ghost. It also opens the channels through which God's power flows more freely into ones life. Read Mark 9:29 and note that Jesus told his disciples that some demons can only be cast out when one has the power that comes by prayer and fasting.

Why Fast

1. Fasting secures God's results with God's blessings.
2. Fasting relieves heavy burdens (Isa. 58).
3. Wisdom was obtained through fasting (Dan. 10).
4. Revival came after fasting (Isa. 58:6).
5. God's protection from danger was secured through fasting (I Kings 21:27-29).
6. Healing for a sick loved one came after fasting (Psa. 35:13)
7. Inauguration of a great ministry followed fasting (Matt. 4:2).

INCREASE YOUR TIME WITH GOD. Worship, Bible Reading, prayer and mediation should be a major part of your day.

CRUCIFY THE FLESH. Abstain from secular entertainment such as television shows, secular publications, non-worship forms of music, excessive socializing, (Psalm 35:13, 69:10)

WORSHIP THE LORD. Cleansing your environment with worship and praise is important. Worship is also a means of bringing encouragement to you when the flesh begins to weaken. (Acts 13:2)

FOCUS. Fasting should be approached with some purpose or goal in mind. In this case, we are focusing on Preparing To Reap The Harvest, Equipping The Saints. We are praying that this congregation will experience a great explosion of growth as the Apostles did in Acts 2:41..."and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Acts 2:47..."and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

How Often Should You Fast

Every saint should have a personal consecration program which, of course, will include regular fasting and prayer. While it is true your fasting should be regular, it should not be so automatic, and "taken for granted" that you lose sight of your purpose.

Ordinarily, a saint should fast at least one day per week (many of us take Wednesday). Periodically, at least once or twice a year (usually your Pastor will direct you in this), it is important that you go on a three-day and night fast. The three-day fast will do something special for you. It is a glorious experience to receive the holy communion after having completed a three-day fast.

Occasionally, a saint will feel led of the Lord, or have a desire to go on an extended fast that is more than three days. This too may prove to be beneficial especially should the Lord direct it, but it would be wise for the saint to consult with the Pastor first. There are certain safeguards that should be observed when attempting an extended fast.