

FASTING

What Is Fasting?

“A temporary renunciation of something that is in itself good, like food, in order to intensify our expression of need for something greater, namely, God and his work in our lives.” -John Piper

Why People Fast, According to Scripture:

1. Intense Supplication Before God

Nehemiah heard about ruin of Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 1:4)

Jews learned about King Ahasuerus's decree that they were to be killed.
(Esther 4:3)

Daniel realized exile was nearly over. (Daniel 9:3)

2. Repentance & Humility

God orders people to repent and fast with weeping & mourning. (Joel 2:12)

Jewish people fast & repent under Samuel's leadership. (1 Samuel 7:6)

Ninevites repent with fasting due to word of Jonah. (Jonah 3:5)

David humbled himself. (Psalm 69:10; 35:13)

Ezra & Levites fasted and sought God's protection. (Ezra 8:21)

3. Grief

David & his men fasted over the deaths of Saul & Jonathan. (1 Samuel 1:12)

4. Worship

Anna worshipped with prayer and fasting. (Luke 2:37)

Church leaders in Antioch worshipped with fasting. (Acts 13:2)

***This period of fasting and prayer led to the mission of Paul & Barnabas.

5. Seeking Guidance

The early church chose and ordained elders through prayer & fasting.
(Acts 14:23)

Queen Esther sought God by fasting before going to the king. (Esther 4:16)

Israelites fasted when determining whether to go into battle. (Judges 20:26)

King Jehoshaphat fasted and sought the Lord for guidance. (2 Chron 20:3, 12)

6. Anticipation

Jesus: Disciples will fast when bridegroom is taken away. (Matt 9:14-17; Mark 2:20; Lk 5:35)

Why Should We Fast?

1. Focus on what we have, not on what we don't have
2. Exercise in self-discipline
3. Heightens spiritual & mental alertness and sense of God's presence
4. Expresses urgency and earnestness of prayers
5. Increases humility and sense of dependence on God
6. Reminder of sacrifices required by the Christian life
7. Communicate how much we want, need, and trust Jesus

Fasting Suggestions:

1. Skip one meal. If possible, spend time in prayer and study during the missed mealtime.
2. Skip two meals. This is a 24-hour fast (sundown to sundown). Eat dinner one evening, and don't eat again until dinner the next day.
3. Skip three meals. This is a 36-hour fast. Skip all meals for a full day and break your fast at breakfast the next morning.
4. Prior to fasting, determine your focus.
5. Set aside time for prayer, silence, and journaling.
6. If fasting is new to you, sip on fruit juice.

7. Fast regularly to reap the benefits of this spiritual practice.

8. Be patient with yourself as you pursue a new practice/discipline. God is gracious to you; be gracious to yourself!

*****Check with your doctor before fasting!

*****Drink plenty of water while fasting!

Celebrating God’s Goodness by Fasting & Feasting:

*Feast with gratitude, but don’t fall in love with the gift rather than the giver.

*Fast out of hunger for God himself, but don’t boast in your own self-discipline.

References:

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