



Fasting from a Biblical Perspective

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Definition of Fasting

- ▶ A Christian's **VOLUNTARY** abstinence from something for **spiritual** purposes.
 - ▶ Food
- ▶ Fasting can also be the **VOLUNTARY** denial of a **normal desire** for the sake of intense **spiritual** activity.
- ▶ Sacrifice is to give up something good for God's "better"
 - ▶ Other things or activities: social media, Watching TV, Spotify
 - ▶ Goal to re-enter positive things at end of fast to break the fast
- ▶ Fasting may be the first step in deliverance
 - ▶ What do you need to give up?
 - ▶ Alcohol, fornication, gambling, unnecessary spending, complaining, financial fast, eating out

Kinds of Fasts

- ▶ Normal
- ▶ Partial
- ▶ Absolute

Kinds of Fasts

- ▶ Normal- abstaining from all food but not water.
- ▶ Matthew 4:2- “After fasting forty days and forty nights, he [Jesus] was hungry.”
- ▶ Luke 4:2- He “ate nothing during those days.”
- ▶ *To abstain from food but to drink water is the most common kind of biblical fast.*



Kinds of Fasts

- ▶ Partial- limitation of the diet but not complete abstinence from food
 - ▶ Daniel 1:12- For ten days Daniel and three others had only “vegetables to eat and water to drink.”
 - ▶ Matthew 3:4- John the Baptist “food was locusts and wild honey.”
 - ▶ A partial fast involves eating significantly smaller portions of food than usual for a specified period and/or consuming only a few simple foods.

Kinds of Fasts

- ▶ Absolute- avoidance of all food and liquid, even water
 - ▶ Ezra 10:6- Ezra “ate no food and drank no water, because he continued to mourn over the unfaithfulness of the exiles.”
 - ▶ Esther 4:16- “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day.”
 - ▶ Acts 9:9- “For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.”

Fasting is expected (not required)

Matthew 6:2-7, 16-17

“And when you fast... (not if...)”

Compare to:

- ▶ Jesus' statements on giving (Matthew 6:2-3)
- ▶ Jesus' statements on praying (Matthew 6:5-7)
 - ✓ No biblical indication to stop giving, praying or fasting
 - ✓ Christians in the book of Acts fasted (9:9, 13:2, 14:23)

Jesus' Instructions on Fasting

▶ Matthew 6:16-18

- ▶ “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.”
 - Don't look like you are fasting
 - Don't look miserable.
 - Don't look like you are suffering.
 - Don't neglect your appearance.

Why Fast?

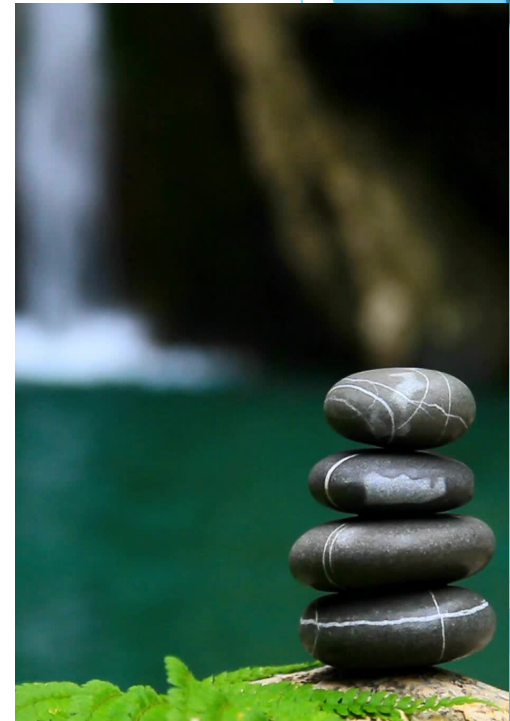
Spiritual Purposes of Fasting

For Spiritual Discipline

- Godly people are a disciplined people
- a holy people-set apart to God

To Strengthen Prayer

- Sharpens the edge of our intercession
- Gives passion to our supplications



Spiritual Purposes of Fasting

- ▶ **To Seek God's Guidance**
- ▶ (to discern the will of God clearly)
 - ▶ Acts 14:23
- ▶ Fasting does not ensure the certainty of receiving clear guidance from God.
- ▶ But it does make us more receptive to the One who loves to guide us.

Spiritual Purposes of Fasting

▶ To Express Grief

- ▶ 1 Samuel 31:13- Men of Jabesh Gilead fasted seven days after the death of King Saul and his sons at the hands of the Philistines.

Spiritual Purposes of Fasting

- ▶ **To Seek Deliverance or Protection**
- ▶ 2 Chronicles 20:3-4 - King Jehoshaphat, when informed that a large army was approaching, was afraid and “resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.”
- ▶ Ezra 8:21-23 - Ezra led the exiles in prayer and fasting to seek God’s protection on their journey.
- ▶ Esther 4:16 - Queen Esther called for a fast among all Jews as she prepared to go to King Xerxes uninvited to appeal to him for the protection of the Jews from mass extermination.

Spiritual Purposes of Fasting

- ▶ **To Express Repentance and the Return to God**
 - ▶ Joel 2:12 - “Even now, return to Me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.”
 - ▶ Jonah 3:5-8- “The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast...Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence.”

To Express Repentance and Return to God (a commitment to obedience and a new direction)

Fasting without repentance is in vain.

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Spiritual Purposes of Fasting

➤ To Humble Oneself Before God

- Judges 20:26 - Israelites fasted to express their grief for the forty thousand brothers they had lost in battle.
 - They sought the Lord and failed two times.
 - But they began to repent, seek God, and fast.
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- Fasting itself is not humility but should be an expression of humility.
 - Luke 18:12- Pharisee bragged to God that he fasted twice a week.

Spiritual Purposes of Fasting

- ▶ **To Express Concern for the Work of God**
 - ▶ Nehemiah 1: 3-4 - Despite the return of many Jewish exiles to Jerusalem, the city still had no wall to defend it. “They said to me, ‘Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace’...When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

Spiritual Purpose of Fasting

- ▶ What kind of fasting does God require?
- ▶ Isaiah 58:6-7
 - ▶ The people complained to God
 - ▶ Disobedience was the reason he had not heard them.
- God will not bless fasting (or any spiritual discipline) if we reject his Word regarding our relationships with others.

Spiritual Purpose of Fasting

- ▶ **To Overcome Temptation and Dedicate Yourself to God**
 - ▶ Matthew 4: 1-11
 - ▶ In times of exceptional temptation, exceptional measures are required.
 - ▶ Traveling, the effect of a new job on family, disappointment, despair, etc.



Spiritual Purpose of Fasting

▶ To Express Love and Worship to God

- ▶ Luke 2: 36-38- Godly woman devoted over half of a century, night and day, to a worship of God characterized by “fasting and prayer”.
- ▶ Disciplining yourself to fast means that you love God more than food, and that seeking him is more important than eating. It means your stomach is not your God as it is with some.

What if you falter?

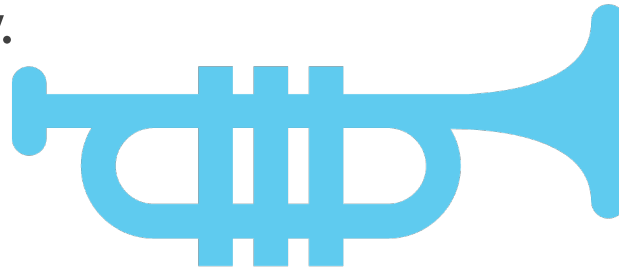
- ▶ Confess and repent
- ▶ Donnie McClurkin... Get back up again!
 - ▶ We mess up in all areas of life, but we don't stop shopping or recreation or eating;
 - ▶ Don't quit on God.

PREPARE FOR THE FAST!

NPBC Season of Consecration: Prayer and Fasting

▶ Congregational

- ▶ Joel 2:15-16- “Blow a trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly.”
- ▶ Acts 13:2- Part of the congregation at Antioch were fasting- “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting.”



Preparing for a Season of Prayer and Fasting

- ▶ 1. Ask God how God wants you to fast and pray.
- ▶ 2. Know that fasting is a spiritual discipline of sacrifice.
- ▶ 3. Do not expect everyone to get what you are doing
- ▶ 4. Do not make fasting and prayer complicated.
- ▶ 5. Ask a small group of mature Christians to pray for your resolve and strength as you fast and pray.
- ▶ 6. Pray for the spiritual strength and a mature spiritual mentality during the season of prayer and fasting.

While You are Praying and Fasting

- ▶ 1. Stay in the Word of God.
- ▶ 2. Surround yourself with intercessors, encouragers and life-speakers.
- ▶ 3. Fast and pray with a partner or small group of like-minded Christians.
- ▶ 4. Expect spiritual attack, distraction and opposition.
- ▶ 5. Do not fast and pray to compete, impress others, force the hand of God or for any selfish reasons.
- ▶ 6. Be intentional about praying as you fast.
- ▶ 7. Take note (journal) about what God is doing in, with, through and around you.
- ▶ 8. If you make a mistake, ask for forgiveness and start again.
- ▶ 9. Keep focused on Almighty God.
- ▶ 10. Expect God to move in your life.



Jesus' Promised Results

“And your Father, who
sees what is done in
secret, will reward you.”