

PRAYER AND FASTING

- *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*

What Is Fasting?

- One of the most powerful weapons of spiritual warfare that God has given to His children is fasting -- a way of crucifying the flesh or denying your flesh the basic sustenance of food. Although fasting will weaken you physically, it will highly enlighten you spiritually. ***It is important to note that fasting should be combined with prayer for utmost effectiveness.***

- Fasting is a form of spiritual discipline that informs God that you are serious about repentance. Fasting is a significant part of your Christian walk just as praying and reading the Bible is significant. Fasting is for everyone who desires to draw closer to God.

- When you fast, you do not have to give up just food; it can be anything of importance to you that is a sacrifice to give up. Whenever you fast, you need to pray and seek the Lord, otherwise you are just depriving your body of food and not getting in touch with what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell you.

- Although fasting is not commanded in the Bible, it is expected of all believers in their Christian walk, for Matthew 6:17-18 says "when you fast." Jesus did not say, "if you fast" but rather "when you fast"; therefore Jesus reveals through scripture that fasting is expected of us

Types of Fasts

- The ***Normal Fast*** involves abstaining from all solid and liquid food except for water.

- The ***Absolute Fast*** involves abstaining from both food and drink. You should never stay on this fast more than three days unless under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

- The ***Partial Fast*** involves abstaining from just certain foods. You can live on just certain foods during the duration of this fast such as bread and water, or you may choose to fast a certain meal each day.

- The ***Daniel Fast*** consists of fruits, vegetables, and water.

- The ***Juice Fast*** consists of fruit and vegetable juices only.

- The ***Television and Entertainment Fast*** involves setting aside television, radio, newspapers, and other forms of entertainment to seek the Lord.

- The ***Water, Honey, & Lemon Fast*** is considered a cleansing fast. Squeeze $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon in a cup of hot water and add honey to add flavor. This recipe can be used for an extended fast.

Reasons for fasting

- The prophet Isaiah writes: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"

Isaiah 58:6-7

Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

- Isaiah 58:6-7

Thus, there are 7 reasons for fasting according to Isaiah 58:6-7, and they are as follows:

1. *To bring justice*

2. *To undo heavy burdens and break the yoke of bondage*

3. *To free the oppressed and loose the bands of wickedness*

4. *To share food*

5. To provide shelter for the poor

6. To clothe the naked

7. To provide for one's family

- However, there are several other reasons for fasting:

- To Mourn and Repent
- "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.

I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled."

Daniel 10:2-3

(Also see Esther 4:3; Isaiah 58:5; Joel 2:12-13; Zechariah 7:5)

- To Receive God's Instructions

"And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments."

Exodus 34:28

(Also see Acts 9:9-12; Acts 13:2)

- To Resist the Devil's Temptations

"Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (lack of self resistance)."

I Corinthians 7:5
(Also see Luke 4:1-2)

- Due to Lack of Food

"And he (Elijah) arose, and did eat and drink, and went in strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God."

I Kings 19:8

- For Health and Healing

"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, 'Here I am'."

Isaiah 58:8

(Also see Psalm 35:13)

- **For Spiritual Power to Cast Out Demons**

"And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour."

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

And Jesus said unto them, 'Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.'
Matthew 17:18-21

People in the Bible that fasted

- Jesus 40 days; Matthew 4:2
- Moses 40 days; Deuteronomy 9:9,18-19
Exodus 34:27-28
- Elijah 40 days; I Kings 19
- Daniel 21 days; Daniel 9
- Paul, prisoners, and Roman troops 14 days; Acts 27:33
- David 7 days; II Samuel 12:16-20

Esther 3 days; Esther 4

Saul 3 days; Acts 9:9-12

Nehemiah----- Nehemiah 1:4; Exodus 34:27-28

Christians from Antioch----- Acts 13:1-3; Acts
14:23

John the Baptist's Disciples----- Mark 2:18

The people of Nineveh----- Jonah 3:5-10

Apostles, elders, and church members-----
II Corinthians 6:4-5

Preparation

- The first thing you need to do before you fast is set a definite time period for your fast. Will your fast be 1 meal, 3 days, 7 days, 21 days, 40 days?

- The second thing you need to do is decide which type of fast you will undertake. Will it be a normal fast, a Daniel fast, or perhaps a television and entertainment fast?

- If you are going on a prolonged fast, please don't begin your fast immediately but rather gradually cut your food intake back and then begin your fast. Also cease drinking caffeine products a few days before you start a prolonged fast so you can get over the withdrawal headaches before you start.

Precautions

- Drink warm water instead of cold and do not drink too much water at one time. Do not drink milk, coffee, or other beverages during the fast for this will be considered dieting and not fasting. (Follow these procedures on all types of fasts except the absolute fast.)

- Do not take excessively hot baths during a prolonged fast; for this may cause dizziness. However, take a bath regularly during your fast because fasting causes many impurities to be secreted through the pores of your skin thus causing an odor.

- Do not engage in excessive work or exercise.

- Walk, read, pray, and worship during mealtimes to overcome temptations.

Some Symptoms You May Experience

- **1. *Headache***
- **2. *Nausea***
- **3. *Low fever***
- **4. *Sleeplessness***
- **5. *Stomach pains***

If you have any of these symptoms do not take medication for them.

Three phases of a prolonged fast:

- ***Phase 1***- Craving food
- ***Phase 2***- Feeling weak and faint for 2-3 days or even longer.
- ***Phase 3***- Growing stronger and no longer having concern about food.

Breaking the fast

- Breaking the fast is the most difficult period after the fast; it requires discipline and self-control. If you fast for 40 days, then you should allow your body an adequate period of time to recover so you will be able to resume your regular diet.

- Start with some vegetable and fruit juices a little at a time and maybe a cup of watered-down soup. The following day, start to drink juices and increase the thickness of the soup. Continue to do this until you gradually begin to build yourself back up.

Final Thought

- If our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ could fast for 40 days and 40 nights while in human form, couldn't we do the same?