

Keys to Experiencing God

Part 3—A Call to Fast

July 6, 2014

Why Fasting?

Jesus Fasted

- Luke 4:1-2

People Who Heard and Received from God Fasted

- Moses—Exodus 34:27-28
- The multitudes who followed Jesus—Matthew 15:32

People Who Mourned Fasted

- David mourned the death of Saul and Jonathan—2 Samuel 1:11-12
- Nehemiah mourned the condition of Jerusalem—Nehemiah 1:4

People Who Sought Mercy and Repentance Fasted

- Personally
 - David—2 Samuel 12:16
 - Ahab—1 Kings 21:27
- Corporately
 - Samuel—1 Samuel 7:5-6

People Who Sought God's Help and Intervention Fasted

- Esther—Esther 4:16
- Daniel—Daniel 9:3

People Who Sought Healing and Deliverance Fasted

- Hannah—1 Samuel 1:7
- Jesus healed an epileptic, and demon-possessed boy—Matthew 17:21

People Who Sought Guidance

- Paul and Barnabas—Acts 13:2-3
- Early church leaders—Acts 14:23

Why Fast Now?

- There is scriptural precedent for corporate fasts called by leadership in specific circumstances.
 - King Jehoshaphat when Judah came under attack—2 Chronicles 20:1-3
 - The King of Nineveh—Jonah 3:5

- Ezra and the people fasted to prepare for a four-month journey back to Jerusalem, and also for direction and protection—Ezra 8:32–23
- Joel called for a fast for the people to repeat as a result of God’s call to return to Him—Joel 1:14; 2:12, 15–16
- Corporate fasts have the power to unite people in a God’s vision
 - Peter and Cornelius—Acts 10:9–16; 19–22 and 30–33
- There are scriptural directives for a leader to call a fast, and for God to speak individually to people fasting, and bring them together for a larger purpose and vision. Who knows, if we will submit to fasting and praying, what heavenly unity the Lord may bring to unite our hearts and minds?

Scriptural Tips for Fasting

- Andrew Murray wrote, “Prayer needs fasting for its full growth. Prayer is the one hand with which we grasp the invisible. Fasting is the other hand, the one with which we let go of the visible.”¹
 - Purpose of fasting:
 - Focused and centered upon God—God focused, initiated and ordained.
 - It is searching for Him with no other objective to manipulate or control
 - It is a desire to seek Him, find him and center upon Him
 - Secondary benefits:
 - Fasting reveals the things that control us—it brings sin to the surface
 - Fasting reminds us how we are sustained—we feast on the Word during a time of fasting
- Jentezen Franklin wrote, “Fasting is not just a physical discipline, it can be a spiritual feast. Once you “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8), your hunger for more of His presence eclipses the limitation of your understanding.”²
 - Fasting increases concentration and effectiveness in prayer
 - Fasting provides guidance in decisions—clearer revelation from God
 - Fasting opens the door to deliverance from bondage, physical healing and personal well-being.
 - Fasting brings revival
- Warnings and Wrong Motives:
 - Richard Foster wrote, “Whenever there is a form devoid of spiritual power, law will take over because law always carries with it a sense of security and manipulative power. Biblical fasting always centers on spiritual purposes.”³
 - Not a tool to manipulate God—We are not manipulating God through our work. Fasting breaks us and helps you grow in faith. We are not “twisting God’s arm” when we fast. We are not going to make him do anything He does not want to do. What we are doing is positioning ourselves and preparing our hearts for what is to come.
 - Not to obtain merit or have sins forgiven—Jesus blood cleanses us. However, fasting can raise our awareness of our sins and bring them to the surface so we can repent.

¹ Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, (Whitaker House Publishers, 2008), 57

² Jentezen Franklin, *Fasting: Opening the Door to a Deeper, More Intimate, More Powerful Relationship with God*, (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2008), 56

³ Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 1978, 1988, 1998), 47, 49

- Fasting is not a Christian diet—if we are just doing it to lose weight, that’s just starvation. A fast centers on prayer, worship, and the Word.
- Do not fast to be noticed by others—Do it privately, not drawing attention to yourself. (Jesus talks about this in Matt. 6:16-18) There are corporate fasts, but even then it’s not a show about ourselves.

Practical Tips for Fasting

- Have a clear goal in mind
- Prepare spiritually (repent, forgiveness).
- Decide which type of fast:
 - Partial Fast (example: Daniel 10): fruits and veggies only (no meat, sweets, breads) and water only
 - Normal Fast: water only (this can last up to 40 days), consider health: pregnancy, diabetic, and other health issues.
 - Absolute Fast: only for short periods (1-3 days), depending on your health, consult medical history and perhaps advice from a physician if you are uncertain about your health.
 - Specific Fast: giving up a specific food, drink, or activity for a period of time
- Decide how long you want to fast. Beginners need to work their way up to a major fast. Try a one day fast, and then build to longer ones.
- What to expect during a fast:
 - We should not stock up before a fast, especially a longer one. Tapering off leading up to a long fast is a wise choice.
 - People can expect headaches, irritability, and hunger pains. Our body is probably having withdrawals from caffeine and sugar! Our body is detoxifying if we are fasting for several days.
 - Get lots of rest and exercise more moderately. We may feel weakness or dizziness especially with sudden adjustments in position. Be careful, move slowly, and hang in there!
- How to end a fast—Don’t overeat once the fast is completed. The stomach has shrunk and we need to build back up to a normal meal. Eat slowly with smaller portions and snacks.

Discussion Questions

1. As you read the list of biblical examples of people who fasted, how does it help you understand the need for fasting?
2. There are several reasons for fasting listed in the biblical examples. Which ones could have the most meaning for you? Why?
3. After reading these scriptures, why do you think it’s important to personally fast? Why is it important for a corporate fast?
4. What are some reasons why prayer and fasting are so intertwined? How could your prayer life be enriched by occasionally fasting?
5. How do you think fasting could help deliver people from the evil that has come into this world?
6. How could fasting help you to pray that the Son of God would be glorified in the church and our nation?
7. How could fasting help your prayers to focus on the Holy Spirit and a national awakening and revival?