

## Section 14 Fasting

### I. Purpose and Results of Fasting

A. Isaiah 58:6-7, 8-11 provides a list of the purpose of fasting.

1. To loose the bonds of wickedness.
2. Undo the heavy burdens.
3. Let the oppressed go free.
4. Break the yoke.
5. To bring an awareness of the plight of hunger, poor and naked.

B. To produce faith (Matthew 17:14-21).

Jesus rebuked the disciples for their inability to cast out the devil. Their inability was linked to unbelief. He then told them how to have faith by prayer and fasting. The lack of power was not on God's part, but on the disciples. Apparently, the disciples took Jesus' teaching to heart. The scriptures reveal later that the disciples did possess the power (through God) that miracles could be performed (Acts 3).

C. Deny Self

1. One's desires must be brought under subjection (Galatians 6:8). Jesus commanded a disciple to ". . . deny himself, and take up his cross . . ." (Matthew 16:24).<sup>137</sup>
2. If one can not deny himself of food, what other desires will he not be able to resist! Fasting enables one to develop a habit of saying: **no**.

D. Results of fasting (Isaiah 58:8-14)

1. Light shall break forth as the morning.
2. His health shall spring forth speedily.
3. Righteousness shall go before him.
4. The glory of the Lord shall follow him.
5. (Special Status) When he calls, the Lord will answer and say, "Here am I".
6. The Lord will guide the individual that fasts.
7. The Lord will satisfy the soul.
8. If he removes ungodly ways from his life, God will bless and honor him.

## II. Examples of those who fasted and related Scriptures.

### A. Old Testament

1. Moses (Exodus 24:18; 34:28 Deuteronomy 9:9, 18) fasted forty days.
2. Elijah (I Kings 19:8).
3. Daniel 10:2, 3; Nehemiah 1:4.
4. City of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5).
5. Joel 2:12-15. It should be noted that there are private (Individual) and public (congregation's) fasts.

### B. Fasting in the Gospels

1. Matthew 6:16. Jesus endorsed fasting when He said "When ye fast", not "If ye fast" (also Matthew 9:14-15).
2. John the Baptist's disciples (Matthew 9:14).
3. Anna - Luke 2:37.
4. Jesus - Matthew 4:2.

### C. Fasting in Acts

1. Cornelius - Acts 10:1-6
2. Paul and disciples - Acts 9:9; 13:2-3; 14:23; 27:9.

### D. Fasting In the Epistles

1. I Corinthians 7:5 - Husband and wife
2. II Corinthians 6:5; 11:27

## III. There is a Price Tag

### A. Window shopping or a serious buyer

1. Many People go through malls viewing the new merchandise each year. They are impressed with the appearance, and talk about the new items. But there is one thing that keeps the merchandise in the store instead of in their homes the PRICE.
2. But there are others who view the same merchandise and mist pay the same price to have It. They desire It so much they force themselves to do without other Items so they can save enough money and buy the new merchandise.

3. Most church people are just spiritual window shoppers. They talk about revival. They dream of miracles. But they are not willing to pay the price. Jesus taught that there were great works that would never be experienced but by prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:14-21).
4. To experience the deep things of God requires sacrifice.

#### B. Paul's teaching

1. Paul taught for converts to follow him as he followed Christ (I Corinthians 11:1).
2. At first that might sound exciting, following Paul through many miracles. But there were more than miracles on Paul's journey. There were experiences of stonings, beatings, shipwreck, perils, weariness, and fastings often (II Corinthians 11:23-28).

#### C. Today's converts

1. The deep calleth to the deep (Psalm 107:23-24; 42:7).
2. Whatever one desires of God, he can have. But there is a price. Elisha desired a double portion of Elijah's spirit. But the fulfillment of that desire required sacrifice on his part. He had to follow and press ahead, even when there were opportunities to sit down and rest (II Kings 2:1-13).

#### IV. Practical Guide: to Fasting

##### A. How often?

1. Believers should have a regular scheduled fast day at least once a week.
2. Once a year there should be an extended fast of two to seven days. Ministers should participate in a minimum of three or four extended fasts a year.

##### B. Health conditions

Some guidelines on fasting concerning health can be found in The Practical Encyclopedia on Natural Healing , New, Revised Edition by Mark Bricklin. Related chapters on fasting and natural healing are Informative.

1. Some health conditions may prohibit extended fast. It is not recommended for pregnant women to go on extended fast.
2. However, the health issue should not be offered as an excuse unless it is legitimate. As a matter of fact, fasting is healthful in most cases. Doctors will at times recommend a fast to clean the body of poisons.
3. If health prohibits extended fasting, God will honor whatever sacrifices for Him, if it is just a meal.

##### C. Drinking water

1. Drinking water is recommended, especially on extended fast.
2. The purpose of a fast is not to destroy, but to deny the body. The drinking of water prevents harm to the body, and also serves as a carrier to transmit poisons out of the body.

3. During a fast, the soul and body can benefit by the flushing out of impurities.
4. The drinking of water keeps a vital organ, as the kidneys operative. Also, it is easier on the digestive system when breaking a fast if water has been drank.
5. To those who feel the drinking of water is pampering the flesh, consider this. On an extended fast one will have to almost force themselves to drink a quart of water a day. The desire for water will not be a strong factor, and the one fasting will disdain the taste of water. But for good health, at least a quart of water should be drank, even if one has to slowly force it down.

#### D. Beware of Bad Breath

1. An Empty stomach produces a horrible odor
2. If there will be contact with other people, gum or breath mints should be used. Concern over violating a fast by chewing gum should not be considered. For just like water, gum and mints soon become distasteful on an extended fast.

#### E. Seclusion

1. In the Bible, those who participated in an extended fast did so in isolated areas.
2. Moses and Jesus both went to the mountains for their forty-day fast.
3. One reason is to be as physically inactive as possible. Of course, when one has a public job, this is almost impossible. One should not allow the enemy to belittle them because they may not be able to go on a thirty day fast. God considers each one's unique position in life. There are some who can get away for thirty days and not have to participate in any physical exertion. Not to take away from that individual. But the sacrifice of someone who is fasting seven days and must continue laboring at their place of employment may be equivalent!
4. Unless the Lord just impresses an individual with a fast at a specific time, an extended fast should be planned around work load. For example, instead of fasting Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday; why not begin an extended fast after the lunch break on Friday, and end it with lunch break Monday. Three days are still fasted, but over a less hostile situation. And plan the week end to be as "physically inactive as possible when fasting. The weekend designated for tilling the garden is not the one to pick for an extended fast! It would be wise for a Pastor who calls for extended church fasting to consider the idea of weekend fasting.
5. During an extended fast, that is not the time to become involved in emotional issues. Contrary to what one thinks, an individual is more irritable during extended fast than normal. This is not because they are less spiritual, but because the stomach is empty! And no one performs well when they are hungry. The spiritual benefits of the fast usually occur after the fast, not during it.

6. One enters the fast anticipating a time of spiritual renewing and in-depth study of God's Word. However, due to physical weakness, agonizing prayer may not be possible until after the fast.

F. Areas of cautions spiritually and physically

1. A note of caution, after fasting, do not think you are spiritually stronger than you are (I Corinthians 10:12).
2. There is a danger of falling when one overestimates his strength and underestimates the strength of the enemy. God must still fight the battle if the victory is to be won.
3. In the physical realm, a word of caution also. If possible, avoid heights and getting up quickly. Dizzy spells and black-outs are sometimes associated with extended fasting.

G. Ending an extended fast

1. A fast should be broken gradually. Be aware of over-Indulgence. Terrible stomach pain can result from not ending a fast properly.
2. Soup, crackers, warm jello juice, etc. should be eaten after a fast. It is better to eat several light meals. That method is much more beneficial than sitting down and trying to catch up all at once on a lack of food.

V. Conclusion

1. God is just as powerful today as He ever was (Hebrews 13:8). The question is not "Where is the God of Elijah?" but "Where are the Elijah's of God?" (II Kings 2:14). The language of the scripture is still "If my people will, then I will (I Chronicles 7:14). Nothing moves heaven, or changes the individual like prayer and fasting.
2. Although it was not covered, fasting can involve more than food. Remember fasting is about the concept of denying one's self. To many fasting technologies would be more difficult than fasting food. As Paul said, some things are lawful but may not necessarily be expedient and you should not be brought under the power of such things. (I Corinthians 6:12)