



“WHEN YOU FAST...”

Fasting Seminar, 10/27/2019

CHRIST'S CALL TO FAST

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

MATTHEW 6:16-18

“Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

MATTHEW 9:14-15

WORKING DEFINITION OF FASTING

Fasting is the denial of some worldly, time-consuming good for a period of time in order to be able to more intentionally commune with God in prayer and His Word for a specific purpose.

“(Fasting) is a means to the end of abiding, deep, and personal communion with the triune God of grace through prayer....*Fasting is an aid and help in prayer.*”

Daniel R. Hyde, ***WHY SHOULD I FAST?***

“The Bible presents fasting as a way of getting time and space to commune with God.

That is the ultimate aim of it.

It's not to build up credit; it's not to be a lever. God I've done this, now you deliver the goods. It's the way of a Christian saying I need more time with my Savior, I need more time with my Bible.

What can I cut out of my life to give me that opportunity?”

David Murray, **“IS FASTING APPROPRIATE FOR CHRISTIANS TODAY?”**

Video available at www.christianity.com

REASONS FOR FASTING

“Holy and lawful fasting has three objectives. We use it either to weaken and subdue the flesh that it may not act wantonly, or that we may be better prepared for prayers and holy meditations, or that it may be a testimony of our self-abasement before God when we wish to confess our guilt to him.”

John Calvin, *INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, VOL. 2, 4.12.15*

1. GREATER INTIMACY AND DEPTH OF RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD.

- a. Repentance unto restoration
- b. Spiritual dryness
- c. Growth in maturity
- d. Remembrance of the goodness and displayed love of God
- e. Longing for the return of Christ
- f. Grieving death and/or the effects of sin

2. GROWTH IN BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE.

- a. To answer a question for yourself or someone else
- b. To address areas of doubt or confusion
- c. Discipleship / Ministry opportunities

3. PURSUIT OF BIBLICAL WISDOM FOR A PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCE.

- a. Direction for an important decision
- b. Insight to grant to someone else
- c. To pursue or grant forgiveness

4. PLEADING WITH THE LORD FOR A PARTICULAR SITUATION.

- a. Healing
- b. Relational restoration
- c. Evangelism / Mission
- d. Provision
- e. Protection / Deliverance

5. PREPARATION IN THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR A GIVEN SEASON.

- a. Temptation / Mortification
- b. Transition
- c. Ministry opportunities
- d. To humble the flesh

THE LOGISTICS OF FASTING

“It’s interesting that Jesus gives us no command regarding how often or how long we should fast. Just like all the other Spiritual Disciplines, fasting is not to be a legalistic routine. **It is a privilege and an opportunity to seek God’s grace that is open to us as often as we should desire.**”

Donald S. Whitney, ***SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE***

The Bible gives very little instruction when it comes to fasting which allows us to creatively pursue communion with God through fasting in a variety of ways. This allows us to set up some banks of the river in wisdom to help us participate in this means of grace to grow in dependence on the Lord.

FREQUENCY:

-Somewhere between “Never” and avoiding doing harm to either our bodies or relationships with those around us.

-Good opportunities include congregational fasts, key events in the life of the church, key milestones or opportunities in the life of your family, key moments in local and national life for but a few examples.

LENGTH:

-Somewhere between 1 day and 40 days from biblical examples, however, this is not law and can be creatively applied in examples such as exchanging a particular meal per day for a period of time in order to have extended prayer time or beginning on part of one day and concluding on part of the other.

-The real issue is not the specific length but whether the reason for fasting was achieved.

OBJECT TO FAST FROM:

-Somewhere between something you think you can’t live without and something you prefer not to live without on a regular basis

-It should be something that affects your affections such as food, sex, technology, sports, exercise, etc.

PREPARATION TO FAST:

-Fasting requires a proactive and purposed plan to help achieve the purpose intended.

-You should have a clear reason for fasting with associated resources gathered and particular plan for when, where, and what you will pray for and/or study and how you will resist the object you are fasting from.

-You should be sure to be rested up and adequately nourished for the task at hand.

-Avoid choosing times/seasons that will cause frustration in those around you or draw attention to your fast in an unhealthy way such as someone’s celebratory event or gathering.

PREPARATION TO BREAK FAST:

-You should proactively break your fast so as to specifically celebrate your communion with God in prayer.

-You should avoid overindulging in the breaking of your fast choosing to re-introduce the object fasted from with self-control so as not to cause discomfort and guilt.

CHART OF BIBLICAL PASSAGES ON FASTING

SEEKING WISDOM/DIRECTION	PURSuing REPENTANCE	GRIEVING DEATH/DESTRUCTION	SEEKING PROTECTION	REMEMBRANCE	PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY	INSTRUCTIONS FOR FASTING
Judges 20:24-28: Israel in dealing w/ Benjamin	Leviticus 16:29-34 (cf. 23:26-32): Prep for the Day of Atonement	1 Samuel 31:8-13/1 Chronicles 10:8-14: The Death of Jonathan and Saul	Ezra 8:21-23: Return to Jerusalem	Esther 9:29-32: Festival of Purim	Deut. 9:9: Moses to Receive the Law	Matthew 6:16-18: Not w/ Outward Show
2 Chronicles 20:1-4: Jehoshaphat in preparing for war	Deut. 9:18: Moses for the Sins of the People	2 Samuel 1: See above	Psalms 69: Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies	Jeremiah 36:1-10: Tangential Reference	Isaiah 58: Serving the Poor	Matthew 9:14-17: Not When the Bridegroom is Present
1 Corinthians 7:5: Sexual fast within marriage for a particular purpose	1 Samuel 7:3-11: Worship of Foreign Gods	2 Samuel 12:1-24: Consequence of David's Sin w/ Bathsheba	Daniel 6:16-28: King Darius for Daniel	Zechariah 8:18-19: Monthly Fasts Associated w/ Cheerful Feasts	Matthew 4:1-2: Jesus in Preparation for Being Tempted	
	2 Samuel 12:1-24: Consequence of David's Sin w/ Bathsheba	Nehemiah 1: The Condition of Jerusalem			Luke 2:36-38: Anna for the Coming of the Lord	
	1 Kings 21:17-29: Ahab over the threat of God's judgment for the death of Naboth	Esther 4:1-3: The Decreed Destruction of the Jews			Acts 13:1-3: The Choosing and Sending of Paul and Barnabas	
	Ezra 9: Marriage to foreign wives	Psalms 35: Affliction from Enemies			Acts 14:19-23: The Choosing of Elders	
	Nehemiah 9: Same as above	Psalms 109: Grief Over Accusers				
	Daniel 9, 10:1-3: Daniel Confessing on Behalf of Israel					
	Joel 1 and 2: Unknown communal sin					
	Jonah 3: Nineveh Repents in Response to the Word					