

FASTING – a believer’s voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes

Oftentimes, PRAYER is associated with a few other spiritual disciplines in the Bible. Things like:
Humiliation – seen in people covering themselves with ashes, putting on sackcloth, beating their breast
Celebration – things like the Feasts, Festivals, Construction of the Temple
FASTING – one of the MAIN things Prayer is associated with.

TYPES OF FASTING – in keeping with the Disciplines, there are both Private and Public Fasts in the Bible

Generally in the Bible, the Scriptural fast involved abstaining from all food – whether solid or liquid, but not water.

Partial Fast – Daniel 1:12; 10:3 – abstained from delicacies; John the Baptist – Matt. 3:4 – locusts and wild honey

Absolute Fast – neither eat, nor drink water – Ezra 10:6; Esther 4:16; Paul – Acts 9:9

Supernatural Fast – Deut. 9:9 – Moses – “I ate no bread and drank no water”; I Kings 19:8

Private Fast – Matt. 6:16-18

Public (Congregational) Fast – Joel 2:15-16; II Chron. 20:1-4 (Jehoshaphat); Jonah 3:5-8 (king of Nineveh); Ezra – 4:16; 8:21-23; Nehemiah 9:1

Leadership Fast – Acts 13:1-3

Regular Fast (only ONE required as under the O.T. LAW) - Lev. 16:29-31; 23:27 – the Day of Atonement

History of Biblical Fasting

SOME EXAMPLES OF OLD TESTAMENT FASTING: Moses, Nehemiah, Ezra, David, King Jehoshaphat, Elijah, Isaiah, Joel, Daniel, Esther, Anna the Prophetess, 4 annual Fasts instituted in Babylon as recorded by Zechariah – Zech. 8:19

NEW TESTAMENT PEOPLE WHO FASTED

Jesus – Matt. 4:2; Luke 4:2 – 40 days	His Disciples	The Jews of Jesus’ day – Matt. 6
John the Baptist	Peter	Paul
The Church Leaders – Acts 13		

Fasting under the New Covenant

Regular fasting has had such a profound effect on so many Christians that they have searched the New Testament to find a clear Biblical command requiring regular fasting to be commanded to all believers.

Jesus said... “WHEN you fast...” – Matt. 6:16-18 - does it mean that we still should?? Or was he speaking to Jews?

“And then they will fast” – Matt. 9:15; note – his disciples did fast after he ascended – Acts 13:1-3

Paul – in fastings often – II Cor. 11:27; Paul’s instruction to married couples – I Cor. 7:5

Catholic Church – strongly encouraged and frequently cited

Some have said of John Wesley that in keeping with the practice of the Pharisees (Luke 18:12), he fasted every Wednesday and Friday, and urged all believers to do so. It is said that he would not ordain a man who didn't!

NOTE: There is no prescribed frequency or duration for fasting – that is why it is difficult to classify as a command

U.S. History – early Presidents & Congress proclaimed National Fasts – Presidents John Adams, Madison, Lincoln (3)

REASONS TO FAST

1. To focus on God as an accompaniment to prayer and meditation
2. To obey God (for those who believe it is a Biblical command)
3. To humble ourselves and receive revelation concerning the things that control us – Ps. 69:10
4. To remind us of God's sustenance (Matt. 4:4; Col. 1:17) and that the will of God is our true FOOD – John 4:32-34
5. To learn to master our bodies and its appetites – I Cor. 6:12; 9:27; Psalm 35:13)

NOTE: You are to be master of your stomach, not its slave.