

WHEN YOU FAST

Matthew 6:16-18

Fasting is an element of spiritual discipline that should be seriously considered by all Christians.

I. THE PRACTICE OF FASTING

A. DEFINITION:

- A Biblical fast involves a specific time with a particular purpose whereby you fervently seek the Lord.

B. DESIGNATION

1. In Matthew 6:16 Jesus said “whenever you fast” > He assumed that they would
2. Jesus’ goal is to remedy the misuse of fasting but not to encourage its disuse

C. DISTINCTION

1. Biblical fasting is always associated with prayer
2. If you’re not disciplined to pray you’re not ready to fast

II. SOME REASONS FOR FASTING

A. PRIMARY REASONS

1. An expression of **repentance** and preparation for revival
 - a. An overview - Nehemiah 1:4-11 (see also Daniel 9:1-19)
 - b. Repentance - Nehemiah 9:1-3
 - See also I Sam. 7:6; I Kings 21:27 and Jonah 3:5-10
 - c. Revival - Joel 2:12-13
2. Seeking **guidance** when contemplating important decisions or commitments
 - a. When Esther was going before the king - Esther 4:15-17
 - b. When the leaders and church at Antioch were commissioning missionaries - Acts 13:1-3
 - c. When churches were considering Elders - Acts 14:23

B. SECONDARY REASONS

1. An expression of sorrow - II Samuel 1:11-12 and Esther 4:3
2. When interceding for the sick - II Samuel 12:15-16 and Psalm 35:13-14
3. To set your heart on understanding - Daniel 10:2-3, 12

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III. SOME BENEFITS OF FASTING

- A. COMMUNICATING A CONCERN FOR REVIVAL - Nehemiah 1:1-11
- B. EXPRESSING DEPENDENCE - Esther 4:15-17
- C. HEIGHTENING SPIRITUAL ALERTNESS - Daniel 9:3
- D. GIVING MORE ATTENTION TO PRAYER - Luke 2:37
 - 1. Anna served night and day with fastings and prayer
 - 2. When fasting you can use the time you would normally give to preparing and eating a meal to prayer and supplication
- E. DEVELOPING SELF-DISCIPLINE - I Corinthians 9:27
 - Paul indicated that his goal was to make his body his slave

IV. SOME PROHIBITIONS REGARDING FASTING

- A. NO PRIDE ALLOWED - Matthew 6:16-18
- B. LEGALISM IS FORBIDDEN - Luke 18:12
- C. MANIPULATING GOD MUST NEVER BE THE GOAL - Isaiah 58:3
- D. INSINCERITY IS NOT ACCEPTABLE - Jeremiah 14:10-12

CONCLUSION:

God is pleased when we give up food for a specific time and purposely, humbly, righteously and fervently seek Him in prayer.