

VIII. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING FASTING

1. Have the Right Attitude

- a. Sole purpose is to commune with God. Not a ritual.
- b. Beware of the Warnings Concerning Fasting
 - i. No Cherishing of Sin [Isaiah 58; Zechariah 7]
 - ii. Not to Impress Others [Matthew 6:16-18]
 - iii. Not a Meritorious Work [1 Corinthians 8:8]

2. Plan Properly

- a. *Set a Time.* Set aside time *fully* for the task of reading, meditating on God's word and prayer. Reading a good devotional book can also be of great benefit. Avoid fasting on a work-day or when you are taking care of other family matters. Biblical examples reveal people not being distracted by other tasks when spending time in fasting.
- b. *Determine the Duration.* Decide how long of a fast. ½ day or full day [skipping breakfast/lunch] or more [skipping breakfast, lunch and dinner]. If you have never fasted before, start with a half-day fast [e.g. skip breakfast] and then progress.
- c. *Decide on the Type of Fast.* Decide if it will be a total fast [no food and water]; normal fast [no food] or partial fast [light food]. Take your health into consideration when making this decision.
- d. *Carefully End the Fast.* When you break a fast, especially if it is a day-long or more, drink a lot of liquids, eat a small meal and then slowly get back to regular quantity of food.

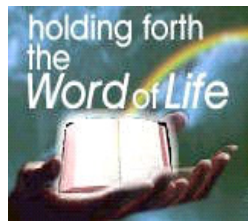
3. Encourage Others

- a. *Church.* Be present when the Church comes together to fast.
- b. *Family.* Fast and pray together as a couple. If children are present, encourage them to be a part of this spiritual discipline as well. The Bible gives examples of families fasting together [Ezra 8:21-23].
- c. *Individual Believers.* Get together with another fellow-believer for a time of fasting.

Conclusion

Common thread in biblical fasting is this: God is the center and man in humility looking to God alone for all of his needs. Therefore, at the core, the purpose of fasting is God-Centered; i.e., God is the One who gets the glory by man humbling himself to draw closer to God through the act of fasting.

I pray this overview will have stirred your heart to make fasting as a part of your own spiritual growth. I hope the question will not be, "Should I fast?" Rather, may it be, "How often can I humble myself with fasting and seek to be drawn closer to God?"



GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

of Windsor

*For we are not proclaiming ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves because of Jesus.
(2 Corinthians 4:5)*

8 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONCERNING BIBLICAL FASTING *A Short Overview*

Introduction

Fasting for the most part is a spiritual discipline that is hardly mentioned or practiced by many bible-believing Christians.

The general thinking of many concerning fasting can be broadly categorized as follows:

- A. It is an Old Testament practice that is no longer applicable to the Church.
- B. It is sort of a works-based system that could corrupt grace.
- C. It is a form of asceticism.
- D. It is harmful to the body.

While the above list is not all-exhaustive, it captures the general thought process concerning fasting.

Since many have not been taught clearly about this subject, a general lack of clarity exists among many biblical Christians concerning this subject. Is fasting really something that Christians should practice? Is this something that is really beneficial? I hope to answer these and other questions in this short overview by asking and answering 8 questions regarding this subject.

I hope by the end of this overview the Spirit of God would convince you as he has convinced me that fasting is indeed a wonderful spiritual discipline that should be practiced by all Christians.

Let's begin.....

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I. DEFINITION OF FASTING

“Fasting is a voluntary act of abstaining from food for a given period of time for the sake of drawing closer to God through the reading and meditating of God’s word and through prayer.”

II. REASONS FOR FASTING

1. Old Testament

- a. Commanded Fast [Leviticus 23:27; Day of Atonement]

2. New Testament

- a. Implied by Jesus [Matthew 6:16-18 and 9:14-15]
- b. Practiced by Apostles [Acts 13:1-3; 14:23]

III. TYPES OF FASTING

1. Absolute Fast (Absence of Food and Water)

- a. Supernatural [40 days and 40 nights]
 - i. Moses [Deuteronomy 9:9; 18; Exodus 34:28]
 - ii. Elijah [1 Kings 19:8]
- b. Natural [3 days and 3 nights]
 - i. Jewish People [Esther 4:15–17]
 - ii. Paul [Acts 9:9]

2. Normal Fast [Absence of Food only]

- a. David [2 Samuel 12:16–23]
- b. Christ [Matthew 4:2]

3. Partial Fast [Abstinence from certain Foods]

- a. Daniel [Daniel 10:3]
- b. John the Baptist [Matthew 3:4]

IV. DURATION OF FASTING

1. 40 days [Moses, Deuteronomy 9:9; Jesus, Matthew 4:2]
2. 21 days [Daniel, Daniel 10:3]
3. 7 days [David, 2 Sam 12:16–23]
4. 3 days [Paul, Acts 9:9]
5. Full/Partial day [Jews, Nehemiah 9:1–3]
6. Overnight [Darius, Daniel 6:18]
7. Indefinite Period [Church at Antioch, Acts 13:1–3]

V. MANNER OF FASTING

1. Public

- a. Israel on Day of Atonement [Leviticus 23:27]
- b. Ninevites [Jonah 3:4-10]
- c. Church at Antioch [Acts 13:2-3]

2. Private

- a. Daniel [Daniel 10:3]
- b. Jesus [Matthew 4:2]
- c. Paul [Acts 9:9]

VI. PURPOSES OF FASTING

1. To Display Devotion to God

- a. Luke 2:36-37 [Widow Anna at the temple]

2. To Display True Repentance

- a. Nehemiah 9:1-3 [Nehemiah’s prayer of repentance]
- b. Joel 2:12-14 [God’s call for his people to repent]
- c. Jonah 3:4-10 [Repentance of the Ninevites]

3. To Seek God’s Help

- a. 2 Samuel 12:16 [David for his son]
- b. 2 Chronicles 20:3-4 [Judah/Jehoshaphat when facing enemies]
- c. Ezra 8:21-23 [Ezra/Jews for a safe travel back to Jerusalem]

4. To Display Grief at the Death of loved ones

- a. 2 Samuel 1:11-12 [David after the death of Saul and Jonathan]

VII. BENEFITS OF FASTING

1. Helps us to Get Closer to God

- a. James 4:8-10 [General call for drawing closer to God]

2. Increases our Humility

- a. Psalm 35:13 [David]
- b. 1 Kings 21:27-29 [Ahab]

3. Enriches our Prayer Life

- a. Ezra 8:23 [Ezra/Jews]
- b. Acts 13:3, 14:23 [Church at Antioch and other Churches]

4. Helps us to Resist Temptation

- a. Matthew 4:1-11 [Jesus]

5. Helps us to Discern God’s Will

- a. Judges 20:26-28 [Israelites battling against the Benjamites]

6. Enables us to Accomplish God’s Work

- a. Daniel 9:3 [Return of Jews from Captivity]
- b. Nehemiah 9:1-3 [Rebuilding of Walls]
- c. Fulfillment of the Great Commission
 - i. Acts 13:1-3 [Commissioning of Missionaries]
 - ii. Acts 14:23 [Ordaining of Elders in a local Church]