

Prayer and Fasting Principles and Practices

Fasting with Biblical Purposes:

1. There is more to fasting than just abstaining from food—fasting is about our relationship with Christ, it is a spiritual exercise with a focus, a Christ-centered purpose seeking spiritual results that honor and glorify Christ (see Isaiah 58:1ff; Matt 6:16-18; Ezra 9:1-10)
2. Fasting is a help to our life of prayer (John 15; 1 Thess 5:17; Neh 1:8-10)
3. Fasting is expected and taught to be a practiced discipline of the faith (Matt 6:16-18; 9:14-15)
4. Fasting was associated with grief and mourning (1 Sam 1:7-8; 31:13)
5. Fasting was associated with seeking God's renewed presence and sustaining strength and salvation from enemies, danger and temptation (Ex 34:28; Matt 4:1-11; Lk 4:2; 2 Chron. 20:3-4; Esther 4:16;)
6. Fasting goes along with knowing and doing God's will (Judges 20; Acts 14:23)
7. Fasting is related to power and fruit through ministry (1 Kings 13:1-22; Isa 58:1-12; Acts 13:1-4; Matt 4:2ff)
8. Fasting is linked with worship and adoration of the Father (Luke 2:37; Zechariah 7:5)

Practices:

1. The Bible distinguishes between several kinds of fasts: *normal* (all food but not water, Matt 4:2), *partial* (dietary limitation, Dan 1:12), *absolute*, (no food or liquids, Ezra 10:6), *supernatural* (Deut. 9:9)
2. In Scripture fasts were private (Matt 6:16-18), congregational (Joel 2:15-16; Acts 13:1-4), regular and occasional fasts (Lev 16:29-31; Matt 9:15)
3. Biblical fasts lasted—one day, 14 days, 40 days, 3 days, 7 days (see Judges 20:26; Acts 9:9; 1 Sam 31:13; Dan 10:3-13)

In Bible times, fasts were most popularly one day in length.

Judges 20:26 says, "Then all the sons of Israel and all the people went up and came to Bethel and wept; thus they remained there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening. And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD."