

FASTING
Matthew 4:2

Fasting without prayer is starvation.
~ Unknown

Introduction: Jesus taught us that fasting is choosing to go without food for a *specific* time in order to seek God and His will with more passion and intensity.

Jesus Showed Us How to Fast

1. Jesus fasted to *overcome* Satan (Matthew 4:1-11).
2. Jesus assumed Christians would fast (Matthew 6:16).
3. Jesus taught the *true* way to fast (Matthew 6:16-18).

Prayer is reaching out after the unseen; fasting is letting go of all that is seen and temporal. Fasting helps express, deepen, confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God.
~ Andrew Murray

What Are the Enemies of Fasting?

1. *Inconvenience*—it would affect my schedule too much.
2. *Comfort*—I don't like feeling hungry.
3. *Unwillingness*—I just don't want to do that.

Types of Fasting...

1. *Supernatural* fast: Fasting for many days without food and water (undertaken by Moses (Deut.9:9-18), Elijah (I Kings 19:8) and Jesus).
2. *Absolute* fast: Where no food or water is taken (this should only be done for short periods—maximum three days (Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9)).

3. *Normal* fast: This is when no food is taken but water/liquids are taken during the fast (one to forty days).
4. *Partial* fast: Abstention from certain types of food (Dan.1:8; 10:3; Num.6:3; Matthew 3:4).
5. Public/National/Church fast: When a body of people cooperatively join together in a fast for a specific purpose (Esther 4:3; Jon.3:6; Acts 13:1-3).

Principles and Rules For Your Fast...

1. Let God lead you as to *when* to fast.
2. Fast for something *specific*.
3. Fasting and prayer *always* go together.
4. Fast to express your *availability* to God.
5. Fast to put your body under the Lord's *control*.
6. Don't tell anyone, with exception of your *spouse*, you are fasting.
7. Reserve enough time to spend *alone* with God during your fast.
8. Don't get discouraged if you do not see an *immediate* answer.
9. Make sure you are fasting for the *right* reasons.
10. Be *joyful* because you have done something tangible for God by denying yourself.

If the reward you aim at in fasting is the admiration of others, that is what you will get, and that will be all you get. In other words, the danger of hypocrisy is that it is so successful. It aims at the praise of men, and it succeeds, but that's all.

~ John Piper

NINE BIBLICAL FASTS
The Fasts God Chooses

1. The ***Disciples*** Fast

Fasting for freedom from addiction (see Matthew 17:20-21).
If we fast, we can break the besetting sins that limit a life of freedom in Christ.

2. The ***Ezra*** Fast

Fasting to solve problems (see Ezra 8:21-23).
If we fast for a specific purpose, we may solve a debilitating problem.

3. The ***Samuel*** Fast

Fasting to win people to Christ (1 Samuel 7:1-8).
If we fast and pray for revival, God will pour Himself on His people.

4. The ***Elijah*** Fast

Fasting to break crippling fears and other mental problems (see 1 Kings 19:2-18).
Through fasting, God will show us how to overcome negative emotional and personal habits.

5. The ***Widows*** Fast

Fasting to provide for the needy (see 1 Kings 17:12).
When we sacrifice our own physical needs, God enables us to focus on and provide for the needs for others.

6. The ***Apostle Paul*** Fast

Fasting for insight and decision making (see Acts 9:9-19).
If we fast to subject our will to God's, He will reveal His will to us.

7. The ***Daniel*** Fast

Fasting for health and physical healing (see Daniel 1:12-20).
When we fast for physical well-being, God will touch our bodies and enrich our souls.

8. The ***John the Baptist*** Fast

Fasting for an influential testimony (see Matthew 3:4; Luke 1:15).
If we fast for the influence of our testimonies, God will use us.

9. The ***Esther*** Fast

Fasting for protection from the evil one (see Esther 4:16).
If we fast for protection and deliverance from Satan, God will deliver us from evil.