

Fasting

Introduction

- What first comes to mind with the word “fasting”.
- Fasting is feared and misunderstood
- Fasting is misunderstood because of the lack of contemporary awareness and teaching about it.
- Mentioned 77 times in Scripture
- Goes radically against our self-indulgent culture
- I believe the clear teaching of Scripture is that fasting is expected and was regularly practiced in old testament times and in the early church.

Fasting Explained

- Fasting is a believers abstinence from food for spiritual purposes.
- We should fast with the desire to become more like Christ, to draw closer to him, according to biblical teaching, and with purposes that are God centered.
- We may also benefit from fasting from other things.
- Partial fast
- The typical fast mentioned in the Bible is a private fast. Matt 6:16-18.
- Congregational fasts. Joel 2:15-16. Acts
- National fasts. Jehoshaphat called for a national fast in 2Chronicles 20:3. Nehemiah 9:1. Esther 4:16.
- In the OT: the day of Atonement, and in Babylon the leaders instituted four more fasts.
- Occasional fasts for specific purposes. Before our last election many Christians fasted and prayed. Today there are many calls for prayer and fasting for revival during our time of pandemic.

Fasting is expected

- Matt 6:16-18. And when you fast. Remember that Jesus also said “when you pray and when you give”.

- The early church fasted. Acts 9:9, 13:2, 14:23.
- Matt 9:14-15. Then they will fast.
- Jesus did not give specific rules about fasting.

Fasting should always be done with a purpose

- To strengthen prayer
- To seek God's guidance. In Acts 14 the church fasted for guidance in choosing leaders
- To express grief. In Judges Israel fasted to express grief over those killed in battle.
- To seek deliverance or protection. King Jehoshaphat, Esther, Ezra.
- To express repentance and return to God
- To humble oneself before God. David in Ps 35:13
- To express concern for the work of God. Nehemiah
- To minister to the needs of others. Is 58:1-9.
- To overcome temptation
- To express love and worship

Some things to do and things to expect during a fast

- Significant feelings of hunger from your spoiled stomach.
- Fasting often reveals what is inside of us: pride, anger or impatience, difficulty with self-denial, overly concerned about what people may think about you
- Eat lightly before and after a fast.
- Also, abstain from distractions that would take your focus off of God: social media, television, internet, etc.
- Lightheadedness, or feelings of weakness.
- Feeling cold as your metabolism slows.
- Drink adequate water

- Expect temptations and attacks from the devil.
- Be in a receptive attitude for God to speak to you.
- You may want to record what you are learning from God in a journal.