

# 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.