

FASTING

What is Fasting?

Biblical fasting is the believer's voluntary abstinence from any legitimate pursuit of food, liquid, work or entertainment for spiritual reasons. The best way to learn the spiritual benefits of fasting is to fast. Fasting should be seen as a privilege and not a law. Physical hunger can bring spiritual satisfaction. We are in a sense giving up food in order to be able to feast on God. Biblical fasting means more than just abstaining from food; it means to abstain from food in order to concentrate upon God and His answer to a particular matter.

Reasons for Fasting: 1) An expression of grief - I Samuel 31:3 2) An expression of repentance - Jonah 3:7 3) When facing difficulty - Nehemiah 1:4 4) On Special Days - Zechariah 7:3-5;8:19 5) As preparation for guidance Acts 13:3; 14:23 6) Facing temptation & following the example of Christ - Matthew 4:2

Various kinds of Fasts: **Check your doctor or medical condition before fasting.**

- a. **Normal fast.** A person abstained from all food, solid or liquid, but not from water — usually to prepare for some significant event.
- b. **Partial fast.** Sometimes people entered into a partial restriction of diet, but not total abstention. For a three-week period of mourning, Daniel ate no meat or drank no wine, and he applied no lotion to his body (Dan. 10:3). A partial fast may also include abstaining from certain activities such as television, phone calls, e-mails/internet, etc.
- c. **Absolute fast.** During a relatively short, urgent period of time, people could abstain from all food and water to discern God's leading. **Notice that this kind of fast was only for a short time, because it was very dangerous to go without water. It is not recommended except for extreme circumstances.**
- d. **Private and corporate fasts.** Fasting is usually a private affair, but at times the people of God came together for corporate or public fasts, such as on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:37).

I. **The Wrong Way to Fast** (Matthew 6:16) Isaiah 58 also gives essential guidelines

1. **Do Not Be Like the Hypocrites**

He doesn't say *"if you fast,"* but *"when you fast."*

2. **"Do not Disfigure your Face" (aphanizo)** Do not make your face unrecognizable from a normal perspective, with the intent to publicize the physical hardships endured while fasting.

3. **Spiritual pride** is the greatest danger in fasting-to gain public approval/admiration.

4. **Public Recognition only Reward:** *"Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward."*

II. **The Right Way to Fast** (Matthew 6:17-18)

1. **Your Father Who Sees In Secret**

Fasting is a heart issue between God and the individual.

2. Fasting is to be done without notice. The believer is to fast before God, not before men.

There is to be no change in appearance or behavior to indicate that he is fasting.

"anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting..."

3. You may need to let your spouse/parents know – those who cook for you.

4. **God will reward you openly:** *"to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly."*

