

Fasting Facts

“And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”
Acts 14:23

“And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”
Acts 13:3

Prayer and Fasting fit together like the pieces of a puzzle. They are marriage partners in the spirit. They walk together, hand in hand. Fasting without praying results in nothing more than going hungry.

Fasting is a vital spiritual discipline for all believers. It is as relevant today as it has ever been. Jesus did not say, **“If you fast”** He said **“When you fast...”** (Matthew 6:16) The Apostle Paul fasted often because he said concerning his life, **“in fastings often.”** (2 Corinthians 11:27) He also stated, **“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”** (1 Corinthians 9:27)

For our purpose **“Fasting”** is a total abstinence of food for a definite period of time. When Jesus entered into the wilderness to be tempted, he fasted forty days. How do we know he fasted? **Luke 4:2** reveals that **“he did eat nothing.”**

“Fasting” has also been referred to as a time to **“afflict our souls”** (Leviticus 16:31). The Psalmist David said, **“I humbled my soul...”** (Psalms 35:13). So fasting is a way of humbling ourselves before God (Isaiah 58:5; Psalms 69:10) It will bring understanding to our spiritual condition and helps us to regain spiritual determination. Fasting invites God into our problems and situations and asks Him for an answer. Fasting tells God that we are turning to Him for the answer to our need.

“Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with

fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.” (Joel 2:12)

In the beginning of Luke 4 Jesus approached the wilderness experience **“full of the Holy Ghost.”** After his forty days of prayer, fasting, and overcoming the temptations from the devil he came forth **“in the power of the Spirit.”** (Luke 4:14) Prayer and fasting made a **“powerful”** difference. Fasting will put the power of God at work and will aggravate the devil. Charles Stanley once said, **“God will not entrust supernatural power to those whose lives are not under his control.”** In fasting, we enter into a war with our flesh and bring it into subjection to the Spirit.

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” (Galatians 5:16-17)

It is our way of telling God how hungry we are for the things of the Spirit rather than just the things of the flesh.

“...I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.” (Job 23:12)

“...Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)

Fasting in the Book of Acts

In the Book of Acts **“fasting”** played an important role in the growth of the early church. Additionally it was a practice of the early Christians.

- ⇒ After Saul’s powerful, knock down conversion on the Road to Damascus he fasted and prayed for three days. (Acts 9:9)
- ⇒ Cornelius fasted as he sought out God’s plan for salvation. (Acts 10:30)
- ⇒ In Acts 27:33-34 Paul fasted for a long time and the crew had fasted for fourteen days on a sinking ship.
- ⇒ In Acts 13:1-3 they fasted and the Holy Ghost said, **“Separate me Baranbas and**

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Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” (Verse 2) They fasted and prayed, laid their hands on them, and sent them off to do the Lord’s work.

- ⇒ In Acts 14:23 the elders (pastors) were ordained in an atmosphere of prayer and fasting.
- ⇒ In Acts 23:12-13 more than forty Jews came together and had a mind to fast until Paul had been killed. This goes to show us that if we fast and our hearts are not right; our motives not pure and correct; then God will not answer. If we are praying and fasting for the wrong thing, no amount of prayer and fasting will make it correct.

David fasted for seven days in 2 Samuel 12. He was attempting to barter and beg with God to change his judgment. Just because we fast does not mean that God will answer our prayers in the way we want Him to.

In studying for this lesson, I read a valuable book entitled, **Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough** by **Elmer L. Towns**. This was an excellent resource and provides much of the insight for this lesson. In his book, Elmer Towns suggests that if there is a place where God has met with you in the past, which would be a good place for you to go to pray and fast. He gives three measured steps to fasting.

1. **Vow to God that you will fast.**
2. **Prepare for the fast.**
3. **Fulfill your resolution.**

Mr. Towns claims, that once you have made the vow to fast, and then begin, that Satan will try to:

1. **Make you too hungry.**
2. **Put other thoughts in your mind.**
3. **Tempt you to quit.**
4. **Interrupt your schedule.**
5. **Discourage you.**
6. **Attack your fast.**

Most can certainly relate to what Mr. Towns is saying. It seems that fast days are our hungriest days. Normally one can wake up in the morning and not be hungry. However, on fast days we wake up so hungry. Not to mention, those fast days seem to be one’s

most carnal days. This is because of the war between the flesh and the Spirit. Satan will not be happy for you to fast and destroy all of his plans. In fasting we proclaim like Jesus said in the Lord’s prayer, **“deliver us from evil.” (Matthew 6:13)** Fasting is a time for the Lord to deliver us from the evil one.

“When You Fast”

(Matthew 6:16)

1. **When you need divine intervention. (Jonah 3: 5-9; Esther 4:16)**
2. **When you need revival. (Joel 1:14-15; 2:28)**
3. **When you have desperate needs. (1 Samuel 1:7-8)**
4. **For better health. (Isaiah 58:6-8)**
5. **When you want to be used in demon deliverance. (Mark 9:29; Matthew 17:21)**
6. **To loose from besetting sins. (Hebrews 12:1)**
7. **When you have a problem or need protection. (Ezra 8:21-23)**
8. **Before any major change. (Acts 13:2)**
9. **When habits need to be broken. (Isaiah 58:6)**
10. **To mortify lusts. (1 Corinthians 9:27)**
11. **To strengthen our prayers. (Acts 10:30)**
12. **To express repentance. (Jonah 3:5-10)**
13. **When you need to seek the Lord. (2 Chronicles 20:3-4; Daniel 9:3)**
14. **To prepare for spiritual warfare. (Matthew 17:21)**
15. **When facing judgment.**

(Jonah 3:4-5; Joel 1:14; 2:2)

16. When concerned for others. (Ps. 35:13)

17. When communion with the Lord is broken. (Mark 2:19-20)

18. When you need guidance. (Acts 13:21-23)

19. When ordaining men into the ministry. (Acts 14:21-23)

20. When in need of blessings and prosperity. (Isaiah 58: 6-9)

(Please Note: Many of the above points were found in Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough by Elmer Towns)

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is fasting? _____

2. How do we know that fasting is a vital spiritual discipline in the New Testament Church? _____

3. After prayer, fasting, and temptation from Satan, how did Jesus come forth? _____

4. Give three examples of fasting in the Book of Acts. _____

5. Why did those that fasted in Acts 23:12-13 and also David in 2 Samuel 12 not receive the answer they wanted when they prayed and fasted? _____

6. Where is the best place to fast? _____

7. What are the three measured steps to fasting? _____

8. Once you have made a vow to fast what will Satan do? _____

9. What are ten reasons for fasting? _____

10. What did Charles Stanley say that is quoted in this lesson? _____

11. What is written in Job 23:12? _____

12. What is written in Matthew 4:4? _____

13. Jesus did not say "If you fast" but what? _____
