

## **“Hungry Enough to Fast”**

Are you hungry for God? Do you have a great need? Is there a sinful habit that you can't shake off? Then, maybe, just maybe, you should consider fasting.

For thousands of years believers have practiced fasting. Moses, Daniel, Paul, and even Jesus, all fasted. Why? Because their hunger for God's presence far surpassed their hunger for physical food. In other words, they hungered for righteousness more than for actual food, to borrow Jesus' phrase (Mat. 5:6)

By fasting some received special revelations (Dan. 9:3-21), others were delivered from harm (Esth. 4:3; 9:25-31), and still others received mercy from God instead of punishment (I King 21:27-29).

In a time of technology and sophistication, however, many see fasting as an archaic practice for times past. But if we believe in the timelessness of the Bible and its message, we must accept fasting as a discipline to be practiced today.

Though there is no specific biblical command to fast, (besides Israel's Day of Atonement, Lev. 16) we do have many examples in the Scriptures of people, including Jesus Himself, who made fasting a part of their lives. In fact, when Jesus addressed the subject during the Sermon on the Mount He started with the words: "When you fast..." (Mt. 6:16) assuming that His followers would fast.

Who should fast?

Those who are physically capable of abstaining from food for a period of time, and who are hungry for God and His intervention in their lives. (People with any kind of illness should consult their doctor prior to fasting.)

Why should we fast?

In the Bible the reasons for fasting vary from person to person. There are fasts of repentance (Jl. 2:12), for protection during a dangerous trip (Ezra 8:22-23), for a sick person (Ps. 35:13), for deliverance from death and annihilation (Esth. 4:3), to worship God and to be strengthened in Him (Luke 2:37; Mt. 4:1-0), etc. But whatever the reason, fasting is always linked to an urgency to draw closer to God, to humble before Him, and to receive His supernatural intervention.

How should we fast?

There are many different ways to do it. Some abstain from meat for a period of time and only eat fruits and vegetables; others skip breakfast for a few days in a row; some do a complete fast (no food and no water) for up to three days, while

still others fast from time to time as they feel led by the Lord. It is really a matter of personal choice and the leading of the Spirit.

It is important to never go without food longer than we can endure it, though. God doesn't want us to hurt our bodies, which are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). It is, perhaps, better to fast for a day, or for half a day, and to do it often, than to fast sporadically for much longer periods of time.

The important thing is that we fast and pray. In other words, it is not about starving ourselves but about substituting physical food for spiritual nourishment. We fast to seek the face of God. We abstain from our "daily bread" so we can better taste the "Bread of Life." (Jn. 6:48) We refrain from the pleasures of eating earthly food so we can focus on the greater pleasures found in a deep fellowship with the Savior. We fast because we are hungry, hungry for more of God and His presence in us, because we long to hear His voice, to experience His touch and to see His glory. We fast because we want to dive deep into the river of God's living water!

So I challenge you to make fasting a part of your life. Not as those who try to manipulate God (though He cannot be manipulated, Eccl. 7:13), but in order to humble yourself before Him, to express your urgent need for His intervention in your life, and to simply worship Him. Remember: No chains may remain, no heart can stay the same, no life can go unchanged, when fasting is a part of its ways! Those who live a life of fasting and prayer will no doubt see the glory of God. Amen!

In the love of Christ,

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