

# **1. fasting defined, described, and explained**

**QUOTE** The body is supposed to be our servant, not our master. When you and I take control of our physical appetite, we develop strength we can also use in controlling our emotions and our other cravings as well.

**Mt. 6:16-18** [Jesus speaking] “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

**Mt. 9:14-15** Then John's disciples came and asked him, “How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?”  
Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

**Ex. 32:28** Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant – the Ten Commandments.

**2Sa. 12:16-17** David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground. The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them.

**verses 21-23** His servants asked him, “Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!”  
He answered, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, ‘Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.’ But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.”

**Lk. 2:36-37** There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

**Jer. 36:9** In the ninth month of the fifth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, a time of fasting before the LORD was proclaimed for all the people in Jerusalem and those who had come from the towns of Judah.

**2Chr. 20:3** Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.

**Jol. 1:14** Declare a holy fast;  
call a sacred assembly.  
Summon the elders  
and all who live in the land  
to the house of the LORD your God,  
and cry out to the LORD.

**Jol. 2:15** Blow the trumpet in Zion,  
declare a holy fast,  
call a sacred assembly.

**Ezr. 8:21-23** There, by the Ahava Canal, I [Ezra] proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions. I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, "The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him." So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.

**Est. 4:15-17** Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

**Mt. 4:1-2** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

**Dt. 9:18** [Moses addressing the Israelites] Then once again I fell prostrate before the LORD for forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water, because of all the sin you had committed, doing what was evil in the LORD's sight and so provoking him to anger.

**Ac. 9:8-9** Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

## **2. purposes of fasting**

**QUOTE** If prayer is the capsule containing our gifts and requests to God, then fasting is the booster rocket that lifts our prayers beyond the boundaries of earth and into the heavenlies. Fasting provides the "oomph" of the Spirit needed to catapult us beyond the gravity of the flesh and into the very purposes of God!

**Ac. 13:1-3** In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

**Jnh. 3:5-9** The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

**2Chr. 20:2-4** Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Sea. It is already in Hazazon Tamar” (that is, En Gedi). Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.

**Jol. 2:12-17** “Even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.”

Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing – grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. Let the priests, who minister before the LORD, weep between the temple porch and the altar. Let them say, “Spare your people, O LORD. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”

**Is. 58:3a** ‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’

**Is. 58:5a** Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself?

**Ps. 35:13** Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting.

**1Co. 9:27** No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

**QUOTE** Could it be that some believers would find the strength to overcome their smoking habit if they started fasting one day a week? Could it be that others would be able to control their anger or stop viewing pornography if they adopted the regular exercise of drawing near to God with fasting? That's worth considering.

**1Sa. 20:34** Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the month he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David.

**Ezr. 10:6** Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the room of Jehohanan son of Eliashib. While he was there, he ate no food and drank no water, because he continued to mourn over the unfaithfulness of the exiles.

**Mt. 9:14-15** Then John's disciples came and asked him, “How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?”

Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

**1Sa. 30:11-12** They found an Egyptian in a field and brought him to David. They gave him water to drink and food to eat – part of a cake of pressed figs and two cakes of raisins. He ate and was revived, for he had not eaten any food or drunk any water for three days and three nights.

### **3. results of fasting**

**Mt. 6:17-18** [Jesus speaking] But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

**Est. 4-9** look up if desired

**Jnh. 3:1-10** look up if desired

**Dan. 9** look up if desired

**Ac. 13:1-3** In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

**Ac. 14:23** Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

**QUOTE** Apparently, the selection of properly qualified leaders in the churches and the commissioning of those leaders to do their job in the grace of God was so crucial to the proper function of the church that it was only natural for prayer, with fasting, to accompany a matter of such importance. How many problems in the church today would be avoided if we were more diligent to pray and fast over the selection and commissioning of church leaders?

### **4. some pitfalls to avoid**

**Mt. 6:16-18** [Jesus speaking] "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

**Zch. 7:3-6** by asking the priests of the house of the LORD Almighty and the prophets, "Should I mourn and fast in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?"

Then the word of the LORD Almighty came to me: "Ask all the people of the land and the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted? And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves?'"

**Is. 58:3-9a**

'Why have we fasted,' they say,  
'and you have not seen it?  
Why have we humbled ourselves,  
and you have not noticed?'

"Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please

and exploit all your workers.  
Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife,  
and in striking each other with wicked fists.  
You cannot fast as you do today  
and expect your voice to be heard on high.  
Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,  
only a day for a man to humble himself?  
Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed  
and for lying on sackcloth and ashes?  
Is that what you call a fast,  
a day acceptable to the LORD?

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:  
to loose the chains of injustice  
and untie the cords of the yoke,  
to set the oppressed free  
and break every yoke?  
Is it not to share your food with the hungry  
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter –  
when you see the naked, to clothe him,  
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?  
Then your light will break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing will quickly appear;  
then your righteousness will go before you,  
and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.  
Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;  
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

**Lk. 18:11-12** The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

**Lk. 17:10** So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'

**POEM** They Fasted by: Arthur Wallis [taken from the book God's Chosen Fast by: Arthur Wallis]

On Sinai's mount, with radiant face,  
To intercede for heaven's grace  
Upon a stubborn wayward race,  
He fasted.

Once lifted from the miry clay,  
When opposition came his way,  
This soldier-king would often pray  
With fasting

A seer, possessed of vision keen,  
Who told the troubled king his dream,  
Had light on God's prophetic scheme  
Through fasting.

The prophetess in temple court  
Beheld the Babe the two had brought;  
For Him she long had prayed and sought,  
    With fasting.

He came to break the yoke of sin,  
But ere His mission could begin  
He met the foe and conquered him  
    While fasting.

“Set these apart,” the Spirit bade.  
A spring, that soon vast rivers made,  
Broke ope by men who as they prayed  
    Were fasting.

“So shall they fast when I am gone;”  
Was this no word to act upon?  
Ask countless saints who fought and won  
    With fasting.

When we shall stand on that great day  
And give account, what shall we say,  
If He should ask us, “Did you pray –  
    With fasting?”