

The Year Long Celebration of God

Fasting Bible Reading

Fasting in the Old Testament

1. Day of Atonement: **Leviticus 16:21, 29, 23:27-32; Numbers 29:7**
2. After the Exile: **Zechariah 8:19**
3. Occasional Fasts
Individual Fasts: **II Samuel 12:22**
Corporate Fasts: **Judges 20:26**
4. Fasting as an expression of . . .
Grief: **I Samuel 31:13; II Samuel 1:12, 3:35; Nehemiah 1:4; Esther 4:3; Psalm 35:13-14**
Penitence: **I Samuel 7:6; I Kings 21:27; Nehemiah 9:1-2; Daniel 9:3-5; Jonah 3:5-8**
Humility: **Ezra 8:21; Psalm 69:10**
Fasting was often directed towards securing the guidance and help of God: **Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9; II Samuel 12:16-23; II Chronicles 30:3-4; Ezra 8:21-23**

Fasting in the New Testament

1. Jewish Practice
Day of Atonement: **Acts 27:9**
The Pharisees fasted every Monday and Thursday: **Luke 18:11-12; Matthew 9:14**
Anna the prophetess: **Luke 2:36-37**
2. Jesus Fasting: **Matthew 4:1-4**
3. The fasting of Jesus' disciples is assumed: **Matthew 6:16-18**
4. Leaders of the church fasted when choosing missionaries and elders: **Acts 13:2-3, 14:23**
5. Paul twice refers to fasting: **II Corinthians 6:5, 11:27** (Acts 9:9; I Corinthians 7:5)

Components of Fasting

1. Degree of Abstinence
Normal Fast (abstinence from all food and drink): **Esther 4:15-16; Ezekiel 10:6; Acts 9:8-9; Deuteronomy 9:9**
Partial Fast (limit of diet, but not abstention from food): **Daniel 1:12**
2. Number of Participants in the Fast
Private Fast: **Acts 27:9**
Small Group Fast: **Acts 13:1-3**
Congregational Fast: **Esther 4:16; Nehemiah 9:1; Joel 2:12-16**
3. Lengths of Fast
Part of a Day: **Judges 20:26-28**
One Day: **Jeremiah 36:6**
Three Days: **Esther 4:1; Acts 9:8-9**
Seven Days: **I Samuel 31:13**
Twenty-One Days: **Daniel 10:2-3**
Forty Days: **Deuteronomy 9:9; I Kings 19:8; Matthew 4:1-2**
Indeterminate: **Matthew 9:14; Luke 2:37; Acts 13:3**

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4. Frequency of Fasts

Regular Fast

On a repetitive schedule: **Leviticus 16:29-31**

Day of Atonement: **Leviticus 16:29-31**

Pharisaical Twice Weekly Fasts: **Luke 8:12**

Occasional Fast: Most of the fasting examples in Scripture seem to fall into this category.

Continuous Fast

John the Baptist: **Matthew 3:4**

Nazarite Vow: **Numbers 6**

Samson: **Judges 13:7**

Should Christians Fast?

1. What the NT says about food and eating: **I Timothy 4:1-5; Colossians 2:16-23; Romans 14:3-6; I Corinthians 8**

2. Fasting is nowhere commanded in the New Testament, but it is clear that Jesus assumed His followers would fast: **Matthew 6:16-18, 9:14-17 (Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:33-35)**

Christian Fasting Has a Spiritual Purpose.

1. Fast to Strengthen Prayer: **Ezra 8:21, 23**
2. Fast to Seek God's Guidance: **Judges 20:26-27**
3. Fast to Seek Deliverance or Protection: **II Chronicles 20:2-4**
4. Fast to Express Grief over Sin or Calamities: **II Samuel 1:11-12**
5. Fast to Express Repentance: **Joel 2:12**
6. Fast to Humble Yourself before God: **I Kings 21:27-29**
7. Fast to Express Concern for the Work of God: **Daniel 9:2-3**
8. Fast to Minister to the Needs of Others: **Isaiah 58:6-7**
9. Fast to Fight Temptation and Grow in Spiritual Disciplines: **Matthew 4**
10. Fast to Celebrate God