

I. Introduction and Review: Do Christians Fast?

II. What is Fasting?

**A. Fasting is the Temporary Abstaining from Fleshly Appetites for Religious Purposes.**

1. Biblical Fasting is not Merely Skipping Meals.
2. Biblical Fasting Can Go Beyond Abstaining from Food. I Cor. 7:5
3. There is Nothing Inherently Sinful About What is Given Up. II Ti. 4:3-5 He. 13:5  
False asceticism has no spiritual value. Col. 3:20-23

**B. The Length and the Nature of a Fast May Vary.**

1. Often Fasting Involves Abstaining from Food from Sunup until Sundown for one day.  
II Sam. 1:12 Judg. 20:26
2. Some have Fasted for Longer Periods. Esth. 4:16 Ex. 34:28 Mt. 4:2 I Sam. 31:30  
I Kings 19:8
3. Some have Abstained Only from Certain Foods for a Period of Time. Dan. 10:2-3

**C. Fasting Includes Two Main Elements.**

1. Humble Yourself Before God While Mourning Over Sin. 5:4 9:14 Ps. 69:10
2. Earnestly Pray Expressing Your Complete Dependence Upon God. Da. 10:3 Lk. 2:37

III. When Do People Fast?

**A. Fasting Originated Under the Old Covenant.**

1. Fasting Was Required Once a Year on the Day of Atonement. Lev. 16:29,31 23:27,32
2. The Nation was Also Called to Special Fasts at Times of Crisis.
  - a. Facing Threats. II Chron. 20:3-4 Ezra 8:23 Esther 4:16 Judges 20:26
  - b. National repentance. I Sam. 7:6 Neh. 9:1 Jonah 3:5 Joel. 1:14 2:12,15
  - c. National mourning. I Sam. 31:13 II Sam. 1:12 Judg. 20:26
  - d. Remembrance. Esther 9:31
3. Individuals Fasted on Certain Occasions.
  - a. Awaiting revelation. Ex. 34:28 Dan. 10:2-3 Dt. 9:9,18
  - b. Personal repentance. II Sam. 12:15-23 I Ki. 21:27-29
  - c. Interceding for others. Ps. 35:13 II Sam. 12:15-23
  - d. Representing the nation in prayer. Dan. 9:3 Neh. 1:4 Ez. 10:6
4. The Pharisees Boasted that they Went Beyond the Law by Fasting Twice a Week.  
Lk. 18:11-12 Mt. 9:14

**B. Fasting Continues Under the New Covenant.**

1. Jesus Fasted. Matt. 4:2
2. John the Baptist Taught his Disciples to Fast. Mt. 9:14
3. Jesus Anticipated that His Followers Would Fast. 6:16 9:15
4. The Early Church Fasted at Crucial Times. Acts 13:3 14:23
  - a. Advancement in mission. Acts 13:3
  - b. Appointment of leaders. Acts 14:23
5. Segments of the Church Later Corrupted Fasting through Pharisaical Practices.
6. Godly Believers Through History have Practiced Fasting.

IV. Why Should You Fast? 6:16-18

**A. Do Not Fast to Impress Men. v. 16-17**

1. The Old Testament Also Condemned Formalism and Hypocrisy. Isa. 58:3-7  
Jer. 14:12 Zech. 7:5 Joel 2:13

2. Don't be a Hypocrite Putting on a Show. v. 16
3. Instead, When you Fast, Act Normal. v. 17

### **B. Do Not Fast as a Means of Earning Righteousness.**

1. The Religion of Man Seeks to Gain Salvation by Works and Rituals.
2. The Bible Offers Salvation as a Free Gift. Rom. 3:20 Eph. 2:8-9 Gal. 2:16
  - a. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse your sin. 20:28 I Pet. 3:18
  - b. You receive forgiveness (the merit of Christ) through faith alone.

### **C. Do Not Try to Use Fasting as a Technique for Manipulating God.**

1. Do Not Expect to Gain favor with God by the Mere Outward Performance of a Ritual.  
Isa. 58:3-5 Jer. 14:12 Zech. 7:5 I Sa. 14:24 Acts 23:12f
2. God Does Not Promise Tangible Results from Your Religious Acts.

### **D. You Must Fast with the Right Motives. v. 18**

1. Fasting is not an End but a Means to the End of Drawing Nearer to God.  
What Matters is Your Heart. Joel. 2:13
2. Fasting Brings Great Spiritual Benefits.

## V. Should You Fast? *Jesus did not condemn fasting 2x a week by pharisees.*

### **A. Fasting is Not Commanded on Any Particular Occasion for the Christian.** Nor is There any Particular Format to Follow.

### **B. It is Appropriate for the Church to Corporately Pray and Fast on Occasion.**

1. Concerning A Major Decision or Move Forward in Ministry. Acts 14:23 13:1-3
2. In the Face of a Crisis: Persecution
3. Seeking Spiritual Renewal and Revival. Daniel 9:3ff

### **C. It May be Fitting for a Nation to Declare Days of Prayer and Fasting. Jonah 3:5-9**

1. To Repent for Sins which have Provoked God's Wrath.
2. In the Face of a Crisis: War, Famine, etc.

### **D. It is Proper for You to set Aside Days for Fasting and Prayer as an Individual.**

1. To Repent of Sin. Phil. 3:19 Rom. 16:18 I Cor. 9:24-27 6:19-20
2. To Seek God's Wisdom Concerning a Major Decision.
3. To Intercede for Others. Ps. 35:13 Mt. 17:21 II Sam. 12:15-23 Isa. 58:3ff

### **E. Other Considerations.**

1. Choose a Day When You Can Devote a Substantial Amount of Time to Prayer.
2. Don't Put Your Health at Risk.

## VI. Concluding Application

### **A. Most Make one of Two Mistakes When it Comes to Fasting: Abuse or Neglect.**

### **B. We Anticipate a Day of Feasting Zech. 8:19**