

# FASTING RESOURCE

2 Chron 7:14 – ...if My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

## Summary

Fasting in the Bible follows a few well-worn patterns. Overall, fasting is part of a process of humanity **humbling** itself before Almighty God as part of the action of repentance from sin, or accompanying prayer for God's divine intervention. People also fasted when in the presence of God and while mourning loss (most likely a natural physiological response to grief). God is clear that His idea of fasting is more about the posture of the heart – desiring justice, mercy, and submission – than about the outward action. In the New Testament, fasting accompanied big ministry decisions that impacted many people's lives like the appointment of elders and the sending of missionaries.

## Themes

While in the presence of God receiving a message

- Moses while receiving the 10 commandments (Ex 34:28)
- Daniel fasts for 3 weeks after receiving a disturbing vision (Dan 10:1-3)

For breakthrough and protection against an enemy

- The nation of Israel after being defeated by Benjamin twice before going to fighting victoriously the third time (Judg 20:18-28)
- Israel corporately fasts while being oppressed by the Philistines repented and fasted under Samuel's leadership (1 Sam 7:3-6)
- Jehoshaphat sought God's protection by proclaiming a national fast and prayed when confronted by enemy armies (2 Chron 20:3-4)
- Corporately for all those returning from exile for safe journey (Ezra 8:21-23)
- Esther and the nation of Israel fast and pray for the calamity planned against them to be thwarted (Est 4:3, 15-16)

As a part of the mourning process

- Mourning over the death of Saul and his sons (1 Sam 31:13, 2 Sam 1:12)
- David mourning over the death of Abner (2 Sam 3:35)
- Darius fasts while Daniel is in the lion's den (Dan 6:18)
- Jesus responding to the Pharisees that His disciples don't fast because He is with them, but they will fast when He's taken away (Matt 9:14-15)

As intercession

- David interceding on behalf of his son doomed to die as a result of his sin (2 Sam 12:15-16)
- David prays and fasts for his enemy's healing (Ps 35:11-13)
- Jesus referring to a demon only being cast out by prayer and fasting (Matt 17:21)

A response to rebuke and/or part of the repentance process

- Ahab humbled himself and fasted at Elijah's rebuke and the Lord relented calamity (1 Kings 21:27-29)
- Ezra grieved over the sins of the returning exiles fasts and prays (Ezra 10:6)
- Nehemiah hears of the reproach of Israel and fasts, prays, and weeps (Neh 1:4)
- The Israelites fast, confess their sin, read from the book of the law, and worship God (Neh 9:1-3)
- The people fast and hear the word of the Lord from Jeremiah, but the king doesn't repent (Jer 36:9-10)
- Daniel fasts, prays, and repents on behalf of his nation (Dan 9:3-6)
- A prophetic call to all the people to fasting, repentance, and prayer (Joel 1:14, 2:12-17)
- The people of Nineveh believe and fast at Jonah's message (Jonah 3:5)

# FASTING RESOURCE

## God's chosen fast

- God's description of the chosen fast that is about justice and mercy (Is 58:3-12)
- Jesus fasts 40 days in the desert while being tempted by the devil, lives on the word of God (Matt 4:1-4)
- Jesus' teaching that fasting is not to be done to be noticed by men (Matt 6:16-18)
- Anna praying and fasting night and day in the temple for decades (Luke 2:36-37)
- Prophets and teachers ministering to the Lord with prayer and fasting, and being told by the Holy Spirit to set aside Paul and Barnabas for missions work (Acts 13:1-3)
- Appointing elders in the new church with prayer and fasting (Acts 14:23)

## Some Practical Thoughts on Fasting

In light of those themes, here are some practical thoughts about how to "fast well"

1. Have a specific purpose for the fast and let it be a time of communion between you and God, and not for any kind of recognition.
2. If this is your first time to fast, start slowly (i.e. fasting from specific items, fasting one meal or one day, etc.) and move to longer fasts over a period of time.
3. Set a definite beginning and ending time and be accountable to someone throughout the process.
4. Begin the fast with faith that it will have an effect. And then walk by faith throughout the process. If you are fasting for a longer period of time, you will probably experience some physical discomfort (headaches, fatigue, etc.) but determine ahead of time that these discomforts will lead you to a measure of desperation for God. If you have any health concerns, consult your physician immediately.
5. Plan ahead. Look at your schedule and set special times of prayer, Bible reading, and rest (which you will need more of than usual).
6. Worship, pray, and serve throughout the day to "feed" your spirit.
7. Let this be a time of personal cleansing and repentance. Spend time confessing sin before God. Pray for breakthrough in the areas that God puts on your heart (for you personally, for your church, city, nation, and the nations).
8. Make things right with people you are at odds with. Confess wrong, ask for forgiveness, or forgive those who have wronged you.
9. Write down what God speaks to you through His word and through prayer throughout the fast.
10. Always drink lots of water and/or juice. Avoid coffee and other forms of caffeine as they are diuretics and water is the very thing you need during a fast to flush the toxins your body will produce.
11. Break the fast with healthy food (soup, broth, whole grains, fresh fruit & vegetables, etc.)
12. Fasting is healthy for the average person and is not harmful when done properly. Make fasting part of your regular lifestyle!
13. "God's Chosen Fast" by Arthur Wallis is an excellent resource on fasting and can be purchased on Amazon.
14. If you take medications which prevent fasting, are pregnant, or have any other physical or medical condition which may prevent fasting, consult your physician first before considering any kind of fast from food. Those who work hard physical labor jobs need to be sure and drink plenty of fluids and be sure to avoid excessive fatigue.