

Fasting or Feasting? March 16th & 17th, 2013

Matthew 6:16-18 ***“And when you fast...”***

Fasting

Fast: (Greek) “voluntary abstinence from food.”¹

❖ Fasting involves Self-Denial!

↳ Self-Indulgence is characteristic of the world!

“For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.” Philippians 3:18-19

❖ When we control the hunger drive, other drives are more easily controlled!

Two perspectives on the benefits of fasting

1. Natural Benefits

Fasting will ...

- ... Rest the digestive system
- ... Allow for cleansing and detoxification of the body
- ... Create a break in unhealthy eating patterns
- ... Promote greater mental clarity
- ... Promote healthier emotional patterns
- ... Lead to an increase in energy level

2. Spiritual Benefits

Jesus said, “...*your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*”

❖ When should we fast?

♦ Times of Crisis

“Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.” 2 Chronicles 20:3

♦ Times of Confession and Repentance

“Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads. And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.” Nehemiah 9:1-2

♦ Times of Need for Direction

“And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree reached, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.” Esther 4:3

♦ Times of Seeking God

“Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking Him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.” Daniel 9:3

♦ Times of Establishing Church Leadership

“And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” Acts 14:23

- ♦ Times of Sending out Missionaries
“And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” Acts 13:3
- ♦ Times of Dealing with certain Demons
“And He said to them, ‘This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting.’” Mark 9:29
- ♦ Times set apart to Worship God!
“And there was a prophetess, Anna, ... She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.” Luke 2:36-37
- ❖ What is the Essence of Fasting?
 - ♦ Self-Denial!
Isaiah 58
 - ↳ Three times in this passage “seeking your own pleasure” is addressed! *Isaiah 58:3,13*
 - ↳ Self-Denial indicates seriousness in our prayers to God and, when done with the right attitude, causes our voice to be heard! *Isaiah 58:4*
- ❖ What is the Result of True Fasting?
“Then you shall take delight in the Lord, ...”! Isaiah 58:14
“Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.” Psalm 37:4
“... your Father who sees in secret will reward you”! Matthew 6:18

Endnotes:

¹ Vine, W.E. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*. Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1997.

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