

## **Fasting**

### **Fasting is a spiritual discipline that is used as a means of seeking the Lord.**

- 2 Chronicles 20:3 HCSB Jehoshaphat was afraid, so he resolved to seek the LORD. So he proclaimed a fast for all Judah,

### **Fasting is associated with confession of sin, prayers, worship, and Bible study.**

- Nehemiah 9:1-3 HCSB On the twenty-fourth day of this month the Israelites assembled; they were fasting, wearing sackcloth, and had put dust on their heads. 2 Those of Israelite descent separated themselves from all foreigners, and they stood and confessed their sins and the guilt of their fathers. 3 While they stood in their places, they read from the book of the law of the LORD their God for a fourth of the day and spent another fourth of the day in confession and worship of the LORD their God.

### **Our Master, the Lord Jesus practiced fasting.**

- Matthew 4:1-4 HCSB Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil. 2 After He had fasted 40 days and 40 nights, He was hungry. 3 Then the tempter approached Him and said, "If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4 But He answered, "It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

### **His disciples did not fast as long as they were with Him.**

- Mark 2:18-19 HCSB Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. People came and asked Him, "Why do John's disciples and the Pharisees' disciples fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" 19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the groom is with them, can they? As long as they have the groom with them, they cannot fast."

### **However, they were to begin fasting once He ascended into Heaven.**

- Mark 2:20 HCSB But the time will come when the groom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

### **Fasting is a way of demonstrating our intense need for God's help.**

- Judges 20:26-28 HCSB The whole Israelite army went to Bethel where they wept and sat before the LORD. They fasted that day until evening and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the LORD. 27 Then the Israelites inquired of the LORD. In those days, the ark of the covenant of God was there, 28 and Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, was serving before it. The Israelites asked: "Should we again fight against our brothers the Benjaminites or should we stop?" The LORD answered: "Fight, because I will hand them over to you tomorrow."
- Ezra 8:21 HCSB I proclaimed a fast by the Ahava River, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask Him for a safe journey for us, our children, and all our possessions.

### **It can accompany our intercessory prayers as a way of demonstrating our sincerity to God and our total dependence on His provision.**

- 2 Samuel 12:16 HCSB David pleaded with God for the boy. He fasted, went home, and spent the night lying on the ground.

**Fasting can grant spiritual power to its practitioner, if done with the right heart. In fact, some spiritual acts can only be undertaken preceded by fasting.**

- Mark 9:25-29 HCSB When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly coming together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you: come out of him and never enter him again!" 26 Then it came out, shrieking and convulsing him violently. The boy became like a corpse, so that many said, "He's dead." 27 But Jesus, taking him by the hand, raised him, and he stood up. 28 After He went into a house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" 29 And He told them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer [and fasting]."

**Fasting may be practiced as a part of mourning.**

- 1 Samuel 31:11-13 HCSB When the residents of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, 12 all their brave men set out, journeyed all night, and retrieved the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan. When they arrived at Jabesh, they burned the bodies there. 13 Afterwards, they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh and fasted seven days.

**Paul fasted before he was baptized and the early church took up this practice.**

- Acts 9:9, 17-18 HCSB He was unable to see for three days, and did not eat or drink...So Ananias left and entered the house. Then he placed his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road you were traveling, has sent me so you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 At once something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized.
- Didache 7:4 But before the baptism, let the overseer fast, and also the one being baptized, and all others who are able. Be sure to instruct the one being baptized to fast one or two days before.

**Note:** see also Justin *Apology of Aristides* 1:61 and Tertullian *De Baptismo* 20.

**It can accompany an announcement of a national calamity.**

- Joel 2:15 HCSB Blow the horn in Zion! Announce a sacred fast; proclaim an assembly.

**The Day of Atonement entailed, among other things, a regular fast.**

- Leviticus 16:29-34 HCSB "This is to be a permanent statute for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month you are to practice self-denial and do no work, both the native and the foreigner who resides among you. 30 Atonement will be made for you on this day to cleanse you, and you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD. 31 It is a Sabbath of complete rest for you, and you must practice self-denial; it is a permanent statute. 32 The priest who is anointed and ordained to serve as high priest in place of his father will make atonement. He will put on the linen garments, the holy garments, 33 and purify the most holy place. He will purify the tent of meeting and the altar and will make atonement for the priests and all the people of the assembly. 34 This is to be a permanent statute for you, to make atonement for the Israelites once a year because of all their sins." And all this was done as the LORD commanded Moses.

### **Fasting can involve a simple diet.**

- Daniel 10:2-3 HCSB In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three full weeks. 3 I didn't eat any rich food, no meat or wine entered my mouth, and I didn't put any oil on my body until the three weeks were over.

### **However, fasting can also be a time of celebration of our dependence upon a good God.**

- Zechariah 8:19 HCSB "The LORD of Hosts says this: The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth will become times of joy, gladness, and cheerful festivals for the house of Judah. Therefore, love truth and peace."

### **It is considered to be a meritorious act of piety and a regular staple of those who worship Hashem in a disciplined manner.**

- Luke 2:37 HCSB and was a widow for 84 years. She did not leave the temple complex, serving God night and day with fastings and prayers.

### **For fasting to be of any true worth, it must be accompanied by compassion.**

- Isaiah 58:3-12 HCSB "Why have we fasted, but You have not seen? We have denied ourselves, but You haven't noticed!" "Look, you do as you please on the day of your fast, and oppress all your workers. 4 You fast with contention and strife to strike viciously with your fist. You cannot fast as you do today, hoping to make your voice heard on high. 5 Will the fast I choose be like this: A day for a person to deny himself, to bow his head like a reed, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast and a day acceptable to the LORD? 6 Isn't the fast I choose: To break the chains of wickedness, to untie the ropes of the yoke, to set the oppressed free, and to tear off every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the poor and homeless into your house, to clothe the naked when you see him, and to not ignore your own flesh and blood? 8 Then your light will appear like the dawn, and your recovery will come quickly. Your righteousness will go before you, and the LORD's glory will be your rear guard. 9 At that time, when you call, the LORD will answer; when you cry out, He will say: Here I am. If you get rid of the yoke from those around you, the finger-pointing and malicious speaking, 10 and if you offer yourself to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted one, then your light will shine in the darkness, and your night will be like noonday. 11 The LORD will always lead you, satisfy you in a parched land, and strengthen your bones. You will be like a watered garden and like a spring whose waters never run dry. 12 Some of you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will restore the foundations laid long ago; you will be called the repairer of broken walls, the restorer of streets where people live.

### **Fasting should not be done to impress other people.**

- Matthew 6:16-23 HCSB "Whenever you fast, don't be sad-faced like the hypocrites. For they make their faces unattractive so their fasting is obvious to people. I assure you: They've got their reward! 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head, and wash your face, 18 so that you don't show your fasting to people but to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 19 "Don't collect for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But collect for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal. 21 For where your

treasure is, there your heart will be also. 22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. So if the light within you is darkness--how deep is that darkness!