

C. Length of Fast

From part of a day up to 40 days, many fasts recorded without length mentioned.

D. Frequency of Fasts

- (1) **Regular:** - Day of Atonement; as a part of worship
- (2) **Occasional:** Whenever a need is perceived

IV. Should Christians Fast?

Matthew 6:16-17 – “When you fast,...” “But when you fast...” (cf. Matt. 6:2-3 “...So when you give” & Matt. 6:5-7 “But when you pray”)

V. Purpose of Christian Fasting

(1) To become more like Christ; NOT earning God’s favor.

“Fasting is a time to set aside the gifts so that we might partake more of the Giver.”

(2) See Section A for examples of specific purposes/occasions.

Recommended reading: John Piper’s “A Hunger for God”

Class Schedule Overview

1	Introduction
2	All of life worship
3	Bible Intake I
4	Bible Intake II
5	Prayer
6	Confession of sin
7	Fasting
8	Evangelism
9	Serving
10	Stewardship
11	Cultivating Spiritual Fruit I
12	Cultivating Spiritual Fruit II
13	Perseverance

How to Grow
Class 7: Fasting

Questions:

1. What do most people think of when they hear the word “fasting”?
2. What is a biblical definition of fasting?
3. What are some other things that we could fast from in addition to food/water?
4. What are some examples of fasting from Scripture?
 - a. Number of participants?
 - b. Length?
 - c. Circumstances?
 - d. Purpose?
5. Are we as Christians to be fasting?

I. Definitions of fasting:

- Fasting is a voluntary abstinence from physical nourishment (food and drink) for some special spiritual purpose.
- “Fasting should really be made to include abstinence from anything which is legitimate in and of itself for the sake of some special spiritual purpose. There are many bodily functions which are right and normal and perfectly legitimate, but which for special peculiar reasons in certain circumstances should be controlled.” Martin Lloyd Jones

II. Redemptive Historical Survey of Fasting

- (1) Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29, 21; 23:27-32; Num. 29:7) – corporate; one day each year; humbling oneself before God as a part of repentance and cleansing from sin.
- (2) Intercession on behalf of God’s people (Deut. 9:6-9) – Moses; 40 days and nights (supernatural – no drink or water); Moses interceded on behalf of God’s people at the giving of the 10 commandments.
- (3) Seeking guidance in times of difficulty (Judges 20:26-28) – corporate; until evening; seeking God’s will in the midst of a civil war in Israel in a difficult circumstance.
- (4) God’s chastening upon His people (1 Samuel 7:3-6) – corporate; one day; humbling as a part of repentance
- (5) Mourning (1 Sam. 31:11-13, 1 Chron. 10:12) – group (inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead); 7 days; mourning the death of Saul.
- (6) Prayers of supplication (2 Sam. 12:15-20) – David; 7 days; seeking God’s grace then resting in God’s sovereignty
- (7) Repentance (1 Kings 21:25-29) – Ahab; unknown length; repentance and humbling before God. Also, Saul in Acts 9:8-9).
- (8) Guidance and help in time of danger (Ezra 8:21-23) – corporate; unknown length; humbling before God and seeking of safe journey along with prayer.

(9) Confession of corporate sin (Ezra 9:5-10:3) – Ezra, until evening; Ezra is broken over the peoples’ sins and this leads to corporate confession and repentance. Also, Dan. 9:3-5.

(10) Seeking to understand God’s Word (Daniel 9-10) - 3 weeks (partial); Daniel had received a vision and had set his heart to understand and humbled himself before God (10:12).

(11) To overcome temptation and dedicate yourself to God (Matt. 4:1-11) – Jesus; 40 days; Jesus prepared for the temptation of Satan and the beginning of his earthly ministry.

(12) As a part of worship (Luke 2:36-38) – Anna; pattern of life; she regularly worshipped with fasting and prayer at the temple. Also, prophets and teachers in the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1-3).

(13) Sending out of missionaries (Acts 13:1-3) – Leaders in the church; unknown length; setting apart Barnabas and Saul for the work of the ministry.

(14) Appointment of elders (Acts 14) – Elders; unknown length; part of prayers as elders were appointed.

III. Characteristics of Fasting

A. Degree of Abstinence

- (1) Normal Fast: The abstinence from all food; or food and drink.
- (2) Partial Fast: A partial fast is a limitation of diet, but not abstention from all food.

B. Number of Participants in the Fast

- (1) Individual
- (2) Small Group
- (3) Corporate (congregational, national, etc.)