

2.42 Series – Fasting

- I. Is there a place for fasting in New Testament times?
 - A. Fasting was not required of the disciples of Jesus during his time on earth.
Matthew 9:14 (Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33)
 - B. But Jesus spoke of a day when there would be a place for fasting.
Matthew 6:16-18
Matthew 9:14-15 (Luke 5:34-35)
 - C. Fasting was a part of the New Testament Church
Acts 13:1-3 – Antioch sends out Paul & Barnabbas
Acts 14:23 – Elders appointed in Galatian churches
Both are Pauline influenced churches

Real Fasting Throughout Scriptures = Desperation

- They are all deeply emotional
 - Lamenting sin
 - Grieving loss
 - Begging God
- Fasting = Fiber of Our Being Prayers
- Three Reasons for Desperation:
 1. Desperate Repentance
 2. Desperate Dependence
 3. Desperate Direction

1. Desperate Repentance

- Far and away the most instances are related to repentance
- Examples:
 - Deuteronomy 9:18 – Moses over Israel’s rebellion (2nd time!)
 - I Samuel 7:5-6 – Israel’s repentance of idolatry
 - I Kings 21:27-29 – Ahab’s sin against Nahaboth
 - Ezra 10:6 – Ezra lamenting exile’s intermarriage
 - Nehemiah 1:4 – Nehemiah about exile’s sin
 - Nehemiah 9:1-3 – Exile’s repentance of intermarriage
 - Daniel 9:3, 20 – Daniel’s lament over Israel’s sin
 - Jonah 3:5-10 – Ninevites repentance at Jonah’s preaching
 - Acts 9:9 – Saul’s conversion

Joel 2:12-15

- Connection between wholehearted return and *“fasting and weeping and mourning”*
- *“Rend your heart...”* = A broken-heartedness
- Fasting is a means of breaking or softening our own heart

James 4:4-10

- V. 4-5 = Worldliness is all around us!
 - We can grow hard and calloused
- Alluring our hearts away from a pure devotion to God
- V. 7-10 = We need times of rending our heart
 - Grieving, mourning, wailing, gloom
- V. 6, 10 = Key is humbling!
- This is no mere “I’m sorry”
- Fasting tunes us in to:
 - It heightens our sensitivity to sin!
 - How sin has affected our relationship with God (*“You adulterous people...”*)
 - Concern for people who don’t get this

Zechariah 7:1-14 (Mirrors Isaiah 58)

- They had fasted for 70 years!
- Fasting didn't soften their hearts so God could mold them
 - They didn't have the heart of God
- They did it because they were supposed to
- Fasting is meant to be a softening of our heart and a heightening of our sensitivity to sin
- How do we do this?
 - Begging for mercy - Luke 18:9-14
 - Confession
 - Grieving, mourning, wailing, gloom – James 4

2. Desperate Dependence

- There are desperate times where they needed God to act
- Examples:
 - II Samuel 12:15-16 – David for Bathsheba's son's life
 - II Chronicles 20:3-4 – Jehoshaphat and Israel against the Moabite Alliance
 - Ezra 8:21-23 – Travel from Persia to Canaan
 - Esther 4:16 – Esther going before King Xerxes to save Israel
 - Psalm 35:13 – David fasting for sick people
 - Daniel 6:18 – King while Daniel is in Lion's den
 - Acts 27:33 – Paul's shipwreck
- Desperately dependant times!
- Again, fasting is associated with humbling!
 - "God, we need you!"

3. Desperate Direction

- These are times where God's people felt a bit blind
- Examples: (All three could be above under Desperate Dependence as well)
 - Judges 20:26-28 – Israel discerning battle plans
 - Luke 4:1-2 – Jesus before beginning his ministry
 - Acts 13:1-3 – Antioch sending Paul & Barnabas
 - Acts 14:23 – Paul & Barnabas appointing elders in Galatian churches
- Again, fasting is associated with humbling
 - "God, what is your will?"
- KVC Hunger for Souls Day – A bit of all three: repentance, dependence and direction

Practicals:

- Choose a Topic – What are you fasting for?
- Choose a fast – Food (Complete or partial), media, etc
- Choose a time – Day(s), weeks, indefinitely (Until God answers)
- Increase Spiritual Activity
 - Pray (or read Bible)during meals
 - Pray when you feel hunger pains
 - Set extra time for prayer
- Include a time of softening your heart

Challenge: Fiber of Our Being Prayers

- Study fasting to gain a deeper conviction about its role in our faith and church
- Adopt fasting in your life
- Recommit to KVC Hunger for Souls Day
 - We will be changed
 - God will move

Types of Fasts

1. Examples of absolute (complete) food fasts:

Deuteronomy 9:9, 18	Luke 4:1-2
Ezra 10:6	Acts 9:9
Esther 4:16	Acts 27:33
2. Examples of partial fasts (abstinence from certain foods only):

I Kings 17	
Daniel 10:3	
3. Example of non-food fast:

I Corinthians 7:5	
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- D. There is a place for both the corporate (group) and the individual (personal) fast.
 1. Examples of corporate fasts:

I Samuel 7:5-6	Jonah 3:5-10
II Chronicles 20:34	Acts 27:33-37
Ezra 8:21-23	Acts 13:1-3
Nehemiah 9:1-3	Acts 14:23
Joel 2:15-16	
 2. Examples of the individual fast:

Deuteronomy 9:9, 18	Psalms 35:13
II Samuel 12:15-16, 22-23	Daniel 9:3
I Kings 21:27-29	Luke 2:36-37
Ezra 10:6	Acts 9:9
- III. Fasting in itself is of no spiritual value (Isaiah 58; Jeremiah 14:12; I Corinthians 8:8) – "that which is of the flesh is flesh," John 3:6 – but it is the attitude of a heart sincerely seeking Him to which God responds with blessing. (Romans 14:6, 17, I Corinthians 15:50)
 - A. Only fasting that is done with the right motive, that of glorifying God, can be pleasing in His sight.

Isaiah 58	Matthew 6:16-18
Zechariah 7:5-6	Luke 18:9-14
 - B. The same Bible that teaches abstaining from foods (as God leads) also warns us against testing the Lord (Matthew 4:7).
 1. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:9), and we are to care for them as such (v. 20).
 2. It may indeed be profitable for a season for us to exercise severe discipline, to "keep under my body, and bring it into subjection" (I Corinthians 9 :27), to be "temperate in all things" (I Corinthians 9 :25), but we must also realize that "that which is flesh is flesh," and we cannot produce spiritual results – however sincere our intentions – from that which is purely flesh.
 3. To deny the flesh of its natural desires may cause us to be more "in tune" to hear the voice of the Lord (Deuteronomy 9:18, 25, etc.), but it also places us in a realm more easily prone to the attack of the enemy. It was when Jesus had been fasting for 40 days that He was faced with the greatest Satanic attack (Matthew 4:1-3; Luke 4:1-2).
 - C. Scripture warns that in the last days there will be many "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats," etc. (I Timothy 4:1-3). We are to test the spirits, to see whether they be of God (I John 4:1).
- IV. How long should I fast?
 - A. Bible personalities fasted and sought God diligently until they obtained from God what they desired (see the examples of Hannah, I Samuel 1:6-8, 17-18; and Paul, Acts 9:9,17-19) – or until the Lord made it evident that what they requested simply would not be obtained (as in the case of David, II Samuel 12:15-23).
 - B. The length of a fast may vary.
 1. One night.

Daniel 6:18

2. One day.
 - I Samuel 7:6
 - II Samuel 1:12; 3:35
 - Judges 20:26
3. Three days and three nights.
 - Esther 4:16
 - Acts 9:9, 17-19 (not planned)
4. Seven days.
 - I Samuel 31:13
 - II Samuel 12:16-23 (not planned)
5. Fourteen days.
 - Acts 27:33-34 (not planned)
6. Twenty-one days.
 - Daniel 10:3-13
7. Forty days.
 - a. Moses (at two different times).
 - Exodus 24:18; 34:28
 - Deuteronomy 9:9, 18, 25-29; 10:10
 - b. Elijah (?).
 - I Kings 19:8
 - c. Jesus.
 - Matthew 4:2 (Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2)

V. When should I fast?

Many occasions for fasting are recorded in scripture.

- A. The ordination of elders and commissioning of missionaries.
 - Acts 13:3
 - Acts 14:23
- B. Intercession for the people of God.
 - Exodus 24:18
 - Deuteronomy 9:8-9, 12-20, 23-27
 - Ezra 10:6
 - Daniel 9:3-4
 - Joel 2:12-14, 17-18
- C. Seeking the Lord and His way.
 - Judges 20:26-28, etc.
 - II Chronicles 20:3
 - Ezra 8:21-23
- D. Repentance and confession of sin.
 - I Samuel 7:6
 - I Kings 21:27-29
 - Ezra 10:6
 - Nehemiah 1:4-7, etc.
 - Nehemiah 9:1-3
 - Jeremiah 36:6-10
 - Daniel 9:3-5, 20
 - Jonah 3:5-10
- E. Receiving healing.
 - I Samuel 1:5-11, 18-20
 - II Samuel 12:15-16, 22-23
 - Psalms 35:13
- F. Petitioning God to withhold His hand in judgment.
 - Deuteronomy 9:18, 25
 - Joel 2:12-15
- G. Preparation to receive word from God.
 - Deuteronomy 9:18
 - Daniel 9 & 10:1-2

- H. Mourning another's death (II Samuel 1:12; 3:35); out of concern for another's safety (Daniel 6:18); or when faced with threats on one's own life (Esther 4:3; 9:1-3).
- I. Seeking protection.
Ezra 8:21-23