

Reading: Matthew 6:16-18, 9:14,15

Topic: The Importance of Fasting
In Spiritual Life – Part 1

Introduction: Fasting is mentioned a number of _____ in the Word of God and it has an important part to play in our _____ spiritual lives and in the collective spiritual warfare of the church.

I. FASTING – WHAT IS IT?

A. Definition:

1. Fasting is defined by Webster's Dictionary as "To abstain from _____," and "The act of abstinence from food.
2. In the Old Testament, the literal translation of the _____ 'fasting' in the Hebrew language means "to cover the _____."
3. In the New Testament, the literal translation of the _____ 'fasting' in the Greek language means "Not to eat."
4. In Bible Times, a normal _____ of fasting was a period of twenty-four _____, which usually began at sundown on one day and continued until sundown of the _____ day.

II. KINDS OF FASTING:

A. The Normal Fast:

1. The normal fast is abstinence from _____ while drinking only _____, and this was the most commonly practiced kind of _____ that was done in Biblical times and in church history.

B. The Absolute Fast:

1. The absolute fast is abstinence from all _____ and _____, including water, and this type of fasting was usually done in a time of _____ crisis or distress. Esther 4:16; Acts 9:8,9

C. The Partial Fast:

1. The partial fast is _____ abstinence from _____ and drink, usually eating only an unleavened type of bread and drinking only _____.
2. This kind of fasting was usually done when an individual due to _____ or illness, was unable to totally fast, so instead did a partial fast. Daniel 10:2,3
3. People also refer to something called "the Daniel _____" which is referring to Daniel Chapter 1 where Daniel and his three Hebrew friends refused to drink the _____ of the King of Babylon and to eat the delicacies that no doubt contained meat offered to idols. They instead opted to be fed with vegetables and water – this is more of a regimen of a diet rather than a _____. (It does require discipline)

III. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF FASTING?

A. Personal Spiritual Discipline:

1. We live in a _____ body that is not yet redeemed, and it needs to be put into subjection, or else it will rise up with its passions and _____ and rule over us. I Cor. 9:27

2. Fasting, when done properly unto the Lord will greatly help us _____ in the Lord through humbling our souls before God, in order that the _____ may die and then Jesus will live more powerfully in us by His Spirit. Ps. 35:13, Ps. 69:20, Gal. 2:20

B. Spiritual Warfare:

1. In the work of the Kingdom of God there is great unseen spiritual warfare taking _____ and God has chosen _____ and _____ as a means of breaking down the powers of darkness. Is. 58:6
2. Fasting is also a way of increasing _____ to deal with spiritual opposition and in the casting out of the _____. Mt. 17:14-21

C. Times of Crisis:

1. When times of crisis come, there are times that _____ with prayer to implore God's mercy and justice, moves the hand of God on our behalf:
 - a. Individually – 2 Sam. 12:15-17;
 - b. Collectively – Esther 4:16, 2 Chron. 20:1-4
2. Sometimes when things get very desperate in our lives, the _____ for God will exceed the desire for food, and bring about a period of _____ and seeking after the Lord.

D. Spiritual Guidance & Direction:

1. Sometimes fasting will bring us into a place to _____ and find more clearly _____ from God concerning His will for us. Acts 13:1-3

Conclusion: Fasting is definitely a part of God's _____ for our spiritual lives and we would be wise to understand its _____ and to participate in this effective discipline.

Next Lesson: Practical Aspects of Fasting.