

# Fasting – Friday Focus 2007

## Fasting

Definition - to abstain from eating all or certain foods or meals, especially as a religious observance. An act or a period of fasting. Collins Dictionary.

## What does the Bible say about fasting?

There are over 70 references to fasting in the Bible. In both the Old and New Testaments fasting was practised individually and corporately. Fasting is often initiated by God (Leviticus 23:20-31; Joel 2:12).

Fasting is

- Humbling oneself before God. Psalm 35:13
- Feeding oneself on the word of God. Jeremiah 36:6
- Disciplining oneself - subduing the body. 1 Corinthians 9:27
- Reflection and preparation before God. Nehemiah 1:4
- Dependence on God not on our own strength. 1 Chronicles 20:1-12
- Priority on spiritual not material. Matthew 6:33
- Ability to distinguish between wrong kinds of fasting. Isaiah 58:1-7
- Concentration on God - pleasing Him and not ourselves. Zechariah 7:5

When fasting, it is normal to spend time in prayer, in reading the word of God and in humbling oneself before God, allowing the Holy Spirit to search deep into our souls and lives to help us listen and see what God is wanting from us.

"Fasting is a physical expression of heart-hunger for the coming of Jesus....It is not a contrived means to make us love God. We love him and long for him. And then fasting rises up as a way of saying earnestly with our whole body what our hearts feel: I hunger for you, O God. Fasting expresses, rather than creates, hunger for God". Piper

## Ways you can fast

These include:

- *Esther fast* - A total fast is without water or food - limit to 3 days (Esther 4:16)
- *Water only fast* - this is difficult but effective, not recommended for those with busy lifestyles
- *Fruit and/or vegetable juice only fast* - Allows you to enter into fasting but still have some energy. Teenagers should consider protein drinks or adding protein powder to their drinks.
- *Daniel fast* - abstaining from certain foods or drinks (Daniel 10:3) this isn't limited to just drinking water and eating vegetables. Suggestions - only eat fruit, soup, vegetables, pulses and/or only drink water, juices, tea, water and milk.
- *TV, DVD and computer games fast* - enables children and teenagers to be involved. Parents need to encourage them to spend the time praying - family times, friends together, on their own.
- *Fasting from sex* - 1 Corinthians 7:5 encourages married couples to abstain from sex to give themselves to prayer.
- *Fasting from shopping, sports* (anything which takes up your time) - spend the time you would normally spend on this activity praying and listening to God.

## Practical

What is my attitude to fasting? Read and pray through Isaiah 58 and ask God to lead and guide.

What is the purpose of group fasting? Look at 2 Chronicles 20:1-4, 1 Samuel 7:3-8; Joel 2:15-17; Acts 13:3-4; Acts 14:21-23.

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## Helpful books

|  |                |         |
|--|----------------|---------|
| Celebration of Discipline                  | Richard Foster |         |
| The Hidden Power of Prayer and Fasting     | Mahesh Chavada | Destiny |
| Shaping History through Prayer and Fasting | Derek Prince   |         |
| A Hunger for God                           | John Piper     |         |
| Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough         | Elmer L. Towns | Regal   |

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