

FASTING

By Mark Moore

Greek: To go without food. To be hungry. Hebrew: Abstain from food.

I. Major Texts on Fasting:

1. Isaiah 58:3-7-The fast God desires is compassion and justice.
2. Matthew 6:16-18--Do not fast for ostentatious show (though it still could be in community).
3. Matthew 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:34-35--when the bridegroom leaves we will fast.

II. Purposes or Reasons for a Fast:

1. A sign of grief (may also be from a natural loss of appetite due to grief). Mt. 9:15 and parallels; Ezra 8:23; Nehemiah 1:4; 1 Kings 21:27; particularly in conjunction with repentance (Acts 9:9).
2. Preparation for prayer and/or a desire to gain God's ear or approval, or to show God your intensity in the matter~2 Samuel 12:16-23.
3. Preparation for a serious decision-Esther 4:16.
4. Fasting is also an effective way to deemphasize the flesh and give priority to the spirit, i.e. to show the body who is boss.
5. Casting out demons-Matthew 17:21; Mark 9:29 (Although both these texts have suspicious textual variants).

III. Facts about Fasting:

1. Total or partial abstinence from food and/or drink Esther 4:16; Psalm 35:13; Daniel 10:3.
2. Time limits:
 - (a) Through the night-Matthew 6:18.
 - (b) Morning through evening - Judges 20:26; 1 Samuel 7:6; 2 Samuel 1:12.
 - (c) Three days, three nights -Esther 4:16.
 - (d) Seven days-Samuel 31:13; 2 Samuel 12:16-18; 1 Chronicles 10:12.
 - (e) Forty days-Matthew 4:2.
3. It is referred to as "afflicting" the body. It causes physical weakness-Psalm 109:24
4. It is connected to:
 - (a) Repentance-Joel 2:12-17; Jonah 3:5; Nehemiah 9:1; 2 Samuel 12:15-23; 1 Kings 21:27-29.
 - (b) Prayer -1 Samuel 7:5, 6; 2 Samuel 12:16-23; 2 Chronicles 20:3; Nehemiah 1:4ff; Ezra 8:23; Psalm 35:13; Daniel 9:3; Joel 1:14; 2:12-17; Matthew 17:21 [in Majority text]; Mark 9:29; Luke 2:37; Acts 13:2,3; 14:23.
 - (c) Mourning-Daniel 6:18; 2 Samuel 1:12; 12:16,21,22; Zechariah 7:5; Judges 20:26; 1 Kings 21:27; Nehemiah 1:4ff.; 9:1; Esther 4:3; Psalm 35:13; Daniel 9:3; Joel 2:12-17; Jonah 3:5.

IV. Who Fasts

1. Anna serving in the temple-Luke 2:37.
2. Jesus' temptations 40 days-Matthew 4:2.
3. John's disciples and Jesus' compared- Matthew 9:14, 15; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:34-35.
4. Official Jewish fast-Acts 27:9, (cf. Lev. 16:29, 31).
 - (a) Pharisaic fast days were Monday and Thursday (cf. Luke 18:12).
 - (b) Christian fast days became Wednesday and Friday.
5. Paul's sufferings-2 Corinthians 6:5; 11:27.
6. Church leaders at ordination-Acts 13:2, 3; 14:23.
7. Fast of Pharisee (Hypocritical)--Luke 18:12.