

The Discipline of Fasting



HEADLINE TEXT

14 Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 15 And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. 16 No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. 17 Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved." Matt 9:14-17



V14: THE QUESTION

What kind of disciples are you bringing through?

The health of a church rises and falls on the quality of disciples that it raises up; we are called not to make MEMBERS of all nations but DISCIPLES!!!



V14: THE QUESTION

How do they compare to 'other' disciples?

We don't live out our faith in a vacuum; at some point or other we will be tested in comparison with others whether we like it or not



V15: WHO FASTING IS ABOUT

At a fundamental level all fasting is an expression of longing for THE PRESENCE OF JESUS CHRIST

The deepest longings and yearnings of our souls will be fully satisfied when Jesus returns



V16: WHAT FASTING IS ABOUT

The illustrations Jesus uses make the point that the new teaching on fasting would not find room in an old covenant context

This means there is a difference between what fasting meant in the Old Covenant and what it means in the New Covenant



Old Covenant Fasting

Predominantly as an act accompanying repentance and expressing remorse for sin

There were some instances in which fasting was a petition for protection, e.g.

Ezra and Esther





New Covenant Fasting

The reasons that Christians should fast



Fasting as Worship

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. Acts 13:1-3



Fasting for Ordination

And when they had appointed and ordained elders for them in each church with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in Whom they had come to believe [being full of joyful trust that He is the Christ, the Messiah]. Acts 14:23 AMP



Fasting and Deliverance

And He replied to them, This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting. Mark 9:29 AMP



Fasting as Consecration

Do not refuse and deprive and defraud each other [of your due marital rights], except perhaps by mutual consent for a time, so that you may devote yourselves unhindered to prayer. But afterwards resume marital relations, lest Satan tempt you [to sin] through your lack of restraint of sexual desire. 1 Cor 7:5 AMP



Fasting and Self Discipline

But [like a boxer] I buffet my body [handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships] and subdue it, for fear that after proclaiming to others the Gospel and things pertaining to it, I myself should become unfit [not stand the test, be unapproved and rejected as a counterfeit]. 1 Cor 9:27 AMP



Types of Fasting

Absolute fast – Deut 9:9

One meal a day (6-to-6) – Ezk 4: 10-11

Daniel fast – Dan 10:2-3



How often we should fast

Scripture does not say. It is dependent upon:

- Need and circumstances
- Appetite for the things of God
- The leading of the Holy Spirit

