
FASTING

“In a culture where the landscape is dotted with shrines to the Golden Arches and an assortment of Pizza temples, fasting seems out of place, out of step with the times”
(Richard Foster, 1978).

A SIGN OF MOURNING

- Judges 20:26 Then all the sons of Israel and all the people went up and came to Bethel and wept; thus they remained there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening.
 - 1 Samuel 31:13 They took [Saul's] bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days. (see also 1 Chronicles 10:12)
 - 2 Samuel 1:12 They mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan and for the people of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.
-

A SIGN OF REPENTANCE

- 1 Samuel 7:6

They gathered to Mizpah, and drew water and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the sons of Israel at Mizpah.

- 2 Samuel 12:16 (see also vv. 21-23)

David therefore inquired of God for the child; and David fasted and went and lay all night on the ground.

A SIGN OF REPENTANCE

- 1 Kings 21:27 “Ahab ... tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and fasted, and he lay in sackcloth and went about despondently.”
 - 2 Chronicles 20:3 “Jehoshaphat ... proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.”
 - Nehemiah 1:4 “When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.”
 - Nehemiah 9:1 “... the sons of Israel assembled with fasting, in sackcloth and with dirt upon them.”
 - Psalms 69:10 “... I wept in my soul with fasting,”
-

A CALL TO REPENTANCE

- Jeremiah 36:9

Now in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, in the ninth month, all the people in Jerusalem and all the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem proclaimed a fast before the LORD.

- Joel 1:14

Consecrate a fast,

Proclaim a solemn assembly;

Gather the elders

And all the inhabitants of the land

To the house of the LORD your God,

And cry out to the LORD.

A CALL TO REPENTANCE

- Joel 2:12,15
"Yet even now," declares the LORD,
"Return to Me with all your heart,
And with fasting, weeping and mourning;
Blow a trumpet in Zion,
Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,
 - Jonah 3:5
Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them
-

A SIGN OF INTENSE PRAYER / NEED

- Ezra 8:21, 23

“Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions. So we fasted and sought our God concerning this matter, and He listened to our entreaty.”

- Esther 4:3

“In each and every province where the command and decree of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing; and many lay on sackcloth and ashes.”

- Esther 4:16

“Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way.”

- Daniel 6:18

“Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.”

JESUS' FAST



- Matthew 4:2
And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.
-

A REGULAR RITUAL

- Esther 9:31
to establish these days of Purim at their appointed times, just as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had established for them, and just as they had established for themselves and for their descendants with instructions for their times of fasting and their lamentations.
 - Jeremiah 36:6
"So you go and read from the scroll which you have written at my dictation the words of the LORD to the people in the LORD'S house on a fast day.
 - Zechariah 7:5
"Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted?'
 - Zechariah 8:19
"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth months will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah; so love truth and peace.'
-

A REGULAR RITUAL

- Matthew 6:16 - 18

"Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. "But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

- Matthew 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:33-35

Then the disciples of John *came to Him, asking, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."

AN ACCOMPANIMENT TO FERVENT PRAYER

- Daniel 9:3 “So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.”
 - Matthew 17:21 “But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”
 - Luke 2:37 “She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.”
-

SEEKING DIRECTION FROM GOD

- Acts 13:2-3

While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

- Acts 14:23

When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

TRUE FASTING (ISAIAH 58:3-6)

Why have we fasted and You do not see?

Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?'

Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire,

And drive hard all your workers.

Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist.

You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high.

Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself?

Is it for bowing one's head like a reed
And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed?

Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the LORD?

Is this not the fast which I choose,
To loosen the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the bands of the yoke,
And to let the oppressed go free
And break every yoke?

- Jeremiah 14:12

"When they fast, I am not going to listen to their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I am not going to accept them. Rather I am going to make an end of them by the sword, famine and pestilence."

People ... “who are careful of their ways, and desire to walk humbly and closely with God, will find frequent occasion for private seasons of humbling their souls, in secret, before their Father in heaven..”

—John Wesley
