



Fasting For Results

“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast....” (Matthew 6:16)

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“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly (Matthew 6:16-18).

Fasting is an important Christian discipline expected of every believer. When rightly done, it denies the flesh and grows the spirit for greater effectiveness in obtaining answers from God. In modern times, the word fasting is used for all sort of things, including medical treatment, weight loss technique, etc. It is important to note that the fasting that Jesus referred to in this scripture is always associated with prayers, without which it merely boils down to starving.

Jesus started His message with the word “when” - implying that fasting is not an optional exercises for the special few, but a mandatory obligation that form an essential part of Spiritual living. Apart from a few occasions of corporate fasting, it is up to the individual Christian to schedule his / her timing and duration of fasting.

In this study, Jesus teaches on what it takes to fast for results rather than merely to be noticed. Basically, he admonished his disciples:

- 1) Not to emulate the hypocrites in their methods and patterns of fasting
- 2) Not to be of a sad countenance or disfigure their faces for the purpose of appearing unto people to fast.
- 3) To anoint their head, and wash their face so as not to appear unto people to fast,
- 4) To focus their attention on God who is in secret; and will reward their secret fasting (+ prayers) openly. Divine reward is far better than earning reputation from people that you are a person that fasts and prays.

“But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face” (Matthew 6:17).

In Luke 18:1-14, Jesus illustrated the wrong type of fasting when he taught saying: “Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted”.

The Pharisees fasting and prayers were for a “show-off” and he got no answer from God, but the publican’s prayer was “sincere” and he immediately received answer from God. When you are sincere in your prayers and fasting, and not keen on who is noticing your efforts or not, then heaven will notice and reward you.

When to Fast

Personal fast is to be decided at a personal level between the individual and God. There may be times when corporate fasting may be decided at a group level which the individual can participate in. The following examples, serve as pointers to when personal fasting may be ideal.

- 1) At the beginning of ministry “And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred” (Matthew 4:2).
- 2) To avert danger “Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, 16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither

eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:15-16).

- 3) To overcome demons "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21).
- 4) Routine Christian practice of the local church "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2).
- 5) Commissioning initiatives "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:3).

What to fast from:

- 1) Food "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5).
- 2) Drinks (not recommended in long fasts)
- 3) Pleasant meals (partial fasting) "I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled" (Daniel 10:3)
- 4) Legitimate pleasures of life such as marital privileges "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency" (1 Corinthians 7:5).
- 5) Labour, Work and other routines of life "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours" (Isaiah 58:3).

What to do during fasting

Dedication of your time and life to Bible Study, Prayers, Meditation, Reading and other forms of spiritual development.

Results of fasting

- 1) Guidance, Health and Answered prayers "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward. 9 Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity" (Isaiah 58:8-9) [Medically it is known that fasting facilitates the body to recuperate, detoxicate, destroy cancer cells and provide other beneficial health effects].
- 2) Salvation - Ninevites spared from destruction when they fasted and prayed following Jonah's preaching.
- 3) Spiritual growth & Victory Jesus defeated the devil after 40 days prayer and fasting.
- 4) Development of faith "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21).
- 5) Anointing to break yokes "And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing" (Isaiah 10:27)
- 6) Deliverances Esther turned around the evil plot of Haman and spared the lives of the Jews after 3 days prayer with fasting.
- 7) Divine protection "Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance... 31 Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way" (Ezra 8:21,31).

Regular fasting and prayers increases spiritual growth. It releases God's powers for you to stay in victory and dominate your world. When rightly used, it becomes the steering wheel that propels your life to the desired God-ordained destiny.