

FASTING: HUMBLING SELF, SEEKING GOD

As we contemplate humbling ourselves and seeking God, in our upcoming Day of Fasting, set for November 21, we certainly need to learn what we can from God's Word about the "why's" and "how's" of denying ourselves as we turn to our God whose will is always the very best.

We can find in the Bible many examples of God's people seeking Him through fasting and praying.

- ❖ In Leviticus 23:27, the Children of Israel were instructed to fast on the Day of Atonement.
- ❖ Moses fasted in his time alone with God as he prepared to receive the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 34:28)
- ❖ In Daniel 10, this inspired leader fasted as God revealed to Him exciting images of Israel's future.
- ❖ Hannah prayed and fasted before the birth of Samuel (1 Samuel 1: 1-20)
- ❖ Ezra and Nehemiah both fasted as they fulfilled God's call to lead His people out of captivity and back to Jerusalem. (Ezra 8: 21-23) and (Nehemiah 1:1-2:8)
- ❖ Ester asked the Jews to fast when their future was threatened. (Ester 4:16)
- ❖ King Jehoshaphat led his people to fast as huge armies gathered to threaten Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 20:3)
- ❖ Even Nineveh fasted and repented and was forgiven by God. (Jonah 3)

- ❖ The prophetess, Anna, fasted and prayed before seeing Jesus. (Luke 2: 37)
- ❖ Jesus fasted before beginning His ministry. (Matthew 4: 1-11)
- ❖ Jesus clearly expected that His followers would fast. (Matthew 9: 14-15)
- ❖ Before Paul and Barnabas were set aside for their missionary work, they prayed and fasted. (Acts 13: 1-2)

Why, then, do we fast?

1. Fasting strengthens our intercessory prayer. (Ezra 8:23)
2. Fasting clarifies our minds as we seek God's guidance. (Judges 20: 26)
3. Fasting assists our hearts in dealing with grief. (2 Samuel 1:12)
4. Fasting focuses our minds as we seek deliverance or protection. (2 Chronicles 20: 3-4)
5. Fasting serves to express repentance and a return to God. (1 Samuel 7:6)
6. Fasting empowers us to humble ourselves. (1 Kings 21: 27-29)
7. Fasting allows us to express concern for the work of God. (Nehemiah 1: 3-4)
8. Fasting facilitates us as we minister to the needs of others. (Isaiah 58: 3-7)
9. Fasting invites God to overcome temptation as we dedicate ourselves to God. (Matthew 4: 1-11)
10. Fasting expresses our love and worship for God. (Luke 2: 37)

John Piper:

". . . what we hunger for most,
we worship."

So, we can be clear that God has given His people the challenge to fast both personally and as a community of faith, when sensing a need to seriously seek Him, His direction and His presence.

Surely, we can understand, as we begin a promising, though challenging 2021, we need God's presence, His direction and His inspiration. Clearly, then, we need to pray and fast.

How, then, do we fast, and how does fasting clarify our understanding of God's direction for us?

- 1. We fast by denying ourselves food for a certain period of time.**
- 2. We deny ourselves in order to focus our thoughts, our feelings and even our actions on God, and God alone.**
- 3. We include in our time of fasting, periods of Bible Study and prayer.**
- 4. As we fast, we confidently look to God for direction that we are committed to follow.**
- 5. We fast in obedience to God, trusting Him to accomplish His purpose.**
- 6. We keep our fast between ourselves and God, though we fast as a part of our faith family. We avoid thinking of fasting as some type of extraordinary achievement. Fasting is all for God's glory.**
- 7. We expect to discern God's action and to join Him as He acts to build His Kingdom.**

What are some factors we need to consider as we fast?

- 1. We prayerfully consider our health in making a decision to fast.**
- 2. We can decide to adjust the length of our fast if that fits better into our present health concerns.**
- 3. We drink plenty of water during our fast.**
- 4. We recognize our opportunity to focus our hearts and minds on God's Glory during our fast.**
- 5. We specifically ask for a sensitive spirit as He speaks new things into our hearts.**
- 6. We specifically ask for Him to share with us a burden for new things He wants to accomplish for His Kingdom.**
- 7. We specifically ask for Him to open our minds to see people who need His special touch through His hands guiding ours.**

Ideas shared are based in part on info shared in:
cslewisinstitute.org; thenivbible.com;
crosswalk.com