

“Breaking From Religious Tradition”

Matthew 9:14-17

I. Biblical Rationale for Fasting

A. Old Testament Support

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

Esther 4:15,16

Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai, “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. And thus I will go into the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.

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Acts 13:1-3

Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 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.

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II. Purpose in Fasting

A. Time for Mourning

B. Humble Self before the Lord

Psalm 35:13

“I humbled my soul with fasting.”

Ezra 8:21

“then I proclaimed a fast there at the river 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.”

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C. Confession and Repentance

“True fasting is always accompanied by abstaining, not only from food, but also from sin itself.”

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D. Longing for God

“In experiences of fasting, we are not so much abstaining from food as we are feasting on the word of God. Fasting is feasting.” -Richard Foster

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E. Express Whole-heartedness in Prayer

“Fasting helps to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything; to sacrifice ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God.”

-Andrew Murray

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F. Discern the Will of God

2 Chronicles 20:12

“O our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You.”

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G. Keep our Bodily Appetites Under Control

1 Corinthians 6:12

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

1 Corinthians 9:27

but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

“Fasting, more than any other discipline, reveals the things that control us.” — Richard Foster

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II. Purpose in Fasting

III. Why We Don't Fast

A. Misunderstanding

B. Association with Asceticism

“a person who leads a life of contemplation and rigorous self-denial”

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C. It's Difficult

“Why are we not more holy? Chiefly because we are enthusiasts, looking for the end without the means.” - John Wesley

“The enemy makes you a target because he knows that fasting is the most powerful of all Christian disciplines and that God may have something very special to show you as you wait upon Him and seek His face.” - Bill Bright

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IV. Why Jesus' Disciples Didn't Fast

A. New Patch on Old Garment

B. New Wine in Old Wineskins

Psalm 36:7,8

How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of
Your wings.
They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your
delights.

