

# **A FOCUS ON FASTING**

## **Matthew 6:16-18**

**We need to seek to understand the Biblical concept of fasting**

### **I. REGULATIONS FOR FASTING**

#### **A. THE PRACTICE**

1. Participation is expected: "When you fast" - v. 17
2. Prayer is included: You are going to your Father
3. Privacy is a must: Not to be noticed by men
4. Presentation is important: Being noticed by your Father only

#### **B. THE PROHIBITIONS**

1. Pride - Matthew 6:16-17
2. Legalism - Luke 18:12
3. Manipulation
  - a. Examples: See I Samuel 14:24 and Isaiah 58:3-5
  - b. The concept: You can make God move because of your fast
  - c. Fasting can be an impatient attempt to get God to move on something He wishes to wait on
  - d. We do not always get the desired result - Exp: David's son in II Sam.12:15-18
4. Insincerity - Jeremiah 14:10-12 and Zechariah 7:4-5
5. Physical Benefits

### **II. REASONS FOR FASTING**

- A concentration on God, His will and His work

#### **A. SELF-DENIAL - Leviticus 16:29**

#### **B. REPENTANCE (and Revival)**

1. Corporately: See I Samuel 7:3-6; Joel 2:12-13 and Jonah 3:5
2. Privately: Notes Nehemiah 1:4; I Kings 21:27; Daniel 9:3-8

#### **C. PROTECTION**

1. Ezra 8:21-23 > Ezra and Israel fasted before moving through hostile territory
2. Esther 4:16-17 > Esther asks Israel to fast as she contemplates approaching the king
3. II Chronicles 20:2-4 > Jehoshaphat proclaims a fast as Syrians plan to invade Israel

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**D. MOURNING**

1. Due to war in Judges 20:26
2. Over King Saul's death in I Samuel 31:13

**E. INTERCESSION**

- See Psalm 35:13

**F. CONSECRATION**

1. Moses before receiving the Ten Commandments - Exodus 34:28
2. Israel as a part of doing of good things for others - Isaiah 58:6-12
3. Jesus before beginning His public ministry - Matthew 4:1-2

**G. GUIDANCE**

1. The Elders in Antioch - Acts 13:1-3
2. Paul and Barnabus before appointing Elders - Acts 14:23

**III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FASTING** (Some practical suggestions)

A. BE SENSITIVE to God's leading when deciding to fast

B. BE CAREFUL to avoid wrong motives for fasting

C. BE PARTICULAR: Have a particular purpose in mind when you begin your fast

D. BE PREPARED:

1. Have a specific time frame
2. Have specific Scripture passages preselected for reading and meditation
3. Have a specific prayer list prepared for this time
4. Have a quiet time and place that is free from distractions

E. BE REASONABLE

1. Don't fast if you have serious health needs that would make it unwise
2. Don't fast if your spouse is not willing to support your endeavor
3. Don't involve children in fasting when they are too young to understand its significance

**CONCLUSION:**

“There can be no right fasting apart from a right heart, right living and a right attitude.”

[John MacArthur, “Matthew” -Volume 1, p. 404]

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