

Foundations Lesson #16B

Fasting

The spiritual discipline of fasting has been instituted by God so that we, his followers, might draw near to him in a more concentrated, focused fashion, and so that we might add urgency to requests we bring before the Lord. Both Old and New Testaments contain stories of men and women who fasted, and who were greatly blessed by God for having done so.

I. fasting defined, described, and explained

- no food and no drink except water
- to be a part of the spiritual life of followers of Christ
 - Matthew 6:16-18 / Matthew 9:14-15
- can be individual, can be public, can be a group
 - individual: Exodus 32:28 (Moses) / II Samuel 12:16-23 (David) / Luke 2:36-37 (Anna)
 - public: Jeremiah 36:9 (Jerusalem) / II Chronicles 20:3 (Judah) / Joel 1:14, 2:15
 - group: Ezra 8:21-23 (Ezra & exiles) / Esther 4:15-17 (Esther & others)
- three ways the term “fasting” is used today
 - fasting, while still drinking water – Matthew 4:1-2
 - fasting, but not drinking any water – Deuteronomy 9:18 / Acts 9:8-9
 - “fasting” being another word for “abstaining” – “a juice fast” / “a Daniel fast”

II. purposes of fasting

- better drawing near to God
 - Acts 13:1-3
- petitioning God in a more urgent, earnest manner
 - Jonah 3:5-9 / II Chronicles 20:2-4 / Joel 2:12-17
- humbling ourselves before **The Almighty**
 - Isaiah 58:3a, 5a / Psalm 35:13
- disciplining our bodies
 - I Corinthians 9:27
- other purposes: a form of mourning or an aid to physical recovery
 - I Samuel 20:34 / Ezra 10:6 / Matthew 9:14-15 / I Samuel 30:11-12

III. results of fasting

- reward from God – Matthew 6:17-18
- the nation of Israel delivered from near extinction – Esther 4-9
- Nineveh spared from God's destruction as had been prophesied – Jonah 3:1-10
- gaining insight and understanding – Daniel 9
- the early church receiving clear revelation of the will of God – Acts 13:1-3
- churches properly stabilized with spiritual leadership – Acts 14:23

IV. some pitfalls to avoid

- fasting made into a flaunting display of piety – Matthew 6:16-18
- fasting for the sake of ritual – Zechariah 7:3-6
- fasting in place of obeying God – Isaiah 58:3-9
- fasting becoming an occasion for boasting – Luke 18:11-12
- breaking a fast without self-control