

What The Bible Says About Fasting With Prayer

I. What we learn from the Old Testament

A. Fasting was not legalistic.

1. Not explicitly commanded in law of Moses except on Day of Atonement
2. Phrase "afflict your souls" Lev. 23:27,29

B. Fasting seemed to be spontaneous, in times of mourning, sorrow, and affliction.

1. In most of these circumstances nature denies itself nourishment, and takes the edge off of hunger.
2. After the Israelites were defeated by the men of Ai, Josh. 7:6, Joshua and the elders of Israel remained prostrate before the ark from morning until evening without eating.
3. I Sam. 7:1-13 - When Israel was oppressed by the Philistines, they gathered at Mizpah and fasted & prayed, & confessed and repented; and revival & deliverance came.
4. Manifestation of humility; Ps. 35:13 - "I humbled my soul with fasting & prayer"
5. Daniel 9:3-6, 9-10, 17-19 - Prayer, fasting, confession

II. What we learn from Jesus Christ.

A. It doesn't appear that Jesus instituted any particular or regular religious fasts, but he does prophesy and sanction his disciples fasting after his ascension. Luke 5:33-35; Mark 2:18-20; Mt. 9:14-15

B. Jesus himself fasted. Mt. 4:2

C. Jesus cautioned against fasting as the hypocrites. Mt. 6:16-18.

D. Jesus gave lack of fasting and prayer as explanation of lack of power in his disciples. Mt. 17:21; Mk. 9:29

- III. What we learn from the Teaching and Example of the Early Apostles.
- A. Acts 13: 1-3 - "As they ministered unto the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said..."
 - B. Acts 14: 23 - "Prayed with fasting."
 - C. II Cor. 6: 5 - "approving ourselves in stripes, in fastings."
- 11: 27 - "in fastings often"
- the life of the apostles and first believers was a life of self-denial, of sufferings, of austerities, & fastings.

Conclusion: While Christians today are nowhere in the Bible commanded by the Lord to fast, he evidently expects them to. It should not be legalistic, but spontaneous; not hypocritical, but sincere. It should come from a heart sincerely burdened & grieved because of an overwhelming sense of the need of drawing near unto God for victory, for power, for revival, for confession, repentance & forgiveness & blessing; for importunate intercession for self & for others; for an impotent church & for a lost world, for sinners & for the sick & afflicted, for the Lord's work at home and abroad, in such a consuming passion & concern for spiritual things that has high priority over physical appetite - or if such a concern is lacking - God help us - to seek His face, until He revives our slumbering spirits & lays just such a passionate burden heavy upon us.