

# FASTING

What is fasting?  
Eleven Reasons to fast  
Seven different ways to fast  
Spiritual warfare



SS Bible Study

January 16, 2011

**H**ow long has it been since you heard a sermon on fasting or attended a Bible study on this timely subject? Do you fast? Why did you fast? Did fasting help you in any way? Can you explain fasting to a new believer? We hope this study will help you in your walk with God.

## FASTING IS BIBLICAL

Have you noticed how many references to fasting there are in the Bible?

**David fasted** when his baby was sick and on his deathbed (2 Samuel 12:15-23).

**The first thing Jesus did**, following His baptism, as He entered His earthly ministry, was to fast ( Matt. 4:1-2).

**Paul fasted** following his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road (Acts 9:7-9).

**The early church fasted** before choosing the first missionaries and sending them out (Acts 13:1-3))

**The only time married couples are to refrain from sex** or fail to meet their spouse's sexual needs is when they are fasting (I Cor. 7:1-5). And the list goes on.

Isn't it strange that, since there is so much in the Bible about fasting, there is so little being preached from the pulpits today on this important subject? Fasting is the "missing link."

## THE DISCIPLES FAILED BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND FASTING (Matthew 17:14-21)

14 "And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, 15 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. 16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. 17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. 18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. 19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? 20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. 21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

## II. FASTING IS ONE OF THE THREE THINGS GOD EXPECTS OF ALL BELIEVERS.

The three things God expects of all serious Christians are: Giving, Praying, and Fasting. Consider the following verses from the Sermon on the Mount.

As you read this popular chapter in which Jesus gives us instructions on prayer, giving, and fasting, you will notice that Jesus did not

say, **IF** you give, **IF** you pray, or **IF** you fast. Jesus said **WHEN** you give, **WHEN** you pray, and **WHEN** you fast.

### 1. GIVING (Matt. 6:1-4)

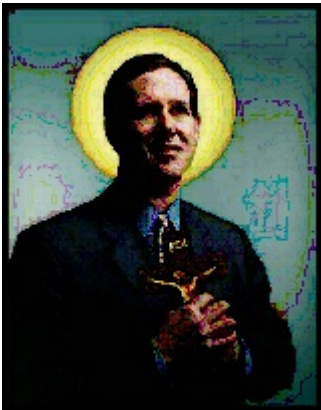


“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 2

Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.”

### 2. PRAYING (Matt. 6:5-8)

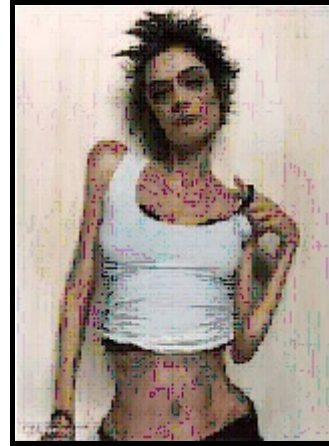
5 “And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door,



pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. 7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your

Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”

### 3. FASTING (Matt. 6:16-18)



16 “Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18 That

thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”

### III. WHAT IS FASTING?

The dictionary defines fasting as: “To abstain from food.” “To abstain from food for religious or medical reasons.” Actually, most Americans fast seven nights every week. They fast from the time they go to bed until the time they wake up. They break the fast with a meal called “breakfast,” but that’s not what I am writing about.

Christians are not the only ones who fast. Muslims celebrate Ramadan in September every year. They fast for thirty days in honor of Allah.

When we speak of Biblical fasting, we are speaking about depriving ourselves of food, drink, deserts, etc. for a period of time for Biblical reasons.

### IV. WHAT FASTING IS NOT

1. Fasting is not starvation.
2. Fasting is not merely a Christian diet.
3. Fasting is not primarily a way to lose weight, although weight loss is definitely a by-product of Biblical fasting.

4. Fasting is not primarily a way to better health, although better health is definitely a by-product of fasting.

5. Fasting is not "twisting God's arm" to get Him to do something for us.

6. Fasting is not merely a religious ritual or an exercise.

## **THERE ARE AT LEAST FOUR DIFFERENT KINDS OF FASTS**

### **1. Total fast**

A total fast is where the individual eats no food or drinks no water for a certain period of time. I do not personally recommend a total fast.

### **2. Partial fast**

A partial fast is when we do without certain things for a short period of time, like sweets, deserts, snickers, Little Debbies, etc. We give up something we really love to accomplish a spiritual purpose.

### **3. Daniel fast**

I like this one. Daniel ate no "pleasant foods" for a period of time. He ate only vegetables, fruit, and liquids. He did without bread, meat, wine, and pleasant foods (could this refer to deserts?) You can read about this in Daniel 10:3.

### **4. Liquid fast**

In the liquid fast the person does without all solid food and drinks only water and liquids for a certain period of time. When deciding to fast, the individual does what the Lord leads him/her to do.

## **VI. DIFFERENT DURATIONS OF FASTING**

There are also different durations of fasts: You may fast one day, three days, seven days, twenty-one days, or forty days. Several of my friends fast regularly. When you decide to fast, ask God to show you which kind of fast and how long He desires you to fast.

## **VII. ELEVEN REASONS TO FAST**

1. We fast because it is Biblical. Did you know that for every three verses in the Bible on prayer there is one verse on fasting?

2. We fast for important spiritual purposes.

3. We fast to find the will of God.

4. We fast to break addictions to things like food, drugs, habits, and hang-ups.

5. We fast for miraculous healing.

6. We fast to break the power of sin in our lives.

7. We fast to receive more spiritual power with God.

8. We fast because we are hungry for God, or desire a closer intimacy with God.

9. We all need to fast for our children. Our children and grandchildren need the touch of God in their lives. Read Ezra 8:21.

10. We fast to bring down the Devil's strongholds.

11. We fast because we are engaged in spiritual warfare.

## VIII. WE SHOULD FAST BECAUSE WE'RE ENGAGED IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE (Eph. 6:10-13)

10 A final word: Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil.

12 For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.

13 Use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm."

We read these verses all the time, but in my opinion, the average Christian doesn't have a clue as to what the Holy Spirit is revealing to us here.

## IX. FOUR DIVISIONS OF SATAN'S KINGDOM

According to the late Dr. Theodore Epp, in his book, *Winning the War against Satan*, the author says that Satan's kingdom is comprised of four divisions: principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness, and wicked spirits in high places. See Ephesians 6:12.

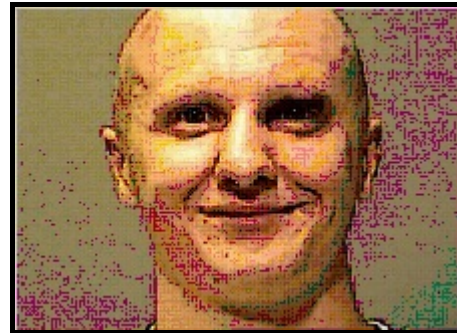
### 1. Principalities



The Bible alludes to the fact that Satan has divided this world into sections, or provinces, each controlled by a "prince" (fallen angel). The word "principalities" has special reference to political realms in which evil spirits (spirit guides) work to influence rulers, kings, presidents, parliaments, legislatures, judges, civil

officers, voters, party politics, office holders, office seekers, and the entire range of men and matters connected with the government. Read about the "Prince of Persia" in Daniel 10:1-14. No wonder we are exhorted to pray for those in authority.

### 2. Powers



The second division refers to a large section of these spirit guides who focus on and attack the personal feelings and

thoughts of believers and non-believers. According to Dr. Epp, these spirit beings are the instigators of the thoughts that lead to the unbelievable and hideous crimes we read about today. These beings do not show their real colors. They operate behind the disguises of self-interest, self-gratification, and revenge.

### 3. Rulers of Darkness



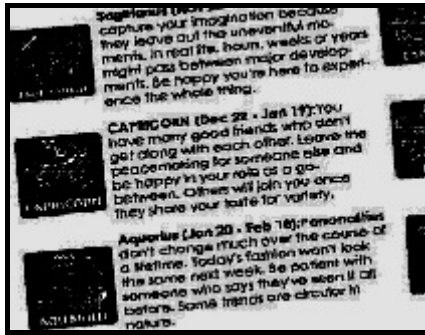
These are the rulers of the darkness of this "world" or "age."

According to the author, these are the spirit beings

whose influence is felt in superstition, fortune-tellers, astrology, witchcraft, the occult, and false teachings of various kinds.

For the Christian, the most dangerous work of the rulers of darkness is deluding people into watching for signs, seeking to interpret dreams, and following emotional impressions they receive regardless of the source.

## THE HOROSCOPE



## WHY DID IT TAKE THREE WEEKS FOR GOD TO ANSWER DANIEL'S PRAYER?



Daniel gives us an inside look at the spiritual battles that go on behind the scenes when we pray.

### (Daniel 10:1-14)

"In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. 2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.

### "The Daniel Fast"

3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. 4 And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river,

which is Hiddekel; 5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: 6 His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. 7 And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. 8 Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. 9 Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. 10 And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and palms of my hands. 11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.

12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.



13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

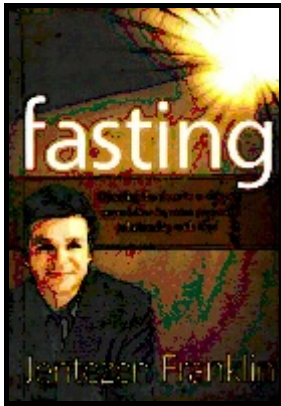
14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the **vision is for many days.**"



God sent the angel to answer Daniels' prayer the first day he began to pray. But the angel had to fight with the demon prince of Persia

(Iran) for twenty-one days. We must understand what is going on behind the scenes.

### THOUGHTS ON A FORTY DAY FAST



Some time ago, I came across an interesting book on fasting by Jentezen Franklin. In this book, he quoted another author who believed it takes a forty day fast to break the power of Beelzebub. I pass this on for your consideration.

### WHO IS BEELZEBUB?

It takes more than a three-day fast to break the power of Beelzebub. We find Beelzebub mentioned in Matthew, chapter 12, where Jesus warned the Pharisees about committing the unpardonable sin.

In this chapter, the Pharisees not only rejected the miracles of Jesus, they accused Jesus of receiving His power to do miracles from Beelzebub. Well, who is this creature called Beelzebub?

The name "Belzebub" means "Lord of the flies!" The Strong's Exhaustive Concordance translates Beelzebub as the "dung god!" That's why blaspheming the Holy Spirit is so serious.

The Pharisees accused Jesus of performing miracles by the power of the "Dung God, the Lord of the Flies." When a person calls the Holy Spirit the dung god, that is unforgivable.

In his book Jentezen quoted another author

who says that defeating Beelzebub, "The Lord of the Flies" is like eradicating some species of (insect) flies.

"Because the gestation period of that specie of fly is forty days, one has to spray pesticides every day for forty days or the flies will hatch and come back. The author goes on to say that this is why a forty day fast is so powerful.

I just thought I'd pass that thought along. Here is a picture of Beelzebub from Google.



### DO YOU NEED A BREAKTHROUGH?

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"While I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He

instructed me and said to me, 'Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding' " (Dan 9:21-22).

There are times in our lives when we simply need a breakthrough from God. Maybe you need

a new job or a breakthrough in your finances, direction on a big business deal, or maybe physical healing from an illness. Sometimes we need to hear from God directly for situations in our lives.

Daniel was seeking God to understand why the nation had been in captivity for seventy years. He began to fast and pray. At the end of this time an angel of the Lord appeared to him. It is clear the angel came to Daniel because of his fasting and prayer and his seeking God for answers.

### Jeremiah

The prophet Jeremiah says, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13). The problem with most of us is we are unwilling to seek God for the answers. Seeking God requires an intentional focus that may require prayer and fasting.

### Bill Bright



Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ said, "I believe the power of fasting as it relates to prayer is the spiritual atomic bomb that our Lord has given us to destroy the strongholds of evil and usher in a great revival and spiritual harvest around the world. The longer

I fasted, the more I sensed the presence of the Lord. The Holy Spirit refreshed my soul and spirit, and I experienced the joy of the Lord as seldom before. Biblical truths leaped at me from the pages of God's Word. My faith soared as I humbled myself and cried out to God and rejoiced in His presence."

### CHECK UP

1. We fast because it is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. We fast for important \_\_\_\_\_.
3. We fast to find the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. We fast to \_\_\_\_\_ to things like food, drugs, habits, and hang-ups.
5. We fast for \_\_\_\_\_.
6. We fast to break the power of \_\_\_\_\_ in our \_\_\_\_\_.
7. We fast to receive more \_\_\_\_\_ with God.
8. We fast because we are \_\_\_\_\_ for God , or desire a closer intimacy with \_\_\_\_\_.
9. We all need to fast for our \_\_\_\_\_. (Ezra 8:21).
10. We fast to bring down the \_\_\_\_\_.
11. We fast because we are engaged in \_\_\_\_\_ warfare.

**May God bless you as you prayerfully consider what you have just read.**

Gene Keith



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