

Declaring A True Fast

Most people would agree that there are two sides to every coin, that there are two sides to every story, and that there are two ways of doing things, a wrong way and right way. One day I was informed that one of our new co-workers fasted as often or maybe more than I did; I was so excited to know that another believer was working in the lab. The next day I told my co-worker how good it was having someone else fasting and interceding, until she told me “yes, I fast every day from the time I go to sleep till I wake up and eat breakfast”. So, I inquired if she had other means of fasting, she said “no”.

It's evident that my co-worker was misinformed of what a true fast is; however, she wasn't alone, because, in Isaiah 58 God rebuked the fast of the Israelites, and throughout the bible God continuously and consistently informs us what is and isn't a true fast! Therefore, it's needful to ask and answer, “when you fast to God are you offering an acceptable or unacceptable fast, a righteous or unrighteous fast, or a true or false fast”?

In Isaiah 58:3, God answers a question that his people were asking about fasting; they asked ‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’ then God Answers them saying “Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure and oppress all your workers”. God tells them they cannot fast as they do and expect for God to hear (answer) them. Then in verses 6-14 God tells us what A True Fast consist of: (v6) It's for loosening chains, breaking yokes, setting oppressed free; (v7) to attend to the needs of others; (v8) for your light to shine, for your healing, for your righteousness to be seen and active and God's glory be your guard; (v9) for God to hear and answer you, for you to repent from the yoke, the pride, and your flesh; (v10) to do for the hungry and oppressed, then you'll see your way (11) for the Lord's guidance, directions, provisions, and strength to be evident and never failing; (12) for the rebuilding, repair, and restoring your ruined foundations, walls, and dwellings; (13-14) for God's Joy and Triumph in your land and family because you Honor and Keep his Sabbath Day Holy! Then he ends this saying “**For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.**”

Fasting isn't a ritual that occurs only when you're asleep; fasting isn't NOT eating to lose weight; and please do fast to be noticed, recognized, or to receive a pat on the back, Jesus warns us of how to fast and how NOT to fast in Matt. 6:16-18. But rather, Fasting is a turning to God with all of your heart It' requires a deep and determine sacrifice! True Fasting is setting aside, scheduling specific time **for you and God to talk**; talk through prayer, meditation, reading, calling out to him, listening to him, mourning and seeking him, singing Zion songs, turning and removing yourself from that which he despises i.e. disobedience,

sin, and being disconnected from him. Praying and fasting is not a new practice, it's deeply embedded in the history of the church and mentioned throughout the Bible.

Fasting was often used as a time of turning to God for spiritual preparation (Joel 1:14; Joel 2:12-13). Esther and her people fasted and prayed to save God's people (Esther 4:16). Nehemiah fast and prayed to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem for the people (Neh. 1:3-4). Moses fasted for 40 days preparing him to receive the Ten Commandments (Ex. 34:28). Daniel mourned and fasted for clarity and vision for three full weeks (Daniel 10:2-3). Elijah fasted for 40 days before he received fresh directions from God (1 Kings 19:8). Fasting coincides with humbling ourselves (Ps. 69:10). Fasting is connected to worship and ordaining (Acts 13:2-3). Fasting plus prayer gives us power over demons and evil (Mark 9:29). Even our Lord and Savior Jesus withdrew from others to spend 40 days communing with His Father and resisting the devil (Matt. 4:1-11).

Verses within the Devotion!

Joel 1:14 Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord.

Joel 2:12-13 ESV

12 "Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; 13 and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.

Exodus 34:28 So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

Daniel 10:2 At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. 3 I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.

Ps. 69:10 When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach.

Esther 4:16 "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."

Neh 1:3 They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." 4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. 5 Then I said:

Matt 6:16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Mark 9:29 And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.” and fasting

Matt. 4:1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights,