

Captive's Corner



"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"

2 Corinthians 10:5

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Fasting

To fast" means "to not eat." For instance, we say we will breakfast (break fast) in the morning because we have not eaten since the day before. Sometimes, we fast due to the fact that we are ill or that there is no food available. At other times, we fast because of a desire to draw near to God. In most cases in the Bible, fasting refers to a time when we do not eat because we are focusing our entire attention upon God. Often in the New Testament, prayer accompanies fasting. Again, this is proof that the people involved are focusing their entire attention upon God.

Why fast? In the Old Testament, there were certain required fasts for the people of Israel. (The Day of Atonement is one example: Leviticus 16:29, 31; 23:27-32). Other fast days marked certain key events in

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the history of that nation - Esther 9:31. Fasting could give expression to grief (Nehemiah 1:4) and to repentance (Nehemiah 9:1). Fasting could also be an expression by which men could show humility before God (Ezra 8:21). Often, fasting was directed towards securing the guidance and help of God (2 Samuel 12:16-23; Ezra 8:21-23). However, God warns against fasting with the intent to manipulate God. Without right conduct, fasting is in vain - Isaiah 58:5-12; Jeremiah 14:11, 12.

In the New Testament, men of Israel were still practicing certain fast days and some religious leaders fasted for show - Acts 27:9; Matthew 6:16-18. Jesus taught that his disciples would fast after He was no longer visibly present

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with them - Matthew 9:14-15. In the early church, believers fasted when making key decisions in the church - Acts 13:2,3; Acts 14:23. Obviously, prayer and fasting continue to be associated

together as people seek to focus their attention upon God to the exclusion of sensual indulgences. You will notice that fasting itself does not earn the favor of God. It is simply the response of a heart that desires God above all else.

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