

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:16-18 – 9:14-17 – Acts 13:1-3 – 14:21-23  
**Singing:** 131:1-4 – 216:1-4 – 385:1-3 – 337:1-4

Intro: Who are the Biblical fasters?

### **The Practice of Fasting**

I. It is a special spiritual exercise II. It has to have a spiritual purpose

#### I. Fasting is a special spiritual exercise

A. Jesus expects His people to cultivate godliness: Phil. 2:12-13; 1 Tim. 4:7-8

1. Cultivate means to *strengthen – feed – perfect – grow*
2. Various aspects and graces of God's children are to be cultivated

B. Jesus expects His Children to fast

1. The Kingdom Charter includes fasting: Matt 6:16-18; Mark 17:21
2. The NT Kingdom life includes fasting: Matt. 9:14-15
3. The new churches practiced fasting: Acts 13:1-3; 14:21-23; 1 Cor. 7:5

Calvin: *Many for want of knowing its usefulness undervalue its necessity and some reject it as altogether superfluous while on the other hand, ignorance or misunderstanding can easily degenerate it into superstition.*

C. Jesus provides only one specific detail about fasting

1. It is to be a *private* matter if done *personally* (Matt. 6:16-18)

D. Jesus promised that fasting with have a reward: Matthew 6:18

#### II. Fasting must have a specific spiritual purpose

A. Fasting for the sake of fasting has no purpose

1. Fasting does not merit anything
2. Fasting does not make you more spiritual or humble

3. Fasting hypocritically will have a reward but not God's (Is. 1:13; Is. 58:3ff)

B. Fasting needs to have a specific spiritual purpose, such as

1. To strengthen our prayer for a specific matter:

a. Judges 20:26

b. Acts 14:23

c. 2 Chron. 20:3-4; Esther 4:16

d. Neh. 1:3-4; Luke 1:37

e. Ezra 8:23

- fasting is no 'hunger strike'
- fasting is adding a depth of intensity to your prayers
- fasting can be seen as a piece of our spiritual armory

2. To deepen our expression and confession of sin

a. Joel 2:12; Jonah 3

3. To express our humility in an additional way: Ps. 35:13; 1 Kings 21:27-29

Final Reflections: All forms of fasting is connected hunger

A. Adding 'fasting' to our prayer is expressing our *hunger for God deeper*

B. Fasting is not confined to *food-fasting* (Daniel 10:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:5)

1. to God it is not the *style of fasting* but the *spirit of fasting* that counts

a. John 4:23 *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.*

C. Fasting as a 'religious duty' without obedience is like putting a band-aid on festering and rotten flesh: Is. 58