

Fasting 101

(Matthew 9:14-15)

- Introduction:**
1. This past week, you received an email, approved by the elders, asking you to consider fasting prior to the mission work we are about to undertake in Karns.
 2. More than likely, there may be several present today, who have never fasted and who don't really understand what it's all about.
 3. Well, this lesson is for you!
 4. In this lesson, I would like to reinforce what was asked of you in the email and give you instructions about how and why we should fast.

I. Who Practiced Fasting?

- A. The record of those who fasted is a virtual "Who's Who" of the Bible!
 1. Moses (Deuteronomy 9:9).
 2. David (2 Samuel 12:16).
 3. Elijah (1 Kings 19:8).
 4. Esther (Esther 4:16).
 5. Anna (Luke 2:36-37).
 6. Jesus (Matthew 4:1-2).
- B. The Day of Atonement was the one time a year that the Jews were commanded to fast (Leviticus 16:29-31; 23:26-32; Numbers 29:7).
 1. While the word "fasting" is not used, it is called "afflicting the soul."
 2. This is the same Hebrew word used of David's fasting (Psalm 35:13).
- C. Some Jews took it upon themselves to fast more frequently (Matthew 9:14; Luke 18:11-12).
- D. But note, fasting was not just an "Old Testament" practice.
 1. The church at Antioch fasted (Acts 13:1-3).
 2. The churches of Galatia fasted (Acts 14:21-23).
 3. The apostles fasted (Acts 9:9).

II. What Is Fasting

- A. It is a deliberate refusal of food or water, to humble oneself and focus on spiritual concerns over physical concerns.
- B. But it's not just food and water but can be sexual activity as well (1 Cor. 7:5).
- C. The length of fasting varied (Judges 20:26; Esther 4:16; 1 Sam. 31:13; Luke 4:2).

III. The Purpose of Fasting

- A. Affliction of the soul – humility (Psalm 35:13).
- B. Why do we need to afflict our souls and humble ourselves (Psalm 51:17; 66:2).
- C. It focuses our attention on spiritual concerns.
- D. It disciplines our bodies, subjecting the flesh to the spirit.

IV. Warnings Concerning Fasting

- A. Fasting can turn into an empty ritual (Isaiah 58:3-9).
- B. It can be done to be seen of men (Matthew 6:16-18).

V. A Summary of Thoughts on Fasting

- A. Must we fast today? No. Should we fast today? Yes (Matthew 9:14-15)!
- B. There are many reasons for which one might choose to fast (temptation, illness, appointing elders, war, seeking forgiveness, attempts to reach the lost, etc.).
- C. Next week, we are undertaking the very same thing that the church at Antioch did nearly 2000 years ago.
 - 1. We're sending out Christians in an attempt to reach the lost.
 - 2. Our early brothers and sisters thought this was so important that they fasted over it.
 - 3. If there should be any difference between us and them, it would be due to our view of how important this mission work is.

- Conclusion:**
- 1. As I stated fasting takes many forms, and for different lengths.
 - 2. May I suggest some ideas.
 - a. Some may wish to go from morning till evening before eating.
 - b. Some may wish to skip one meal of the day.
 - c. Some may wish to do without their TV's, Computers, phones, and use that time praying, reading the Bible, and focusing on spiritual concerns.
 - 3. We have a week before the work begins. I ask you to fast with me.