

Fasting and Prayer

Scripture: The Whole Bible

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Fasting in the Old Testament

“Day of Atonement”

Lev 16:29-31 & Lev 23:26-32

“Deny yourselves” = must fast

Only time in the O.T. where fasting is
COMMANDED.

Acts 27:9 connects fasting with the “Day
of Atonement”

Examples of O.T. fasts

-Conflict / impending war

Judges 20:26 & 1 Sam 7:6

-Sick loved ones 2 Sam 12:15,16

-Death 1 Sam 31:13 & 2 Sam 1:11,12

-Seeking forgiveness Deut 9:15-18

1 Kings 21:17-29 & Jonah 3:4-10 &
Daniel 9:3-5

Examples of O.T. fasts

Purpose of these fasts: 1) Deny themselves and/or 2) show humility

***Always calling (praying) on the LORD**

Types of fasts

Normal: usually no food, some water.

Only certain foods: Daniel 10:2,3

Absolute Fast: no food and no water.
Jonah 3:5-10 & Esther 4:16 & Acts 9:9

Length of fasts

-One day (sunset to sunset) Judges 20:26
& 1 Sam 14:24 & 2 Sam 1:12

-Esther fasted 3 days. Esther 4:16

-burial of Saul (7 days). 1 Sam 31:13

-the longest recorded fasts were 40 days
and done by: Moses, Elijah and Jesus.

Ex 34:28 & 1 Kings 19:8 & Mt 4:2

Fasting in the N.T. (Jesus)

Jesus fasted 40 days. Luke 4:1,2

Jesus taught how to fast. Mt 6:16-18

Jesus said his disciples would eventually fast. Mt 9:15-17

Fasting in the early church

Antioch- Acts 13:1-3

Barnabas and Saul sent off to work for the Lord

Churches of Galatia- Acts 14:21-23

Appointing elders

Does this matter to Christians today?

Jesus assumed his followers would practice fasting. Matthew 6

Jesus said his disciples would fast. Mt 9

Early church fasted. Should we do less?

How should we fast?

Not to be seen by men. Mt 6:16-18

Not as some religious ritual. Mt 9:14

Not with an unrepentant heart.

Isaiah 58:3-9

Practical Suggestions

- Ask your Doctor if you are able
- Remember there are partial fasts
- Drink lots of liquid while fasting
- Set your limits and honor them
- Fast with a reason, goal in mind
- Most important...pray purposefully!