

Some Basics of Prayer & Fasting

"But when you fast, perfume your head and wash your face, So that your fasting may not be noticed by men but by your Father, Who sees in secret; and your Father, Who sees in secret, will reward you in the open." Matthew 6:17-18 (AMP)

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What is fasting? This is a question I have been asked many times. It is a legitimate question, because this is a subject that is not widely taught in the churches much less practiced. You will read about fasting in the Bible, hear about it in your doctor's office, and you may hear about it through nutritional and health programs. The dictionary definition of the word fast (fasting) is to abstain entirely from or limit food, to eat only sparingly or of certain types of food, or a period of self-denial. As we have briefly discussed different types of fasts, let's move on to discuss the meaning of a biblical fast.

Body, Soul and People

What makes a biblical fast different from any other fast? It is not only a voluntary abstinence from food, but while practicing it, praying to God (the Creator of Heaven and earth), seeking Him during the fast, and following biblical guidelines are vital parts of the fast. As Christians, the practice of fasting is not necessary to ensure our salvation. But, we all live in a body, have a soul (mind, will and emotions), and live around people. These areas have the potential of creating circumstances that are hard to manage. At times, it is even difficult to understand why we are facing a particular battle. Biblical fasting helps you gain strength to work through these issues and to receive help from God. In the Bible, fasting was practiced when the people of God faced hardships, faced the enemy, started an assignment from God, and so many other examples. These biblical patriarchs dealt with the same issues of having a body, having a soul, and living around people as we do today.

A Daniel Kind of Character

Participating in a twenty-one-day fast and naming it a 'Daniel Fast' may not necessarily bring you understanding of a vision as it did Daniel in Daniel chapter 10. However, it will assist you in developing the Daniel kind of character that will prepare you to receive from God as did Daniel and many other biblical patriarchs when they fasted. A very important part of a discipline working for you is to know what you must do. According to the scripture we find that food is always involved in fasting. Therefore, whether you sacrifice activities and physical pleasures or not, the abstinence of food should always be included in your fasting. The decision whether you fast a meal, certain types of food, or all food for the entire fasting period remains between you and the Holy Spirit.