

Is *fasting* for us today?

Fasting is not practiced very much in America today. ... Should we? Before we discuss this in more detail let us first define the word. According to the most respected Greek lexicons, BDAG and Thayer's, the word is used in three senses; 1) as a public rite, as the Jews did ceremonially, 2) when forced by circumstances to go without food, and 3) individually as a religious exercise or for a devotional purpose. Quoting from Thayer's, *νηστευω*,

*“to fast, i.e. to abstain as a religious exercise from food and drink: either entirely, if the fast lasted for a single day ... **or** from customary and choice nourishment, if it continued several days ...”*

Both lexicons list the scriptures in the following appendix as being used in the third sense of “individually as a religious exercise or for a devotional purpose.” Please take time to review the passages listed in the appendix, especially noting the three from Acts.

Since the practice of fasting is **not commanded nor given to us as specific instructions** we conclude the concept of fasting is presented to us as an approved example. God offers us this opportunity to add emphasis to our prayers. We know Jesus fasted in special times of crisis, Matthew 4:2-3. Gave instructions about how to fast properly, Matthew 6:16-18, and He also predicted his disciples would fast, Matthew 9:15. We also have at least two examples of Christians fasting after Christ's ascension, Acts 13:2-3, 14:23. Christians can follow these approved examples by fasting today when the need arises.

Therefore we can conclude that fasting is of some benefit, else it would not have been done and encouraged by Christ and practiced by His disciples.

About 45 years ago I had one of my first experiences with fasting. I was teaching an adult Bible school class and fasting was mentioned in our text. A class discussion began. Since no one present had any experience with fasting, I suggested we all practice fasting one day in the next week. The next Sunday we shared our experiences. For those who had tried it there was no indication of physical, psychological or spiritual benefit from our experiences! That day I learned a very important lesson about fasting. Fasting is not intended for **casual** use!! Over the years I have learned the benefits of fasting. Fasting is very advantageous, but only in times of intense need. And only **you** can decide whether or not you have an *intense need*!

The right time to fast can only be decided between you and God! If and when you **know** you should fast then humbly use it, expecting God's blessing. Just like God gave us the avenue of prayer He also gave us fasting. Just like prayer is effective in proportion to our inner concentration and spiritual sincerity, so is fasting. Just like prayer can be abused by the casual and rote exercise, so can fasting.

We are now in a time of uncertainty and a time when more and more sins seem to be acceptable. Even our government officially encourages the sin of homosexuality by allowing the change of the definition of marriage, originally given by God as a union of one man and one woman (see *Gay Marriage and the Supreme Court* on my website). We are now in a time of excessive campaign chaos, political propaganda, and **spiritual weakening** rushing this country in the wrong direction. I have never witnessed anything like this in my eighty years on this earth. Is this distress in America enough to cause an *intense need* in our lives?

Is this the time to use every possible means God has given us to **plead for His help**? Is now the time for all of us to add fasting to our prayers?? I sincerely beg you to consider this option. As we are currently praying every day for God to save our nation, will you join me in adding fasting to our prayers for **two** days, November 7 and 8?

I know God **can** save this nation!! If we add fasting to our prayers as we prepare, and then fulfill our duty to vote, I am confident **He will!!** Your brother in Christ,Cliff

Appendix

Fasting in the New Testament (NIV)

Mt 4:2 After fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

Mt 6:16 "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

Mt 6:17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,

Mt 6:18 so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Mt 9:14 Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"

Mt 9:15 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

Mr 2:18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"

Mr 2:19 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them.

Mr 2:20 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.

Lu 2:37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying.

Lu 5:33 They said to him, "John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking."

Lu 5:34 Jesus answered, "Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?"

Lu 5:35 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast."

Lu 18:12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

Ac 13:2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Ac 13:3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Ac 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.