The Purpose of Fasting

Isaiah 58:6-9 – Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

Fasting has four main purposes:

1) To loose the bondage of wickedness in your life.
2) To undo and remove heavy burdens.
3) Free you from the oppression from the devil.
4) Break yokes or restraints particularly things that draw you to unholiness.

From these verses we can see that fasting does not change God, but instead fasting changes you. Fasting helps us to pull our minds and focus away from our fleshy desires and place them more readily upon the Lord for a special and designated period of time for the purpose of lasting results. Fasting is not and end in itself. In other words, fasting alone will not bring results.

Fasting is not some magic wand, but it is for the purpose of causing your flesh to submit to the Word of God and prepare you to receive.

THREE KEY COMMANDMENTS TO FOLLOW WHILE FASTING

1**) Giving to the poor.** There must be a key spiritual principle that the Bible gives is by asking us to ***"deal our bread to the hungry."*** We can take the food we might have eaten during the time of fasting and give it to those in need.

2) **You should set apart an increased time devoted to prayer**. ***"The shalt thou CALL"*** Fasting and prayer should work together. You can have prayer without fasting, but you cannot have fasting without prayer. Other Scriptures: **Acts 10:30, Acts 13:2-3, Acts 14:23, Ezra 8:21-23, Judges 20:26, 2 Chronicles 20:3-4, Joel 1:14, 2:15-17**

3) **Stop any unholy way of lifestyle.** **"...take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger** (STRIFE)**, and speaking vanity** (USELESS OR EVIL WORDS)**."**

Remember: Fasting goes with prayer, not prayer with fasting.

HOW FASTING WAS INCORPORATED IN THE JESUS' MINISTRY

Matthew 4:1-2 - Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward and hungered.

Matthew 6:16-18 - Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

- Do not look sad so your fasting may be seen by men. The reward for fasting is not to be seen by men. But when you fast, be joyful and refreshed. This is so your fasting won't be noticed by men.

What you do in secret God will reward you for openly.

Matthew 9:14 - Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

Also Mark 2:18-22

Luke 5:33

- Jesus is stating that fasting would be a practice when he departed back to heaven. This is why fasting was and is practiced in the New Testament church.

HOW FASTING APPLIES TO THE NEW TESTATEMENT CHURCH

Acts 10:30 - And Cornelius said, four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

- He fasted for four days. His fasting was coupled with prayer. Fasting and prayer opened the door to the supernatural.

Acts 13:2-3 - AS they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they has fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

- Fasting was coupled with ministering to the Lord. This opened the door to the supernatural word of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 14:23 - And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and has prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

- When elders were ordained into the church, there was fasting and prayer that went forth.

ADDITIONAL BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF THE BENEFITS OF PRAYER & FASTING

Repentance and Restoration.

- **Joel 2:12-17** - The people were instructed to fast and weep as they repented. They were to rend their heart.

Encourages character building and holiness.

- **Isaiah 58:1-7** - God desires that fasting will brings forth giving food to the hungry, take in the poor, cover the naked, care properly and be responsible for your family.

For Intercession.

- **Psalm 35:13** - David afflicted his soul with fasting for his enemies when they were sick.

Direction and Guidance.

- **Acts 13:2-3** - God directed the sending out of Saul and Barnabas.
- **Ezra 8:21-23** - Sought for God a right way of direction.

Deliverance and Protection.

- **Matthew 17:21** - Prayer and fasting required in casting our demons.
- **2 Chronicles 20** - Judah was delivered from their enemies when they fasted and sought the Lord.
- **Isaiah 58:6** - To loose the bands of wickedness, undo heavy burdens and let the oppressed go free and break every yoke.
- **Isaiah 58:8-9** - The glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard.

Opens the Door to the Glory of God.

- **Acts 10:30** - Cornelius speaks with an angel. Fasting will open the door to the supernatural.

TYPES OF BIBLICAL FASTING

The Bible does not give any particular set way or length for fasting.

1. **Complete fasts.** No food or no food AND water. Commonly one day.
2. **Partial fasts.** Daniel ate no *pleasant* bread for 21 days. No pleasant bread might include one, or more likely, a combination of one or more of the following:

    A. Just bread/plain crackers and/or juice and water.
    B. Just a broth or type of soup.
    C. Eliminating all sweets, junk food or "pleasurable" foods (probable)
    D. Choosing only a limited and healthful diet (maybe limit some dairy products)
    E. Dietary supplements or shakes may be useful
    F. Skipping perhaps one meal per day
    G. Most beverages should be limited to water or 100% juice.

Be sure to get plenty of fluids and get plenty of sleep. More sleep and rest is needed during a fast.

NOTE: Pregnant or nursing mothers should only consider minimal fasts under the #2 category under letter C,D, & G.

4. **Supernatural fasts.** Jesus and Moses who fasted 40 days without any food at all. And they only did it once. Very few will ever be called to this type of fast. Serious health conditions could result without the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

5. **Other fasts.** While the Bible generally speaks of food fasts, you could also consider fasting activities such as TV or other similar activities. However, these should be considered regardless in the endeavor to devote to special times of increased prayer and Bible reading.

Rather than long periods of fasting, the Bible encourages **regular** fasting. This is living a "fasted life". In fact, the Bible doesn't teach long fasts at all. Longer fasts are more than likely to fall under category #2, especially if a regular or semi-normal work schedule is kept. When choosing the perimeters of your tailor-made fast, be sure to consider your health level, work environment etc. **Decide how you will fast each day ahead of time and stick to it. Write down your plan. Planning ahead will help you maintain your fast. Realize that the first few days are the most challenging.**

STEPS TO HELP YOU BEGIN YOUR FAST

1. **Decide the purpose and nature of the fast**. What do you want to accomplish?

2. **Proclaim the fast before the Lord.** State when you will start and finish. Begin with a declaration before the Lord that you have called this the time of fasting. You may want to receive communion.

3. **Believe that you receive the reward of fasting (Matthew 6:18) before the fast**. Thank God for it throughout the fast.

4. **Worship the Lord during the fast (Acts 13).** Worship is always important in our receiving from the Lord.

5. **Make a point to eliminate as many things from your schedule as possible for the purpose of seeking the Lord.** Include your children in the fast. While children cannot "fast" their food in the way adults can, they can give up certain toys, events, candy etc.