

# PRAYER AND FASTING

## PRINCIPLES & PRACTICES

*selected texts*

### PRINCIPLES

- There is more to fasting than just abstaining from food — fasting is about our relationship with Christ, it is a spiritual exercise with a focus, a Christ-centered purpose seeking spiritual results that honor and glorify Christ (see Isaiah 58:1ff; Matt. 6:16-18; Ezra 9:1-10).
- Fasting is a help to our life of prayer (John 15; 1 Thess. 5:17; Neh. 1:8-10).
- Fasting is expected and taught to be a practiced discipline of the faith (Matt. 6:16-18; 9:14-15).
- Fasting was associated with grief and mourning (1 Sam. 1:7-8; 31:13).
- Fasting was associated with seeking God's renewed presence and sustaining strength and salvation from enemies, danger and temptation (Ex. 34:28; Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:2; 2 Chron. 20:3-4; Esther 4:16; ).
- Fasting goes along with knowing and doing God's will (Judges 20; Acts 14:23).
- Fasting is related to power and fruit through ministry (1 Kings 13:122; Isa. 58:1-12; Acts 13:1-4; Matt. 4:2ff).
- Fasting is linked with worship and adoration of the Father (Luke 2:37; Zechariah 7:5).

### PRACTICES

- The Bible distinguishes between several kinds of fasts: normal (all food but not water, Matt. 4:2), partial (dietary limitation, Dan. 1:12), absolute, (no food or liquids, Ezra 10:6) and supernatural (Deut. 9:9).
- In Scripture, fasts were private (Matt. 6:16-18), congregational (Joel 2:15-16; Acts 13:1-4), regular and occasional (Lev. 16:29-31; Matt. 9:15).
- Biblical fasts lasted one day, 14 days, 40 days, 3 days and 7 days (see Judges 20:26; Acts 9:9; 1 Sam. 31:13; Dan. 10:3-13).

### PRACTICAL TIPS

#### *Bill Bright's 7 Basic Steps to Successful Fasting and Prayer*

- 1 Set your objectives — search motives, set goals and prayer points, humble yourself before God (2 Chron. 7:14).
- 2 Ask the Spirit to show you the kind of fast — length, focus, kind, limitations on activity, God's Word.
- 3 Prepare spiritually — list sins, confess, repent, seek forgiveness, make restitution, be filled with the Spirit, surrender, meditate on God and His Word, pray with expectation, be prepared for spiritual opposition.
- 4 Prepare physically — gradually move into a long fast, eat smaller meals, avoid high fat and sugar, eat raw veggies and fruits before fasting. When fasting — avoid drugs if possible — even natural herbal remedies, limit activity, exercise moderately, walk for exercise, rest, expect headaches, impatience and physical discomforts, keep liquids flowing — juices, herbal teas, broth.
- 5 Put yourself on a schedule — worship, read the Word, pray, surrender to God's purposes and activity, pray for vision, take walks, pray during meals, seek His heart in unceasing prayer, avoid TV, meet with others to pray, pray with spouse and family.
- 6 End your fast gradually — replace water with fruit juice, broths, soups, utilize small snacks, etc.
- 7 Expect results — a fast is not a spiritual cure-all — keep it relationship centered!

