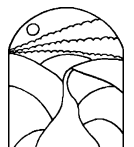


Bible Studies

Fasting Work Sheet

STREAMS IN THE DESERT



Fasting is a biblical practice, but there is also much confusion that surrounds the subject. If God knows our needs and prayer is as powerful as people say where is the need to fast?

We will start by considering some key verses. The question we need to ask as we read these verse is: Why?? did they fast?

Old Testament

- | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mourning | Repentance | Humbling | Dire Need | Preparation | Guidance | Petition | Help | Spirituality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Leviticus 16v29

Who fasted?

Why?

What did they want to achieve?

1 Samuel 7v6

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mourning	Repentance	Humbling	Dire Need	Preparation	Guidance	Petition	Help	Spirituality

Who fasted?

Why did they fast

What did they want to achieve?

2 Samuel 1v12

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Who fasted?

Why did they fast

What did they want to achieve?

2 Samuel 12v16

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Mourning	Repentance	Humbling	Dire Need	Preparation	Guidance	Petition	Help	Spirituality

Who fasted?

Why did they fast

What did they want to achieve? v22

Was he successful?

1 Kings 21v27

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Who fasted?

Why did they fast

What did they want to achieve? v29

Was he successful?

2 Chronicles 20v3

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mourning	Repentance	Humbling	Dire Need	Preparation	Guidance	Petition	Help	Spirituality

Who fasted?

Why did they fast

What did they want to achieve?

Was he successful? v14

Ezra 8v21-23

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Who fasted?

Why did they fast

What did they want to achieve?

	<input type="checkbox"/> Mourning	<input type="checkbox"/> Repentance	<input type="checkbox"/> Humbling	<input type="checkbox"/> Dire Need	<input type="checkbox"/> Preparation	<input type="checkbox"/> Guidance	<input type="checkbox"/> Petition	<input type="checkbox"/> Help	<input type="checkbox"/> Spirituality
Nehemiah 1v3-4									
Who fasted?	<input type="text"/>								
Why did they fast	<input type="text"/>								
What did they want to achieve?	<input type="text"/>								
Easter 4v3&16									
Who fasted?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Why did they fast	<input type="text"/>								
What did they want to achieve?	<input type="text"/>								
Daniel 9v2-3									
Who fasted?	<input type="text"/>								
Why did they fast	<input type="text"/>								
What did they want to achieve?	<input type="text"/>								
Jonah 3v5									
Who fasted?	<input type="text"/>								
Why did they fast	<input type="text"/>								
What did they want to achieve?	<input type="text"/>								
New Testament									
Matthew 4v2									
Who fasted?	<input type="text"/>								
Why did they fast	<input type="text"/>								
Luke 2v37									
Who fasted?	<input type="text"/>								
Why did they fast	<input type="text"/>								
Acts 13v2-3									
How man times did they fast?	<input type="text"/>								
Who fasted?	<input type="text"/>								
Why did they fast	<input type="text"/>								
What did they want to achieve?	<input type="text"/>								
What happened?	<input type="text"/>								
Why did they fast before ordaining Barnabas & Paul?	<input type="text"/>								
Acts 14v23									
Who fasted?	<input type="text"/>								
Why did they fast	<input type="text"/>								
Several of the these passages linked repentance and fasting .									
Do we need to fast for our sins to be forgiven?									
Do you think there is still a link between repentance and fasting?									
The above verses are taken from the Old and New Testaments.									
Do you think there is a shift of emphasis between the Testaments?									
Of the four NT verses that refer to fasting it was only the last one where a specific reason was given for the fasting and even here it was quite broad.									
What do you think the emphasis of fasting in the NT is?									
Sensitivity, closeness to God preparation for service seem to be the key ideas									

Bible Studies

Fasting

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Read Matthew 6v16-18

Did Jesus expect his disciples to fast?

How did he expect us to fast?

What was wrong with fasting in such a way that everyone knows?

This is part of a threefold teaching, "When you give to the needy," v2, "When you pray," v5, "when you fast," v16. Jesus clearly expects us to do all three. **When** you fast, not **if** you fast. Jesus assumes that such things would be natural to us.

In each of the three teachings Jesus emphasises that these things are not for public show. He is not suggesting that we practice deceit or become paranoid that no one should know we are fasting, only that we do not do it for public recognition, but only to and for God. Each passage ends *and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.* This means that praying, giving to the poor and fasting all have rewards attached to them. What reward do you think there is for fasting.

Read Luke 5v33-35

Jesus disciple and we have to assume Jesus himself were accused of not fasting. The Pharisees made it their practice to fast twice a week. (They fasted from evening to evening, effectively they only missed breakfast and lunch.)

If Jesus followed his own teaching would they have known if he was fasting?

Jesus answer seems a bit evasive, as if he did not want to say "well actually I do fast" Jesus however did say that when the bridegroom went away his Disciples would fast.

When did the bridegroom go away?

How does Jesus statement effect us?

Fasting is still something that is expected of us.

Elements of fasting



Fasting humbles. If you look back at last weeks study you will realise that fasting was often associated with humbling yourself.

"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble..." Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. James 4:6&10 of 1 Peter 5v5-6

How is fasting Humbling?

Why do we need to humble ourselves before God?

This aspect of fasting is often linked in the OT with penitence and repentance.

Do we need to fast so that our sins will be forgiven?

No we don't Jesus has done it all for us, But a penitent, broken heart is still something God desires. Psalm 51:17



Fasting is sacrificial It does us no harm from time to time to sacrifice something for God, it reminds us of our loyalties, and the good things God has freely given us. It is a way of giving to God, honouring and worshipping Him.



Fasting Subdues the flesh

I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. 1 Corinthians 9:27

It is often said that the body is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master.

Fasting has a long connection with triumph over sin and also with deliverance.

For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. Galatians 5:17

Fasting helps to remove the two main things that stand in the way of the Holy Spirit's work in us. Our sinful nature and our stubborn self will. With these out of the way it is easier to hear from God, to pray and to bring our lives into line with God's will.

Why then is fasting beneficial for us?



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It is for this reason that fasting is associated with seeking guidance from God. Fasting helps to get us out of the way, so that we can hear God's voice better.



Fasting Concentrates the mind

Fasting has a major impact on your life. If you want to spend time seeking God, fasting will concentrate the mind. It can prepare us for spiritual things. There is a record that the early church insisted that people fast the day of their baptism.



Fasting twists God's arm OK I lied. Of course it does no such thing, you cannot twist God's arm however much you fast, nor are you likely to impress Him with your spirituality. **Fasting changes man, it does not change God.**

In what way does fasting change us?

There are occasions in Scripture when fasting did not obtain what was sort. Eg 2 Samuel 12.

What is more Isaiah 58 strongly criticises the way the people of his day fasted. They abstained from food but they kept on doing all the things God hated, so their fasting was a waste of time.

'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?' *"Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Isaiah 58:3*

When we fast we must change. Isaiah goes on to say that true fasting has to do with justice and compassion, with obedience to God. Obeying is still better than sacrificing.

Do you always need a reason to fast?

If nothing else, fasting shows an earnestness before God.

Fasting and Prayer

This is one of the abiding connections in scripture. One of the reasons to fast, is so that we can spend special time in prayer. And so that we can hear from God better how to pray. It has been said that fasting intensifies prayer. To an extent this is true.

Derek Prince presented the following diagram.



The dark area are the things within God's will, that can be obtained by prayer. The light area are the things that can be obtained by prayer, with fasting. Some things cannot be obtained without fasting. The whole triangle is God's whole will for us. Outside the triangle is outside God's will, the things that fall into this area cannot be obtained, even through fasting.

If fasting had no benefits, in prayer, or in our spiritual lives, why did the early church practice it?

He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer." Mark 9:29. Many early MSS say "by prayer and fasting."

Under what circumstances might you need to fast?



What do you think is the best way to fast?

Well the Bible just does not say. You can fast regularly or at times of need.

You can do a total fast, or just fast from food. You can miss a meal or go 40 days. Fasting occasionally is generally considered to be beneficial to the body, but there are many dangers for those with medical conditions or those doing long fasts, find a book that explains some practicalities of fasting.

Right fasting has more to do with an attitude of heart than it does with the way it is carried out.