



## “Fasting” by Noel Heikkinen

Someone recently emailed me regarding fasting. I get this question from time to time, so I figured I would post my response here.

His specific question was:

*Could you please explain to me the “why” and the “when” of fasting?*

Fasting is usually linked with one of two things in the Bible: Mourning and Prayer. I can’t think of one single time in the New Testament when fasting included mourning. In the season we are living in, there is no need for that. In the same way that we wouldn’t rip our clothes and sit on a pile of ashes, we don’t need to fast in order to mourn.

In addition, it’s important to point out that fasting is not something that is required of Christians. However, we do see that New Testament Christians do fast in a variety of situations in the Bible. For instance, we see in Acts 13-14 that the Christians fasted before they made important decisions.

Whenever I have fasted, it has been when I really need God’s wisdom on something. There have been times when all the pastors at Riverview have fasted together in order to really pray together for something or to ask God’s direction.

As far as fasting and prayer are concerned, the purpose is to take the focus off of something earthly (i.e. - food) and use that time to pray instead. When I have fasted, I find that when I get hungry (always), I grab a bottle of water, take a walk and pray. I use the hunger pains as a reminder to pray and focus on God. In the Bible, fasting is almost always from food. However, I know people who fast from other stuff (TV...internet...whatever) and use that the same way.

Remember, too, that God isn’t impressed with us when we fast. He is concerned with our hearts and our motivations. Jesus said in Matthew 6: “And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, who try to look pale and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I assure you, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will suspect you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in secret. And your Father, who knows all secrets, will reward you.”



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