

## FASTING

INTRO: At age of 9, moved into house -- on kitchen wall, red heart and words, THE WAY TO A MAN'S HEART IS THROUGH HIS STOMACH.

SATAN DISCOVERED THAT A LONG TIME AGO. ADAM AND EVE IN Garden Noah, drunk -- Satan found the way to his heart was through his stomach

Isaac favored Esau because of the food he provided; Esau sold birthright for a meal; Israel in wilderness longed for the flesh pots of Egypt; I cor. 10:15, their idolatry: "They sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play."

Jesus first temptation in wilderness "that these stones be made bread."

Paul in Phil. 3 "Whose God is their belly"

THERE IS A RELATION BETWEEN THE PHYSICAL AND THE SPIRITUAL, and many times THE WAY TO A MAN'S HEART IS THROUGH HIS STOMACH.

Perhaps this is why the Bible places such emphasis on FASTING. As you trace the marks of revival in the Old Testament you will invariably find it coupled with FASTING.... One example will suffice at this point.. Jonah and Ninevah; Joel 1:12ff.

Moses fasted for forty days on Mt. Sinai; Elijah fasted for forty days on Mt. Horeb; Daniel fasted for 21 days; David fasted and prayed for his baby's recovery; Nehemiah and Ezra fasted. God commanded the people to fast at least once a year.

BUT FASTING ISN'T CONFINED TO THE OLD TESTAMENT. In Luke 2:37 it is recorded that Anna, the prophetess served God with fastings and prayers day and night.

John the Baptist fasted ~~and~~ and taught his disciples to fast.

Jesus practiced fasting

*II cor 6:4, 5; 11:27*

Paul in Acts 9:9 went without food and water for three days following his conversion on the road to Damascus.

In Acts 13:2,3 ~~the~~ it is written of the church at Antioch, "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 had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

Again in Acts 14:23, we have a description of Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey. "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."

That Jesus intended his disciples to fast is clear from Matthew 6. In this passage he is given instructions as to how Christian service is to be carried out -- without pretense and hypocrisy. He mentions three Christian duties : LMSGIVING, PRAYERS AND FASTINGS. Now none of us would say that Jesus didn't intend us to give alms and pray. The words of Jesus here reveal that FASTING is as much a part of Christian service as is almsgiving and prayer.

Again in Matthew 9:14,15

*What is fasting? Heb word = to cover the mouth  
Greek - NOT TO EAT  
" to abstain from food for spiritual reasons.*

BEFORE WE EXAMINED THE PURPOSES FOR FASTING LET'S OBSERVE THE DIFFERENT KINDS AND LENGTHS OF FASTING?

LENGTH: 1,3, 7 21, 40 days. Jesus was led of the Spirit to fast, so must we be.

*Kinds*

PUBLIC and PRIVATE FASTING

~~XXXXXX~~ DEGREES OF FASTING

1. Extreme fast -- no water no food. Paul in Acts 9:9
2. Normal fast -- no food, drink water, maybe juice. *- Jesus*
3. Partial fast -- Daniel in 10"3. No pleasant bread

PURPOSES OF FASTING

As we've already hinted at, the purpose of fasting is SPIRITUAL. Fasting isn't an end in itself, it is a means to an end. The ~~desires~~ urge to fast must come from within, moved by God as Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to fast and pray for forty days.

I. FOR DISCIPLINE When God first instructed His people to fast, it was to afflict their souls. It seems that the original basic reason for fasting was the human need for abasement.

Psa. 35:13; 69:10; Ezra 8:21

Often they would cloth themselves with sackcloth and ashes and remove all ornament in order to do all in their power to humble themselves.

WE ARE COMMANDED TO HUMBLE OURSELVES

Self-Denial is a vital part of the Gospel. The first call to follow Jesus is a call to deny self, to see that Jesus is our complete sufficiency.

Fasting is the perfect expression of repentance and sorrow for sin, because sorrow destroys the desire for food. It is the outward expression of the inward repentance.