

FOCUSING FAST

(Matthew 4:1-4; 6:16-18; 9:14-15)

Fasting is physical abstinence for spiritual purposes.

- **GROUNDS for fasting**

- Practiced by God-followers

The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves and present a food offering to the LORD. (Lev 23:27)

I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over. (Daniel 10:3)

Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish. (Esther 4:16)

- Modeled by Jesus

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Matt 4:1-4)

- Expected by Jesus

When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (Matt 6:16-18)

Then John’s disciples came and asked him, “How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.” (Matt 9:14-15)

- **GROWTH from fasting**

- Explore hidden issues

- Discover what controls you

- Feast on God

In fasting we are learning by experience how to be sustained by divine pleasures rather than human pleasures.... Fasting reminds us that we are sustained *“by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4)*. Food does not sustain us; God sustains us. In experiences of fasting we are not so much abstaining from food as we are feasting on the word of God. Fasting is feasting! (Richard Foster, *Spiritual Classics*)

- **GUIDELINES for fasting**

- Enter it gradually

- Enact it quietly

- Exit it gently

- **An EXAMPLE of fasting** (Catherine Marshall, *A Closer Walk*)

- **My FOCUSING FAST:**

- What:
- When:
- How long: