

To Fast or Not to Fast

Luke 5:33-35

BIG IDEA:

Is it appropriate for Jesus' disciples to fast? Yes, if we have the right motivation. There is a right and a wrong way to fast. To fast properly we ought to afflict our physical bodies to remind us our spiritual dependency. This realization should then lead us to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the end of our fasting.

Acts 26:4–5 (ESV) — 4 “My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. 5 They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.

The Pharisees developed a tradition of strict interpretation of the Mosaic law, developing an extensive set of oral extensions of the law designed to maintain religious identity and purity.¹

Colossians 2:20–23 (ESV) — 20 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— 21 “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” 22 (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? 23 These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

1. WHAT IS _____ ?

Luke 5:33-34 (ESV) — 33 And they said to him, “The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink.” 34 And Jesus said to them, “Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?”

At the heart of fasting is **deprivation**. **Fasting is intended to impress upon the souls of men their emptiness, not their fullness. The point of fasting is to inflict intentional grief upon the body as a reflection of the grief we feel in our souls.**

Romans 8:22-25 (ESV) — 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

2. WHAT IS THE _____ WAY TO FAST?

Luke 5:35 (ESV) — 35 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.”

Fasting is an affliction of the soul. Fasting is an external/physical action that either **reflects** or **promotes** an internal/spiritual vexation. There are times when fasting is the **result** of an afflicted soul. But there are also times when we **intentionally afflict** the body, in order to make the **soul more aware** of our **spiritual deprivation**.

“It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

– C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses*

Romans 7:21-8:4

Fasting is a discipline that reminds us of our spiritual need so that we find the fulfillment of that need in Jesus Christ.

3. WHAT IS THE _____ WAY TO FAST?

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We shouldn't fast because we are establishing our own ability but to heighten the reality of our inability. If the right way to fast is find your hope and fulfillment in Christ, then the wrong way to fast is to find your hope and fulfillment in self.

¹Johnson, B. T. (2016). *Pharisees*. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.