



FORTY DAYS WITH GOD

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Our time of consecration will begin March 9, 2011 and will continue through April 17, 2011. We will again limit our food intake to consuming only beans, rice, fruits, vegetables, and nuts (see sample menu). We will take this time for fasting, praying, giving, and moving (see *40 Days of Fitness* article and exercise plan).

Biblical fasting is going without food. The noun translated "fast" or "a fasting" is *tsom* in the Hebrew and *nesteia* in the Greek language. It means the voluntary abstinence from food." Abstaining from food is the typical kind of fast. (Daniel 6:18)

There are many reasons given in the Bible for fasting. God Himself established fasting. In the Old Testament, preparation for a special holy occasion included fasting and prayer. **The fasting itself is an act of sacrifice** and when we fast and experience hunger, we are reminded of God and His sacrifice for us (Luke 2:37). Surrendering comfort as an act of worship is not necessary but it is pleasing to God if it is sincere. **While fasting denies the flesh comfort, it feeds the spirit strength.**

Fasting is a voluntary decision and one that is between you and God. When you decide to fast, be clear with yourself and with God about why you are fasting, how long you will fast and use the time normally spent preparing and eating food to deepen and strengthen your relationship with God.

The fast should serve a purpose; there should be a significant reason for it. Here are some reasons to consider.

Reason one: The Scriptures teach us to Fast and Pray.

The Bible commands us to fast and pray. The Bible also gives us examples of people who fasted and prayed, using different types of fasts for different reasons, all of which are very positive results. Jesus fasted and prayed. Jesus' disciples fasted and prayed after the Resurrection. Many of the Old Testament heroes and heroines of the faith fasted and prayed. The followers of John the Baptist fasted and prayed. Many people in the early church fasted and prayed. By the examples of the saints and what the Scriptures have taught us directly, is surely something we are to do.

Reason two: Obedience.

God calls us to fast and pray many times in His Word:

Isa 58:6 "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke?"

Joel 1:14 Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.

Jonah 3:5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.

Matt. 6:16 Fasting is clearly not optional. When you fast (*rather than If you fast*), Our Lord, speaking of His disciples, said that after His departure, they would fast: when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then they shall fast.

Mark 2:20 But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.

Reason three: To draw closer to God.

As you pray you begin to pour out of yourself, it allows God to pour in more of Himself into you.

Reason four: To seek God for direction in an important matter.

Esther had to go before the king to beg for the life of her people.

Esther 4:16. “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 maids 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.”

Reason five: To show God that you are in love with him.

It shows God that you really love him to afflict body and soul, just to get a word or touch from him. He will love and honor you more in return for this.

Reason six: To seek an answer to prayer.

Fasting is sometimes used as a sacrifice when asking God to intervene in a situation. “But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.” (Psalms 35:13)

Fasting can be used for a variety of reasons but it must be done sincerely to be a pleasing sacrifice to God. It should be kept private; there is no need to reveal our sacrifice to anyone else unless a group is fasting together for a particular reason. Whatever your reason for fasting, use the extra time to grow closer to God. He will honor your sacrifice.

**Make sure you are medically able to fast. Seek your physicians’ advice. God does know and He understands your medical condition(s). He does not want you to harm your temple. If unable to fast from food, choose what consumes you (i.e. shopping, watching T.V, or talking on the phone), and give that up for 40 days. Just make a sacrifice, read
God’s word and pray.**

To God Be The Glory!