



2664 Willis Foreman Rd.
Hephzibah, GA 30815
706.792.9972

Sunday Worship
10:30 am
www.foclc.org

“Biblical Principles for Fasting Today”

Elder Ricardo M. Piña Sr.

‘Fasting Series’

January 18th, 2005 (Wednesday night Bible Study)

Definition: Fasting is a conscious, intentional decision to abstain for a time, from something, in order to gain spiritual benefits.

It is easy to see why fasting is not popular today. We live in a society of pleasure. Fasting is an act of denial. Denial is not popular, even amongst the church. Food, especially, is one the greatest pleasures of our present time. The restaurant industry is a billion dollar industry in the US alone. We will discuss fasting tonight and part of our discussion will be a review of what Bishop has already taught. This is not a bad thing. Paul said, “FOR THE rest, my brethren, delight yourselves in the Lord and continue to rejoice that you are in Him. To keep writing to you [*over and over*] of the same things is not irksome to me, and it is [*a precaution*] for your safety” (Phil 3:1 AMP). It does not bother me to drill the same principles into the people of God. Sometimes we need to hear them over and over before we get the in our Spirit.

A common misconception in the church today is that fasting is an Old Testament phenomenon. Fasting is all throughout the Bible. Let’s look at some Old and New Testament examples:

Old Testament Fasting

1. Fasting was mandated under the Law for certain times.

a. **The Day of Atonement:** (Lev 23:27-32 MSG) "The tenth day of the seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly, fast, and offer a Fire-Gift to GOD. Don't work on that day because it is a day of atonement to make atonement for you before your GOD. Anyone who doesn't fast on that day must be cut off from his people. I will destroy from among his people anyone who works on that day. Don't do any work that day--none. This is a perpetual decree for all the generations to come, wherever you happen to be living. It is a Sabbath of complete and total rest, a fast day. Observe your Sabbath from the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening."

- This was a mandatory fast for all Israelites.
- The Day of Atonement was a day where they slaughtered an animal and used to the blood of the animal as a “covering” for sin.

b. **The Feast of the Tabernacles:** (Neh 8:18 – 9:1 KJV) Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner. Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.

- This fast was also mandatory.
- The Feast of the Tabernacles was a feast where the nation of Israel remembered their wilderness experience. They fasted as an acknowledgement and thanksgiving to God for bringing them out of the wilderness and into the land of promise.



2. Individuals chose to fast.

a. For **Guidance**: Ex. Nehemiah. (Neh 1:3,4 KJV) And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

- Nehemiah fasted out of sorrow for what had been done to the wall of Jerusalem.
- The Lord spoke to him and gave him direction and strategies on how to get it rebuilt.

b. For **Repentance**: Ex. David. (2 Sam 12:16) David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.

- David sinned. This fast was part of his repentance for the sin in his life..

3. Leaders called for corporate fasts for corporate guidance.

a. **King Jehoshaphat**: (2 Chro 20:3 KJV) And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

- Jehoshaphat called for a fast for the entire nation.
- The Lord responded with a Word.
- That “One Word” gave them the strategy they needed for victory in a hopeless situation.

New Testament Fasting

1. During Jesus' time:

a. It was habitual for the **disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees**: (Mat 9:14 AMP) Then the disciples of John came to Jesus, inquiring, Why is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, [*that is, abstain from food and drink as a religious exercise*], but Your disciples do not fast?

- The disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees fasted often.
- This was a common occurrence in Jesus' day.

b. It was an act of **worship for Anna the Prophetess**: (Luke 2:36,37 AMP) And there was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old, having lived with her husband seven years from her maidenhood, And as a widow even for eighty-four years. She did not go out from the temple enclosure, but was worshiping night and day with fasting and prayer.

- This was a woman of prayer in the time of Jesus and he she continually prayed and fasted as her act of worship to God.

Note: Jesus had already fulfilled the law by this point. The Holy Spirit had been given on the Day of Pentecost. Everything after Acts 2 is part of the “Church Age.”

2. After Jesus' resurrection:

a. **Cornelius fasted and the Lord broke down racial barriers – Peter's Vision**: (Acts 10:30 KJV) And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing.

- Cornelius was a gentile. Gentiles were being overlooked by the new converts.
- Cornelius fasted and God turned the heart of Peter by giving him a vision.
- Cornelius' fast resulted in the Holy Spirit being poured out to the Gentiles.
- Never underestimate the power of fasting and prayer.



2664 Willis Foreman Rd.
Hephzibah, GA 30815
706.792.9972

Sunday Worship
10:30 am
www.foclc.org

b. **The church in Antioch fasted for direction concerning who to send out for ministry:** (Acts 13:1-3 AMP) NOW IN the church (assembly) at Antioch there were prophets (inspired interpreters of the will and purposes of God) and teachers: Barnabas, Symeon who was called Niger [Black], Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Separate now for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then after fasting and praying, they put their hands on them and sent them away.

- The church in Antioch was looking for direction on who to select for ministry.
- During their fast, the Holy Spirit spoke and gave them the answer – Paul and Barnabas.

c. **Paul and Barnabas then fasted when they needed to select and appoint Elders:** (Acts 14:23 NIV) Paul and Barnabas appointed elders[a] for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

- These men, who had been selected during a fast, decided to fast so that they would know who to select for ministry assignments as well.
- As they fasted they received direction and they appointed men and committed them to the Lord.

Word of Caution

Fasting is not a substitute for Righteousness.

I. **Isaiah Example:** (Is 58:3,4 AMP) Why have we fasted, they say, and You do not see it? Why have we afflicted ourselves, and You take no knowledge [of it]? Behold [O Israel], on the day of your fast [*when you should be grieving for your sins*], you find profit in your business, and [*instead of stopping all work, as the law implies you and your workmen should do*] you extort from your hired servants a full amount of labor. [*The facts are that*] you fast only for strife and debate and to smite with the fist of wickedness. Fasting as you do today will not cause your voice to be heard on high.

- Fasting alone will not guarantee you hear from God.

II. **Jeremiah Example:** (Jeremiah 14:10-12 AMP) [*And the Lord replied to Jeremiah*] Thus says the Lord to this people [*Judah*]: In the manner and to the degree already pointed out have they loved to wander; they have not restrained their feet. Therefore the Lord does not accept them; He will now [*seriously*] remember their iniquity and punish them for their sins. The Lord said to me, Do not pray for this people for their good. Though they fast, I will not hear their cry; and though they offer burnt offering and cereal offering [*without heartfelt surrender to Me, or by offering it too late*], I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.

- They were fasting, but God said He would not hear they cry, because of their sin.



How long should you fast?

Examples of Lengths of Time for Fasts	
1 Day	Jeremiah 36:6
3 Days	Esther 4: 16,17
7 Days	1 Samuel 31:13
14 Days	Acts 27:33
40 Days	Matthew 4:2

Why should you fast?

- The precedent has been set.** The who's who of the Bible fasted: Moses, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, Jesus, Paul, etc.
- It is for today.** The principle is found in all dispensations of the Bible: During the law, During Jesus' time, after Jesus' resurrection.
- God does not play favorites.** The example has been set that fasting helps us receive direction and guidance from God.
- Jesus expected us to.** He said, "When you fast..."

Benefits of Fasting:

- Fasting assists us in being men/women of "integrity":**
 - The word integrated and integrity come from the same word.
 - We are a spirit, we possess a soul, and we live in a body.
 - When we fast, our body tells our mind that we are hungry. Our mind then reacts by wanting to get something to eat. Our Spirit then reminds our mind that we are fasting. Our mind then tells our body that it will not have something to eat. This is all part of the discipline process. If we can learn to deny our body from temptations for food, then we will be able to overcome other temptations as well.
 - If we train our "entire man" to follow the leadership of our Spirit, then we are training ourselves to walk in the Spirit.
 - We are commanded to walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:16) and also to walk by faith (2 Cor 5:7). If we become fully integrated – Spirit, Soul, and Body – we will be able to walk in the Spirit and walk by faith every day.
 - Fasting is part of our perfection process.
- Fasting helps increase your sensitivity to the Spirit of God:** Most of examples of fasting in the Bible are of people who needed to hear from God. They fasted and the Lord responded with the strategy they needed to win whatever battle they were facing. Fasting helps us hear more clearly the voice of God, because at the time, we are free from normal distractions.
- Fasting helps develop your prayer life:** Prayer and fasting are equal parts of a single ministry. It does no good to fast without praying. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "When you pray..." (Mat 6:5,6). Right after explaining prayer, He said, "And when you fast..." (Mat 6:16,17). Fasting and prayer together. As you learn to discipline yourself to fast, you will also help develop your prayer life at the same time.
- Fasting in secret yields an open reward from the Lord:** Jesus promised (Mat 6:18) that if you fast in secret, meaning that you do not openly show everyone that you are fasting, that He will ensure you are openly rewarded for your sacrifice.
- Fasting enables us to re-invest our time:** Most of our lives are hectic. People commonly complain that they do not have enough time for everything on their plate. Quiet time with God is often the bill payer for a hectic schedule. When you fast you can take the time you would have spent on the thing you are fasting from and re-invest that time in prayer and Bible study; so that you can hear what God wants to say to you.