

Righteous Focus Matthew 6:16-18

Fasting

Watch our righteousness - **Matthew 6:1**

What we do with others – alms; With God – prayer; With ourselves – fasting

A time to clear the mind and body of impurity - **Zechariah 7:5**

Remove worldly focus and consider how we may have neglected God.

Would involve penitence and prayer, but especially a broken and contrite spirit.

Little to no recorded rules governing the length or nature of fasting

Jewish regular holy days, weeks, day of Atonement, etc., often included a fast.

Pride turned the fast into empty ritual and ceremonial show Lost focus on God and reconciliation

Examples Are Plentiful

Only one fast was specifically commanded in the OT. (Day of Atonement) - **Leviticus 23:26-32; Acts 27:9**

To humble themselves by "afflicting their souls" - **Psalms 35:11-13; Psalm 69:10**

Jews added a number of memorial fasts

People often fasted when they wanted God to hear their prayers:

When seeking God's forgiveness - Moses for Israel's sin with the golden calf - **Deuteronomy 9:15-18**

Ahab fasted to be forgiven - **1Kings 21:25-29**

Nineveh fasted at the preaching of Jonah - **Jonah 3:4-10**

Daniel fasted as he confessed the sins of Israel - **Daniel 9:3-5**

Fast at the communal reading of the Law by Ezra was an act of penitence - **Nehemiah 9:1-3**

When faced with impending danger/Times of war or at the threat of it

Jehoshaphat fasted when threatened by Edom - **2Chronicles 20:3**

When loved ones were sick or died - David - **2Samuel 12:15-17**

Israel fasted for Saul and Jonathan - **1Samuel 31:13; 1Chronicles 10:12; 2Samuel 1:12**

In times of suffering & Sorrow - Nehemiah fasted at state of Jerusalem - **Nehemiah 1:4**

The Jews fasted at Haman's decree against them - **Esther 4:3**

When seeking God's will - Esther and Mordecai fasted before she went before the king - **Esther 4:16**

Israel before 3rd battle with Benjamin - **Judges 20:26**

Ezra led a fast when seeking the favor of God toward his return from exile - **Ezra 8:21**

Antioch church appointing Barnabas and Saul - **Acts 13:1-4**

Lord fasted in time of temptation - **Matthew 4:2**

He taught His disciples about fasting - Foretold of a time when disciples would fast - **Matthew 9:14-17**

Times combination of fasting and prayer more effective than prayer alone - **Matthew 17:14-21**

The early church fasted in their service to the Lord

Paul regarded fasting as a mark of his ministry

Prayer and fasting often go hand in hand, whenever strong desire for God's blessing/guidance

Not always associated with food - **1Corinthians 7:5**

Many areas were temporary/permanent abstinence profitable - Digital, Entertainment, Social

Fasting does have a place in the lives of Christians today

However, fasting was fruitless when done ceremonially, without true repentance

It requires using that gained time/effort in devoted pursuit - **Luke 11:24-26**

Seeking God's Favor Via Fasting Can Be Profitable

Consistent with O.T. fasting - War, Sickness, Forgiveness, Protection, Remembrance

Consistent with N.T. examples - Temptations, Service, Work, Appointments

Such fasting should be done in conjunction with prayer

Fasting Humbles and Chastens the soul - **Psalms 35:13; 69:10**

Prayers of a humble person are more likely to be heard! Only you & God need to know!