

# THE BULLETIN

## THIS WEEK:

Sunday:  
Bible Study & Worship  
Wednesday:  
Bible Study

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

August 28th  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Fellowship

## PRIVILEGED TO SERVE:

### Month of August

Announcements:  
Luther Honey

Singing:  
a.m. – Mark Nortz  
p.m. – Luther Honey  
Wed. – Luther Honey

Prayer:  
Tom Mikell

Bible Reading:

Preaching:  
Doug Frazier

Lord's Supper:  
Dick Tudor  
Larry Pahman  
Greg Green  
Drew Myers

### August

Prepare communion  
Ashley Lydon

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Fellowship:  
Patty Honey  
Valerie Green  
Esther Palmer

For the next two or three weeks we will have articles concerning the subject of fasting from different sources.

## Is Fasting for Christians Today?

By Wayne Jackson

### What does the Bible teach about fasting? Is it for Christians today?

Fasting, in the biblical sense, is the abstaining from food and drink for a **spiritual** reason. In the Old Testament era, the Jews fasted frequently, though there was only one fast prescribed by the law. Once each year, on the Day of Atonement, the Hebrews were to “afflict” their souls (Leviticus 16:31), which meant fasting (cf. Isaiah 58:3).

Though there are no compulsory fasts required of Christians today, the New Testament seems to take for granted that children of God would see the need to fast occasionally.

When the Lord’s disciples were criticized for not fasting, Jesus responded by suggesting that it was hardly appropriate for them to fast while he was yet with them. The time would come, however, when he would be taken away from them; then they would fast (Luke 5:35).

Too, in cautioning against improper motivation in worship, Christ warned: “Moreover when you fast, be not, as hypocrites” (Matthew 6:16). It is significant that he did not say, “if,” but, “when” ye fast—reflecting the expectation that they would.

Fasting, for the Christian, is strictly a **voluntary** matter. It should arise out of a feeling of intense need, not as a result of mere formality.

When, then, might fasting be of value?

(1) Fasting may be beneficial in times of personal sorrow. David and his men mourned and fasted upon hearing of the death of Saul (2 Samuel 1:12), and Nehemiah did similarly when he was informed of Jerusalem’s decimated condition (Nehemiah 1:4). Fasting and prayer would certainly seem to be fitting when a loved one is critically ill (2 Samuel 12:16).

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(2) Fasting frequently accompanied repentance as an outward and genuine indication of contrition for spiritual rebellion (1 Samuel 7:6). The people of Nineveh proclaimed a fast when brought to a recognition of their sins (Jonah 3:5).

(3) Fasting was practiced in connection with great and important religious events. Moses fasted during that period when he was receiving the law (Exodus 34:28). Christ fasted prior to his encounter with Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2). The church fasted before sending Barnabas and Saul on that perilous first missionary campaign (Acts 13:2-3). Fasting was certainly a component in the dynamic ministry of Paul (2 Corinthians 6:5; 11:27).

Admittedly, however, fasting can be abused. The practice must never be employed as a substitute for personal godly living. Isaiah delivered a blistering rebuke to those who fasted, then pursued their own worldly pleasures (Isaiah 58). Moreover, fasting must not be an occasion for the flaunting of one's religion. The Pharisees were guilty of this very thing (Matthew 6:16-18).

Finally, the rigors of fasting must not be allowed to ignite a spirit of religious smugness and self-righteousness. This certainly could be a temptation (cf. Luke 18:9-14).

In the final analysis, there does seem to be some benefits in voluntary fasting at certain times. Reflect upon the following:

(1) The Scriptures seem to suggest that God honors fasting when performed as a token of deep and sincere dedication.

(2) Physicians indicate that moderate fasting can be a benefit to health, having the effect of allowing our systems to occasionally cleanse themselves.

(3) The mind appears to be able to plumb greater depths of contemplation during periods of fasting.

(4) Fasting can help one hone a keener edge on self-discipline.

(5) Fasting can also have the added effect of reinforcing our appreciation for those things of which we're deprived during the periods of abstention.

### About the Author

Wayne Jackson has written for and edited the *Christian Courier* since its inception in 1965. He has also written several books on a variety of biblical topics including *The Bible and Science*, *Creation, Evolution, and the Age of the Earth*, *The Bible on Trial*, and a number of commentaries. He lives in Stockton, California with his dear wife and life-long partner, Betty.

## Fasting In The Old Testament by Mark Copeland

### INTRODUCTION

1. In a culture where the landscape is dotted with shrines to the "GOLDEN ARCHES" and an assortment of "PIZZA TEMPLES", fasting seems out of place, out of step with the times - **Richard Foster**, The Celebration Of Discipline, p. 47
2. As I begin to deal with subject like fasting, I do so with some hesitation for several reasons:
  - a. It is a very EMOTIONAL and VOLATILE subject
    - 1) Views about fasting usually go to extremes
      - a) "Some have exalted religious fasting beyond all Scripture and reason, and others have utterly disregarded it."-- JOHN WESLEY
      - b) Some consider fasting unnecessary, undesirable, and therefore to be ignored
      - c) Others think fasting is to be bound as a matter of faith (like baptism)
    - 2) It touches upon a matter very personal to us: FOOD!
      - a) Many people are very dependent upon food
        - 1/ Not just for survival
        - 2/ But for dealing with anxiety, depression, boredom, etc.
        - 3/ Rather than eating to live, they live to eat
      - b) It is like preaching on gluttony or smoking, it often touches on raw nerves
    - b. It is an UNTRADITIONAL subject
      - 1) You rarely hear sermons on this subject
      - 2) One person found in his research that not a single book was published on fasting among some brethren from 1861 to 1954
  3. But the Scriptures have so much to say about fasting...
    - a. The list of Biblical persons who fasted becomes a "Who's Who" of Scripture:

1) Moses the lawgiver	5) Daniel the seer
2) David the king	6) Anna the prophetess
3) Elijah the prophet	7) Jesus the Son Of God
4) Esther the queen	8) Paul the apostle

-- **Richard Foster**, p.48, ibid.
    - b. There is more teaching in the NT on fasting than repentance and confession!
    - c. Jesus taught more on fasting than on baptism and the Lord's Supper!
  4. What would account for this almost total disregard for a subject so frequently mentioned in Scripture?
    - a. FIRST, fasting has developed a bad reputation as a result of the excessive ascetic practices of the Middle Ages - **Foster**, ibid.
    - b. SECOND, many have simply concluded that fasting was a Jewish custom, of no value or need in the Christian age
    - c. THIRD, we have been convinced through constant propaganda that if we do not between, we are on the verge of starvation (we eat, not because we NEED to eat. but because it's TIME to eat) - **Foster**, ibid.

[In this lesson, then, we shall take a look at "**Fasting In The Old Testament**", beginning with... ]

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**Meeting Times:**  
**Sunday Morning**  
Bible Study: 9:30  
Worship: 10:30

**Sunday Evening**  
Worship: 5:30

**Mid-Week Bible Study**  
Wednesday 6:30

5. Because the Bible has so much to say about fasting, it is only that we consider what it says. As we do so, I have several REQUESTS:
- a. Please withhold judgment until you have heard all the material - cf. [Pr 18:13](#)
    - 1) Let's be "SPELUNKERS" and not "ENGINEERS" with the Bible
    - 2) I.e., explore and follow what is there instead of rearranging what is there to fit our designs
  - b. Don't be hasty in drawing conclusions or applying what you hear - cf. [Pr 14:29](#)
  - c. If you have any additional information, questions or view points, please feel free to share them with me - cf. [Pr 11:14](#)

[In next week's lesson, we will take a look at "**Fasting In The Old Testament**"]

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### SICK AND/OR INJURED:

- Please continue to remember Linda James and her family as she is recovering from her surgery.
- Robert Lyles is at home now under the care of his family with the assistance of Hospice.
- Continue to remember Betty Hitchcock, James Harrison, Randy Howe Jr, Rhonda Howe, Bob Earnhart (Blu's uncle), Jean Gause, Larry Pahman's father, Patty Earnhart, Della Brunson, Shirley Rogers, Sherrelle Kendrick, Randy Howe's mother, Linda Martin, Tommy Mikell, Terry Dickerson (nephew of Ruth Gufford), Shirley Kirby, Carolyn Canady (Rhonda's Mom)

### TRAVELERS:

The Nortz family is in England and others are still on holiday. We pray for everyone's safe return.

### BIRTHDAY:

The family of Mary Lois Forrester invites you to a celebration of her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, August 21, 2011 at 2:30-4:30 p.m., High Springs church of Christ.

## TO OUR VISITORS

It is our sincere desire to help all men and women understand what God's will is for their life. Here at the Alachua Church of Christ, we stand ready and willing to help you with any needs you may have. Here are just a few of the services we offer: Marriage Counseling, Family Counseling and Addiction Counseling, free audiotapes of any lesson and In-home Bible Study. Feel free to make your request know. Ask any member of the congregation.

**We're on the Web!**

[alachuachurchofchrist.org](http://alachuachurchofchrist.org)