



# FASTING 101

SINCERELY

GROWING

# FASTING - what is it?

*"The condition of voluntarily abstaining from food."*

- Sometimes it's a change in diet (partial).
- Sometimes it's abstaining from food, but not water (normal).
- Sometimes it's abstaining from food and water (absolute).
- It can last anywhere from several hours to several weeks.
- It can be practiced by the individual or a group.

*But this doesn't tell us what we need to know . . . context will.*



## FASTING - when threatened

**1 Samuel 7:3-6** "And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, 'If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your heart to the Lord and serve Him only, and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.' So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and they served the Lord only. Then Samuel said, 'Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you.' So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the Lord and fasted on that day and said there, 'We have sinned against the Lord.' And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah."



## FASTING - when threatened

**2 Chronicles 20:1-6, 12b** "After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites, came against Jehoshaphat for battle . . . Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah assembled to seek help from the Lord; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. And Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, and said, "O Lord, God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In Your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand You. . . . We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You."



## FASTING - for grace

**2 Samuel 12:15b-16, 21-23** Then Nathan went to his house. And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick. David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground . . . Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food." He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."



## FASTING - for restoration

**Nehemiah 9:1-3, 32** "Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads. And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the Lord their God. . . "Now, therefore, our God, the Great, the Mighty, and the Awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love, let not all the hardship seem little to You that has come upon us, . . ."



## FASTING - for others

**Psalm 35:11-14** "Malicious witnesses rise up; they ask me of things that I do not know. They repay me evil for good; my soul is bereft. But I, when they were sick— I wore sackcloth; I afflicted myself with fasting; I prayed with head bowed on my chest. I went about as though I grieved for my friend or my brother; as one who laments his mother, I bowed down in mourning."

**We can find many examples:** some lasted a week, some for the loss of life, some by smaller groups, some by evil men, some seeking safe travels, some tied to oaths of murder, etc.



## Moses & Mount Sinai - 40 days & nights

**Deuteronomy 9:9, 17-19** "When I went up the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the Lord made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water . . . So I took hold of the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. Then I lay prostrate before the Lord as before, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke Him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure that the Lord bore against you, so that He was ready to destroy you. But the Lord listened to me that time also."





# Moses & Mount Sinai - 40 days & nights

## History: Connecting the dots

- The *Talmud* (collection of oral law/tradition) taught that Moses went up Mt. Sinai on a Monday and came back down on a Thursday.
- "A Dictionary of the Bible" states that Jews in Jesus' time fasted on the 2nd & 5th day because of this belief. *(They also use these days to read the Torah and teach you can't go three consecutive days without study. They teach Israel was sick at Marah because of this).*
- The *Didache* (author unknown, but supposedly the teaching of the Twelve to Gentiles) instructed Christians, "Your fasting should not be like the hypocrites' (Jews). They fast on Monday and the Thursday: you should fast on the Wednesday and Friday."
- **Luke 18:12**, "I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get."



# JESUS - 40 days & nights

## History: Connecting the dots

- Both Moses (law giver) & Elijah (prophet) fasted 40 days and nights.
- Jesus, both the great Prophet and Law giver, was led into the wilderness and fasted 40 days and nights before He began His ministry.
- **Matthew 4:1-4** Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But He answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "



# JESUS - did He bind fasting?

**Matthew 6:16-18** "And **when you fast,** do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But **when you fast,** anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

- Remember Matthew 5:17-18 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them **but to fulfill them.** For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass away from the Law **until all is accomplished."**



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- Matthew 9:14-15 "Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but **Your disciples do not fast?**' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and **then they will fast.'**"



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- Leviticus 16:29-30 "And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, **you shall afflict yourselves** and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you. For on this **day shall atonement** be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD for all your sins."



# Should I **FAST**?

## **Pattern**

- Acts 13:2-3 The church in Antioch along with prophets prayed and fasted.
- Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas encouraged prayer and fasting when appointing elders.
- Matthew 17:21 Jesus found it to be quiet powerful.

## **Let It Be . . .**

- Isaiah 58:1-7 Practiced with Purpose
- Zechariah 7:4-7; 8:14-19 for God with Joy, Gladness, and Cheer



What's on your **plate** these days?

