

Decisions, Decisions

Base Them on God's Word

Your Decision about Fasting

Lesson 2a

Fasting is often overlooked or misunderstood by Christians today. It does not seem to be taught or practiced much, however it may be a *life preserver* that we are throwing aside, when the sea of life is raging, and the waves threaten to overcome us.

We desperately need God's presence in our daily walk and His power for our trials. A human, even a Christian, lacks the power needed when coming against Satan and his demonic world.

God's mighty men in times past turned to fasting and praying together. Jesus fasted and prayed. Jesus told his disciples that there would be a time to fast. When we pray and fast we are admitting to God our inability apart from Him. We are humbly worshipping our Great God!

We think you may decide to fast from time to time after getting acquainted with the scriptures on it!

Memorize this verse:

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Isaiah 58:6

I. What is fasting, and is it necessary?

The act of fasting was practiced after the fall of man beginning as early as Moses on Mount Sinai. Biblical fasting is choosing to avoid food for a period of time to share matters with God that are serious or extreme so that we may find help or sustaining grace. Fasting is a time of self-examination and confession of sins. It can also be a time of drawing closer to God or a time of special worship.

The fast is usually joined with only necessary activities and much prayer, in order for us to be more fully concentrated on our Heavenly Father, Almighty God. It disciplines the body and humbles us before God.

Finish the verses to see the Lord's clear teaching.

A. God Himself gave us fasting, supports us while we fast and blesses us for fasting!

Isaiah 58:6" Is not this the _____

_____”

B. The length of the fast varies as does the severity of the fast.

1. Daniel 10:3 “ _____, neither came _____,
_____, neither _____, till
three whole weeks were fulfilled.” *Daniel was amazed by the things God had revealed to him and wanted to talk to the Lord in earnest about them.*

2. I Samuel 7:6 “And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, _____, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD...”

3. I Chronicles 10:12 “They arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and _____.”

4. Jeremiah 36:6 “...upon the _____...” See also Leviticus 16:29-31

C. Biblical fasting includes prayer.

1. Luke 2:37 Lu 2:37 “And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers _____.”

You may fast a single meal occasionally. Perhaps you would choose to fast lunch one day a week for a missionary or an unsaved person, etc.

2. Matthew 17:21 “Howbeit this kind goeth not out but _____.”

D. Right fasting includes humbling of one’s self and repentance:

1. Psalm 35:13 “But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth:

_____ ; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom”.

2. Daniel 9:3-6 “And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, _____ : 4 And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and _____, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; 5 We have _____, and have done _____, and _____, even by _____

_____ : 6 Neither have we _____, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.”

3. Please read Jonah 3:1-8 and I Samuel 7:1-6 to understand the full meaning of repentance. Initial when done _____. *Fasting and worship go together.*

4. Judges 20:26 “Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, _____, and wept, _____, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.”

5. Nehemiah 1:4-6 “And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that _____, and mourned certain days, and _____, and prayed before the God of heaven, And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, _____, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and _____, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.”

E. God’s fast has great purpose.

Isaiah 58:6-7 “ Is not this the fast that I have chosen? _____, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7 Is it not _____, and that thou _____? ...”

II. Fasting is for today.

A. Jesus taught fasting.

Matthew 6:16-18 “Moreover _____, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 17 But thou, _____, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18 That _____, but _____, which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, _____.” *He expected his followers to fast!*

B. Jesus practiced fasting:

Matthew. 4:2 “And when _____ forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.”

C. Paul fasted:

II Corinthians 6:5 “In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in _____;”

III. Does the Bible show only individuals or groups fasting?

A. These fasted individually:

1. (This refers to Jesus.) Matthew 4:2 “And when _____

2. (Paul is speaking of himself in the next two verses.) II Corinthians 6:5 “In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, _____;”

II Corinthians 11:27 “In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in _____, in cold and nakedness.”

B. These are recordings of people in the Old and New Testaments who fasted and prayed over a common purpose.

1. Zechariah 7:5 “Speak _____, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?”

2. Joel 1:14 Sanctify ye a fast, _____, gather the elders and _____ into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the _____,

3. Jeremiah 36:9 “And it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, that they proclaimed a fast before the _____, and _____ from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem.”

4. Acts 13:2 “As _____, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when _____, they

sent them away.” *Fasting was put into practice by the Church leaders before sending forth workers. Since the Church today is no different in strength and wisdom should it be any less dependent on the fast for such a time as this?*



As we can see, fasting is from the Lord. Fasting was practiced in the Old Testament, and is to be practiced today, as seen in the New Testament. Fasting may be practiced by groups of believers or individual Christians. Fasting produces purifying results and blessing and at the same time gives honor to God.

In the next lesson we will discuss what type of fasting is not acceptable and when we should fast. We trust this study has been a blessing to you. It has been good for us as we have studied and put the pieces of this “puzzle” together!

Do you know someone who would like to receive Bible lessons?

Name: _____

Check if Adult: _____ If child, age _____

Address _____

Name: _____

Check if Adult: _____ If child, age _____

Address _____

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Your Decision about Fasting

Lesson 2a Answer Key

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God's mighty men in times past turned to fasting and praying together. Jesus fasted and prayed. Jesus told his disciples that there would be a time to fast. When we pray and fast we are admitting to God our inability apart from Him. We are humbly worshipping our Great God!

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The fast is usually joined with only necessary activities and much prayer, in order for us to be more fully concentrated on our Heavenly Father, Almighty God. It disciplines the body and humbles us before God.

Finish the verses to see the Lord's clear teaching.

A. **God Himself gave us fasting, supports us while we fast and blesses us for fasting!**

Isaiah 58:6 "Is not this the **FAST THAT I HAVE CHOSEN ? TO LOOSE THE BANDS OF WICKEDNESS , TO UNDO THE HEAVY BURDENS**, and to **LET THE OPPRESSED GO FREE , AND THAT YE BREAK EVERY YOKE?"**

B. The **length of the fast varies** as does the severity of the fast.

1. Daniel 10:3 "**I ATE NO PLEASANT BREAD** , neither came **FLESH NOR WINE IN MY MOUTH**, neither **DID I ANNOINT MYSELF AT ALL**, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." *Daniel was amazed by the things God had revealed to him and wanted to talk to the Lord in earnest about them.*

2. I Samuel 7:6 "And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, **AND FASTED ON THAT DAY** , and said there, We have sinned against the LORD..."

3. I Chronicles 10:12 “They arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and **FASTED SEVEN DAYS.**”

4. Jeremiah 36:6 “...upon the **DAY OF FASTING** ...” See also Leviticus 16:29-31

C. Biblical fasting **includes prayer.**

1. Luke 2:37 Lu 2:37 “And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers **NIGHT AND DAY** .”

You may fast a single meal occasionally. Perhaps you would choose to fast lunch one day a week for a missionary or an unsaved person, etc.

2. Matthew 17:21 “Howbeit this kind goeth not out but **BY PRAYER AND FASTING.**”

D. Right fasting **includes humbling of one’s self and repentance:**

1. Psalm 35:13” But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth:

I HUMBLD MY SOUL WITH FASTING ; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

2. Daniel 9:3-6 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, **AND SACKCLOTH , AND ASHES** : 4 And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and **MADE MY CONFESSION** , and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; 5 We have **SINNED** , and have **COMMITTED INIQUITY** , and have done **WICKEDLY**, and **HAVE REBELLED** , even by **DEPARTING FROM THY PRECEPTS AND FROM THY JUDGMENTS** : 6 Neither have we **HEARKENED UNTO THY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS** , which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.”

3. Please read Jonah 3:1-8 and I Samuel 7:1-6 to understand the full meaning of repentance.

Initial when done ____ . *Fasting and worship go together.*

4. Judges 20:26 “Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, **AND CAME UNTO THE HOUSE OF GOD** , and wept, **AND SAT THERE BEFORE THE LORD** , and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.”

5. Nehemiah 1:4-6 “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, And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, **THAT THOU MAYEST HEAR THE PRAYER OF THY SERVANT , WHICH I PRAY BEFORE THEE NOW** , day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and **CONFESS THE SINS OF ISRAEL** , which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.”

E. **God’s fast has great purpose.**

Isaiah 58:6-7 “ Is not this the fast that I have chosen? **TO LOOSE THE BANDS OF WICKEDNESS** , to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7 Is it not **TO DEAL THY BREAD TO THE HUNGRY** , and that thou **BRING THE POOR INTO THY HOUSE ? ...**”

II. Fasting *is for today.*

A. Jesus taught fasting.

Matthew 6:16-18 “Moreover **WHEN YE FAST** , be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 17 But thou, **WHEN THOU FASTEST** , anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18 That **THOU APPEAR NOT UNTO MEN TO FAST** , but **UNTO THY FATHER** , which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, **SHALL REWARD THEE OPENLY** .” *He expected his followers to fast!*

B. Jesus practiced fasting:

Matthew. 4:2 “And when **HE HAD FASTED** forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.”

C. Paul fasted:

II Corinthians 6:5 “In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in **FASTINGS** ;

III. Does the Bible show only individuals or groups fasting?

A. These fasted individually:

1. (This refers to Jesus.) Matthew 4:2 “And when **HE HAD FASTED FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS HE WAS AFTERWARDS AN HUNGRED**
2. (Paul is speaking of himself in the next two verses.) II Corinthians 6:5 “In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, **IN FASTINGS** ;”
II Corinthians 11:27 “In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in **FASTINGS OFTEN** , in cold and nakedness.”

B. These are recordings of people in the Old and New Testaments who fasted and prayed over a common purpose.

1. Zechariah 7:5 “Speak **UNTO ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND** , and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?”

2. Joel 1:14 “Sanctify ye a fast, **CALL A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY** , gather the elders and **ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND** into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD,”

3. Jeremiah 36:9 “And it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, that they proclaimed a fast before the LORD **TO ALL THE PEOPLE IN JERUSALEM** , and **TO ALL THE PEOPLE THAT CAME** from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem.”

4. Acts 13:2 “As **THEY MINISTERED TO THE LORD** , the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when **THEY HAD FASTED AND PRAYED AND LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM** , they sent *them* away.” *Fasting was put into practice by the Church leaders before sending forth workers. Since the Church today is no different in strength and wisdom should it be any less dependent on the fast for such a time as this?*

Decisions, Decisions

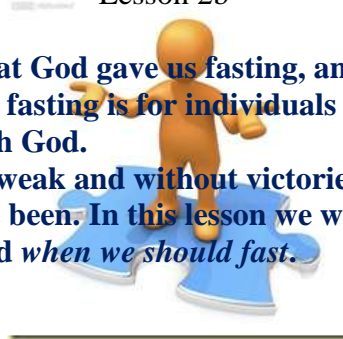
Base Them on God's Word

Your Decision about Fasting

Lesson 2b

In the last lesson we learned that God gave us fasting, and that fasting is still to be practiced today. We also saw that fasting is for individuals and groups who are right with God, or who want to get right with God.

Without fasting we are indeed weak and without victories which could have been, and without comforts that would have been. In this lesson we will cover the subjects of *what type of fasting is not acceptable and when we should fast.*



III. Which kind of fasting is **not acceptable before God**?

A. The fasting of **an unrepentant, or idolatrous Christian, or one who has a hardened heart toward others:**

1. Jeremiah 14:10-12 “Thus _____, Thus have they _____, they have not refrained their feet, therefore _____; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. 11 Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. 12 When _____, I _____; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but _____, and _____, and _____.”

2. Isaiah 58:3 “Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast _____, and _____.” *(Their hearts were not set upon God and as a result God's blessing was not upon them!)*

3. Please read Zechariah chapter 7 and initial when done. Int. _____

B. Fasting **for strife and debate:**

Isaiah 58:3 “ Behold, _____, and _____, ye shall not fast as ye do this day, _____.”

They were contentious and spiteful. Behold, you fast for strife and debate. They pretended to search for sins. They hid their own sins and put the blame on others. In that way they could even falsely accuse others such as Naboth in the day of Jezebel's fast, 1Kings 21:12.

Thus, instead of judging themselves, which is the proper work of a fast-day, they condemned one another, fasting for strife. They also came to blows; “You smite with the fist of wickedness.” The task-masters beat their servants and the creditors delivered their debtors who could not pay to the tormentors, etc.

C. The fasting of the hypocrite:

Matthew 6:16-18 “Moreover when ye fast, _____, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.”



D. Fasting to the harm of the marital relationship.

1 Corinthians 7:5 “Defraud ye not one the other, _____

_____, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, _____.” (This verse is instructing the husband and wife that they are to be in agreement about the length and abstinence of relationship during the fast.)

Fasting is not to earn the respect of others. Fasting is not used to ensure that you get your own way, nor to get God to do what you want or you think is best. All prayer, even prayer with fasting is to have our will subject to His will. The best example of this was Jesus Himself as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “...Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” Lu 22:42

V. When should we fast?

A. Fast when sorely tempted.

Matthew 4:1&2 “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness _____ . 2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.”



B. Fast when wisdom is earnestly desired.

Daniel 9:3 “And I _____, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:”

C. Fast when help and protection are needed.

1. Ezra 8:21-23 “Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, _____

_____ . 22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen _____: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

23 _____: and _____.”

2. II Corinthians 6:5 2 “In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, _____;” (See also II Cor. 11:27)

3. Esther 4:14-17 “For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; _____

_____ : and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? 15 Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, 16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, _____, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: _____

_____ likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.17 So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.” Esther 5:1&2 “Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house. 2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that _____:...”



D. Fast when in mourning for loved ones or the defeat of God's people.

1. II Samuel 1:12 "And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; _____."

2. Matthew 9:14&15 "Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? 15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when _____ and then _____."

E. Fast when new ministries are launched, and when men go forth to proclaim God's Word and battle spiritual enemies.

1. Acts 13:2-3 "As they _____, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when _____."

2. Acts 14:23 "And when they had _____, and had _____, they _____, on whom they believed."

F. Fast when involved in spiritual ministry.

II Corinthians 11:27 "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in _____, in cold and nakedness." *(This is a part of the life Paul lived as a minister of the gospel. One of the ways he was sustained was through fasting.)*

G. Fast when there is demonic control of another.

Matthew 17:21 "Howbeit _____."



As you can see from these lessons, Christians have literally been given the instruction to fast for the work and walk of the godly. It is an act of humble contrition, and it yields God's blessing. Fasting has been practiced by great men of God throughout the ages. Fasting was practiced by God in the flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ, while serving in this sin cursed world where He served His Father and endured the Cross!

God has not told us to put fasting aside. Why not talk to God about your need for fasting, and apply it as He leads. We cannot lose anything good by fasting, and will certainly find blessing and help as found in no other way!

As a soldier of the Cross, could you not use more strength, more protection, and more blessing?

If you are required to take medications or have an inability to fast for health reasons please be sure to follow your doctor's orders. Be wise in choosing the length and severity of the fast. If you cannot fast this does not make you any less a Christian.

Do you know someone who would like to receive Bible lessons?

Name: _____ Check if Adult: _____ If child, age _____

Address _____

Decisions, Decisions

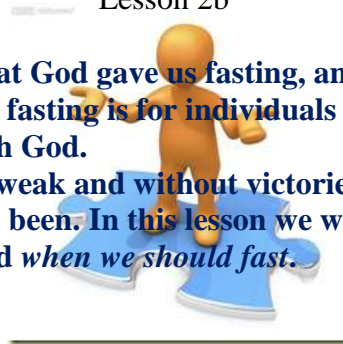
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2. Isaiah 58:3 “Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast **YE FIND PLEASURE** , and **EXACT ALL YOUR LABOURS** .” (*Their hearts were not set upon God and as a result God's blessing was not upon them!*)

3. Please read Zechariah chapter 7 and initial when done. Int. _____

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Isaiah 58:4 “Behold, **YE FAST FOR STRIFE AND DEBATE** , and **AND TO SMITE WITH THE FIST OF WICKEDNESS** , ye shall not fast as ye do this day, **TO MAKE YOUR VOICE BE HEARD ON HIGH.**”

They were contentious and spiteful. Behold, you fast for strife and debate. They pretended to search for sins. They hid their own sins and put the blame on others. In that way they could even falsely accuse others such as Naboth in the day of Jezebel's fast, 1Kings 21:12.

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Matthew 6:16-18 “Moreover when ye fast, **BE NOT, AS THE HYPOCRITES** , of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.”



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1 Corinthians 7:5 “Defraud ye not one the other, **EXCEPT IT BE WITH CONSENT FOR A TIME**, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, **THAT SATAN TEMPT YOU NOT FOR YOUR INCONTINENCY** .” (This verse is instructing the husband and wife that they are to be in agreement about the length and abstinence of relationship during the fast.)

Fasting is not to earn the respect of others. Fasting is not used to ensure that you get your own way, nor to get God to do what you want or you think is best. All prayer, even prayer with fasting is to have our will subject to His will. The best example of this was Jesus Himself as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “...Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” Lu 22:42

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B. Fast when wisdom is earnestly desired.

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2. II Corinthians 6:5 2 “In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, **IN FASTINGS** ;” (See also II Cor. 11:27)

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D. Fast when in mourning for loved ones or the defeat of God's people.

1. II Samuel 1:12 "And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; **BECAUSE THEY WERE FALLEN BY THE SWORD .**"

2. Matthew 9:14&15 "Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? 15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when **THE BRIDEGROOM SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY FROM THEM** , and then **SHALL THEY FAST .**"

E. Fast when new ministries are launched, and when men go forth to proclaim God's Word and battle spiritual enemies.

1. Acts 13:2-3 "As they **MINISTERED TO THE LORD, AND FASTED** , the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 And when **THEY HAD FASTED AND PRAYED , AND LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM , THEY SENT THEM AWAY .**"

2. Acts 14:23 "And when they had **ORDAINED THEM ELDERS IN EVERY CHURCH** , and had **PRAYED WITH FASTING** , they **COMMENDED THEM TO THE LORD** , on whom they believed."

F. Fast when involved in spiritual ministry.

II Corinthians 11:27 "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in **FASTINGS OFTEN** , in cold and nakedness." *(This is a part of the life Paul lived as a minister of the gospel. One of the ways he was sustained was through fasting.)*

G. Fast when there is demonic control of another.

Matthew 17:21 "Howbeit **THIS KIND GOETH NOT OUT BUT BY PRAYER AND FASTING .**"