

# Fasting and Prayer

**TEXT:** Matthew 6:5-8,16-18; 17:14-21

**SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE:** Isaiah 58:1-11

**KEY VERSE:** Therefore also now, saith the LORD, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. — Joel 2:12

Fasting is the abstaining from or giving up of one's food for a period of time, for the purpose of humbling oneself before God with a spiritual burden or request. It is usually accompanied by earnest prayer. Jesus brought out the need for prayer and fasting in the account in Matthew 17:21 when His disciples were unable to heal a father's sick son.

1. What did God say about the value of fasting and making our voices heard by Him in prayer if the lives we live before others are not consistent with God's Word? See Isaiah 58:3-7.

2. What was Jesus' attitude toward prayer and fasting when it was done to be seen of men?

3. The questions of when and why we should fast can best be approached by considering some Biblical examples of circumstances where fasting was necessary in order to bring about an answer to an urgent need. Describe the circumstances brought out in the following Scriptures, identifying the petitioner, the need, and the results in answer to their fasting:

Ezra 8:21-23,31

Nehemiah 1:4-11; 2:1-6

Esther 4:15-17; 5:1-3

4. Sometimes stressful circumstances reveal to us the need for a time of prayer and fasting. Are there other times we should fast? What instructions did Jesus give His disciples, both by word and example, as to when and why they should fast? See Matthew 9:14,15 and 17:21.

5. What action will Satan take when we purpose to pray and fast before the Lord for some special need? See Daniel 10:3,12,13.

6. How did Job feel concerning the importance of food during the time of his great trial? See Job 23:12.

7. Does fasting and prayer guarantee that a person will receive the desires of his heart? Explain your answer.

8. Read Acts 13:2,3 and Acts 14:23, two instances when the Early Church fasted and prayed before the Lord. What was the purpose of these fastings, and what were the results?