



# QUEST 52

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## FASTING

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Gk. νηστεύω —To go without food. Heb. צָוָם —Abstain from food.

### I. Major Texts on Fasting:

1. Isaiah 58:3–7 — The fast God desires is compassion and justice.
2. Matt 6:16–18 — Do not fast for ostentatious show (though it still could be in community).
3. Matt 9:14–15; Mark 2:18–20; Luke 5:34–35 — When the bridegroom leaves, we will fast.

### II. Purposes or Reasons for a Fast:

1. *A sign of grief* (particularly a natural loss of appetite due to grief) — Matt 9:15 and parallels; Ezra 8:23; Nehemiah 1:4; 1 Kings 21:27; particularly in conjunction with repentance, Acts 9:9.
2. *Preparation for prayer* and/or a desire to gain God's ear or approval, or to show God your intensity in the matter — 2 Samuel 12:16–23.
3. *Preparation for a serious decision* — Esther 4:16.
4. *Casting out demons* — Matthew 17:21; Mark 9:29 (Although both these texts have suspicious textual variants).
5. Fasting is also an effective way to *deemphasize the flesh* and give priority to the spirit — i.e., to show the body who's boss.

### III. Facts about Fasting:

1. Total or partial abstinence from food and/or drink— Esther 4:16; Psalm 35:13; Daniel 10:3.
2. Time limits:
  - (a) Through the night — Dan 6:18.
  - (c) Morning through evening — Judges 20:26; 1 Samuel 7:6; 2 Samuel 1:12.
  - (b) Three days, three nights — Esther 4:16.
  - (d) Seven days — Samuel 31:13; 2 Samuel 12:16–18; 1 Chronicles 10:12.
  - (e) Forty days — Matt 4:2.
3. It is referred to as "afflicting" the body. It causes physical weakness — Psalm 109:24
4. It is connected to:
  - (a) Repentance — Joel 2:12–17; Jonah 3:5; Neh 9:1; 2 Samuel 12:15–23; 1 Kings 21:27–29.
  - (b) Prayer — 1 Sam 7:5, 6; 2 Sam 12:16–23; 2 Chron 20:3; Neh 1:4ff; Ezra 8:23; Psa 35:13; Dan 9:3; Joel 1:14; 2:12–17; Matt 17:21; Mark 9:29; Luke 2:37; Acts 13:2, 3; 14:23.
  - (c) Mourning — Dan 6:18; 2 Sam 1:12; 12:16, 21, 22; Zech 7:5; Judges 20:26; 1 Kings 21:27; Neh 1:4ff.; 9:1; Esther 4:3; Psa 35:13; Dan 9:3; Joel 2:12–17; Jonah 3:5.

### IV. Who Fasts?

1. Anna serving in the temple — Luke 2:37.
2. Jesus' temptations 40 days — Matt 4:2.
3. John's disciples and Jesus' compared — Matt 9:14, 15; Mark 2:18–20; Luke 5:34–35.
4. Official Jewish fast — Acts 27:9, (cf. Lev. 16:29, 31).
  - (a) Pharisaic fast days were Monday and Thursday (cf. Luke 18:12).
  - (b) Christian fast days became Wednesday and Friday.
5. Paul's sufferings — 2 Corinthians 6:5; 11:27.
6. Church leader's ordination — Acts 13:2, 3; 14:23.
7. Fast of Pharisee (Hypocritical) — Luke 18:12.