

FASTING

Saturday October 3rd, 2015

What does fasting mean?

Abstain from food

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▶ **What the first commandment God gave man? If you know, can you also tell us where in the Bible it was said?**

Genesis 2:16

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; **17** but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

So why food?

Food is something that everyone has in common. We all breathe, sleep and eat.

Which is the easiest for all to fast from in their daily routine?

By giving up food we remember our human weakness and remember to feed our soul as Christ said

I am the water of eternal life (John 4:6)

I am the Bread of Life (John 6:32 – 35)

WHO WINS, THE EAGLE, OR THE DOG?



Body



Spirit



► **So what is fasting to a Christian?**

Fasting is a gift.

God allows us the opportunity to fast to show Him how much we love Him.

Can you thank God for all He has done for you?

Can you dedicate the rest of your life to service and do you think it would be enough to tell God thank you for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit?

Fasting is a direct line to God for help and precedes service

Esther and the Kingdom fasted (Esther 4:16)

“Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which *is* against the law; and if I perish, I perish!”

The early Church (Acts 13 2:3)

² As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away.

Isaiah 58 New King James Version (NKJV)

Fasting that Pleases God

58 “Cry aloud, spare not;
Lift up your voice like a trumpet;
Tell My people their transgression,
And the house of Jacob their sins.

² Yet they seek Me daily,
And delight to know My ways,
As a nation that did righteousness,
And did not forsake the ordinance of their God.
They ask of Me the ordinances of justice;
They take delight in approaching God.

³ ‘Why have we fasted,’ *they say*, ‘and You have not seen?
Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?’

“In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure,
And exploit all your laborers.

⁴ Indeed you fast for strife and debate,
And to strike with the fist of wickedness.
You will not fast as *you do* this day,
To make your voice heard on high.

⁵ Is it a fast that I have chosen,
A day for a man to afflict his soul?
Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush,
And to spread out sackcloth and ashes?
Would you call this a fast,
And an acceptable day to the LORD?

⁶ “Is this not the fast that I have chosen:
To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens,
To let the oppressed go free,
And that you break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out;
When you see the naked, that you cover him,
And not hide yourself from your own flesh?

⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the morning,
Your healing shall spring forth speedily,
And your righteousness shall go before you;
The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

⁹ Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;

You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'

“If you take away the yoke from your midst,
The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,

¹⁰ *If* you extend your soul to the hungry

And satisfy the afflicted soul,

Then your light shall dawn in the darkness,
And your darkness shall *be* as the noonday.

¹¹ The LORD will guide you continually,

And satisfy your soul in drought,

And strengthen your bones;

You shall be like a watered garden,

And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

¹² Those from among you

Shall build the old waste places;

You shall raise up the foundations of many generations;

And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach,

The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.

¹³ “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath,
From doing your pleasure on My holy day,
And call the Sabbath a delight,
The holy *day* of the LORD honorable,
And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways,
Nor finding your own pleasure,
Nor speaking *your own* words,

¹⁴ Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD;
And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth,
And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.
The mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Examples of fasting in the New Testament:

Christ mentions only certain demons can be defeated by fasting and prayer.

Disciples praying and fasting for each other when they were imprisoned.

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Other than the Bible do we have additional readings to help us in fasting?

Yes, we have the Didache.

The Didache is a brief early Christian treatise, dated by most scholars to the mid to late first century. The first line of this treatise is "*Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles (or Nations) by the Twelve Apostles*"

Fasting can be:

- Individual and communal (Jonah 3, Ezra 8:21, Joel 2:12-17, Acts 27:21)
- At any time.
 - There are times that the whole congregation fast together (Advent, Lent, Wednesdays and Fridays, Apostles Fast)
 - Individuals fast when they want to get closer to God and make petitions. We hear about this numerous times with the Desert Fathers and Saints
 - Daniel and the three Sainly youth
 - King David in the psalms (2 Samuel 12:15-20)

Fasting consists of not just eating vegetarian foods, but also abstaining from eating at certain times.

Adam and Eve were vegetarians in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1:29-30)


²⁹ And God said, “See, I have given you every herb *that* yields seed which *is* on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. ³⁰ Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which *there is* life, *I have given* every green herb for food”; and it was so.

Meat was not eaten until after the flood and Noah (Genesis 9:3)

Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.

Foods are not prohibited but are abstained from during the time of fasting.

When the fast is over, individuals that are fasting go back to these foods once they break their fast.

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So why is this important and how does it apply to apologetics?

We fast to get closer to God.

This is a choice, not because we have to, but because we want to.

We don't fast and go back to gluttony right after. We try to give up our past sins and way of thinking and start anew.

We get closer to God by God working in our weakness.

Saint Paul had an infirmity and prayed for it to go. What was his answer?

2 Corinthians 12:9

And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Fasting is not a punishment but an act of love (from us) to God to make us more pure and clean.

We feed our body with ham, water, bread, cheese, etc.

We feed our Spirit with fasting, prayer, repentance, spiritual readings, communion, etc.

One of these will bring us closer to God. Who is high in the sky. In Heaven.

The other will weigh us down. To the ground. To dust and dirt.

When others ask us why we fast, it is an opportunity for us to explain God's love for us and how we attempt to reciprocate our love to Him.

When others ask us why we fast, it is an opportunity to reinforce our beliefs and remember why we fast in the first place and how we fast.

Do we fast for communion on a weekly basis and as soon as communion is over go back to worldly talk and ideas?

Or are we taken to Heaven and remain there as long as possible before the week starts?

Do we grow closer to the rest of the congregation while we fast together?

Or stay isolated and think we are doing it all alone?

There are many different ways to fast and rules that are put in place.

The Coptic Church reminds us that we fast to:

Show our love to God

Show our weakness without God

Prepare for service in furthering God's Kingdom

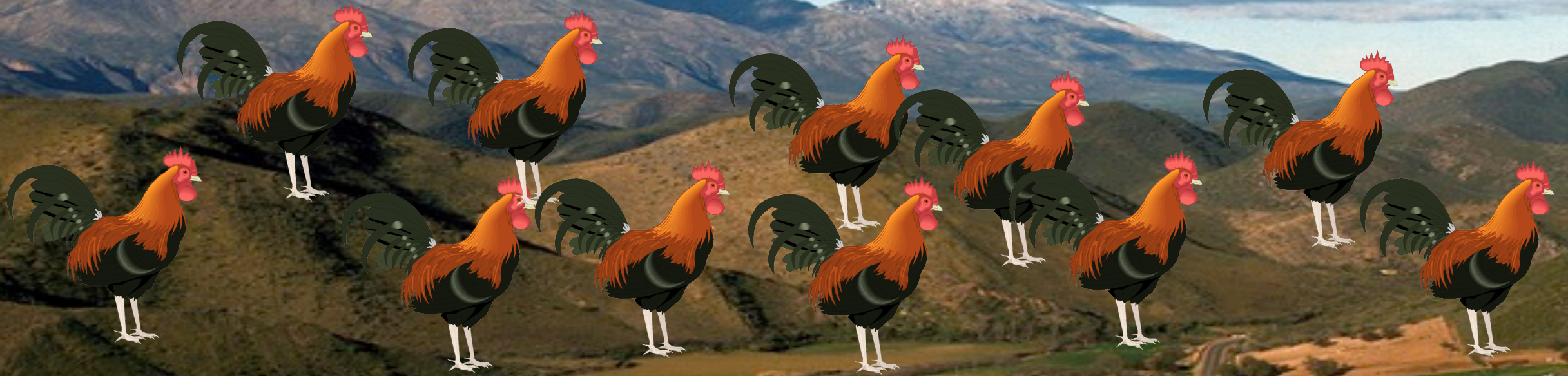
Remember we are part of a community, and body

Renew our mind daily

Clean our physical and spiritual body and approach God as pure as we can.



Luke 18:1-9



SO WHO WINS, THE EAGLE, OR THE DOG?

Easy...

Whoever you feed more. And however much you feed them, the closer you will get to your destination. Some methods of fasting will only take you so close to Heaven but might not get you the fullness.



Questions?

