

FASTING



1. What is Fasting?

People from many different religions and races practise fasting. Chinese history traces fasting back to within four generations of Noah! However fasting is God's idea! Let's look further into how fasting began and what the purpose of it is.

1. HOW DID FASTING BEGIN?

- ♥ What did God command the people of Israel to do on the Day of Atonement every year?
Leviticus 23:26-32

Note: The expression 'deny themselves' was used for fasting.

- ♥ What was the significance of the Day of Atonement and why did the people have to deny themselves food on this day? V28 Leviticus 16:30, 34 Discuss.

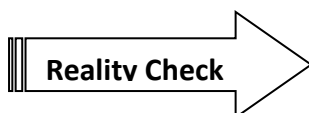
2. WHAT IS FASTING?

- ♥ What comes to your mind when you think of fasting? Share.

Most of us would immediately say that fasting is going without food! That is true! God wanted the Children of Israel to fast or 'deny themselves' on the Day of Atonement so they would focus on him and humble themselves in preparation for receiving his forgiveness. We don't have to fast to receive God's forgiveness, we simply need to believe what Jesus has done for us on the cross. However there may be times when we are facing a great need or wish to seek God afresh, that the Holy Spirit leads us to fast. It is also a way we can humble ourselves before God and acknowledge our need of him.

Although our bodies need food, sometimes food controls us rather than the Spirit of God.

- ♥ What part did food play in the fall of man? Genesis 3:6
- ♥ How did Jesus overcome the same kind of temptation? Matthew 4:2-4



Let's ask ourselves a few questions:

1. Is food more important to us than the Word of God?
2. Do you find you are always thinking about food?
3. Do you live to eat, or eat to live?

- ♥ What danger did God warn his people about? Deuteronomy 8:11-14. What did he say about food in particular?
- ♥ How can we as Christians overcome this danger? Galatians 5:16, 22-26

Biblical fasting is going without food, it is denying ourselves something we enjoy for a time, so we can focus on God. The Word of God often links eating and pride together, so by fasting we are humbling ourselves before God. As we deny our normal bodily desires, it helps us focus on God and allows the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. If you have never fasted, perhaps begin by missing one meal and use that time to seek the Lord! It will be time well spent.