

Online Grace Bible School

With

Ken Legg, Australia

Copyright © Ken Legg, 2012

www.kenlegg.com.au

These notes may be copied and distributed (not sold) provided that due copyright acknowledgement is given in accordance with the details on this page

**Online Grace Bible School
Phase 6
Fasting**

1) Are You Fasting or Feasting?

- ✓ Fasting has physical benefits. It rejuvenates the body. Our organs and glands get a much-needed rest and the body is able to concentrate on other things besides digestion.
- ✓ But almost all religions, including the New-Age, believe that fasting has spiritual benefits also, purifying the spirit and bringing us closer to God. Even in Judaism and Christianity it is seen this way.
- ✓ How did the Church arrive at this idea? And what does the Bible actually teach?
- ✓ The Bible mentions fasting over 70 times.
- ✓ Under the OC Jews were required to fast once a year, on the Day of Atonement, Lev.16:30-31. In addition there were times when a fast was undertaken by the nation or individuals when in distress or repentance.
- ✓ After the exile Jews began to fast 4 times per year. During the intertestamental period the elders turned it into an outward show, fasting every Monday and Thursday.

- ✓ Surprisingly, there is no record of Jesus fasting after His 40-day fast, Matt.11:18-19.
- ✓ He gave no instruction to fast. He firmly rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocrisy in fasting.
- ✓ He only said if you do fast do it in secret.
- ✓ If fasting is required to drive out demons, this would mean one would have to wait for days before we could deliver anyone. Even in the Ephesians 6 instructions for spiritual warfare fasting is not mentioned.
- ✓ Four times it is mentioned in Acts. In Acts 9:9; 13:2 and 14:23 they were being set apart unto the Lord.
- ✓ The noun *nhsteiva* in Acts 27:33 refers to an involuntary fast, i.e. not eating, as in 2 Cor.6:5, 11:27. In both these verses the context indicates fasting not in the sense of a spiritual exercise but hardship.
- ✓ Fasting was never prescribed for believers in Paul's epistles. Note the wording of 1 Cor.7:5.
- ✓ There is an absence of references to fasting as a spiritual exercise in the General epistles and Revelation.
- ✓ This implies that the practice was not considered significant in the church.

- ✓ After the death of the Apostles the church succumbed to the pressures of the Jewish & pagan world, and fasting became a full-blown practice. Almost all the church fathers encouraged numerous collective fasts.
- ✓ By the 6th century fasting was made obligatory by the 2nd Council of Orleans (A.D. 541) which decreed that anyone neglecting to observe the stated time of abstinence should be treated as an offender.
- ✓ In the 8th century it was regarded as praiseworthy and failure to observe it subjected the offender to excommunication. The Reformation freed the church from much of this wrong teaching about fasting.

- ✓ Matt.9:14-17. Jesus said his disciples could not fast as long as the Bridegroom was with them. They would fast when the Bridegroom was taken from them, between His death and the giving of Spirit at Pentecost.
- ✓ We are instructed to keep the feast of remembrance of Christ's death, not a fast, 1 Cor.5:7-8. Since all our sins were forgiven at the cross, fasting is turned into feasting, mourning into dancing and sorrow into joy.
- ✓ When someone emphasizes what God doesn't emphasize, they usually DON'T emphasize what He does!
- ✓ Supposedly, fasting forgoes food so as not to feed the flesh. When we give food to our flesh we strengthen our flesh and thus are prone to walk after the flesh. But nothing feeds the flesh like legalism.
- ✓ The Bible warns against teaching that regulates your approach to food. Such teaching may *seem* to be spiritual, but it does not advance your sanctification. Don't be fooled by testimonies, Col.2:23.
- ✓ A preoccupation with food is false self-denial. Food is spiritually neutral, 1 Cor.8:8.
- ✓ The more teachers impose fasting on you the more they are spreading demonic doctrine, 1 Tim.4:1-5.
- ✓ Jesus said it is not what goes into your mouth that hurts you spiritually but what comes out, Rom.14:17.
- ✓ Fasting does not alter the spiritual atmosphere, break demonic strongholds or usher in revival. It will not result in a Holy Spirit move. It doesn't make you closer to God or release blessings, see Eph.1:3, etc.
- ✓ If you are wondering why God is not pleased with your sacrifices, He is wondering why you are not pleased with His, Rom.8:32. Every blessing comes to us by grace alone. At no cost you already received love, power, anointing, victory and breakthrough. It is all by grace. Jesus paid it all!
- ✓ Of course you are free to fast if you are led to do so. But never think God requires it of you or that it will give you anything, and never let others impose a fast on you.