

Eight Basic Guidelines for Fasting

By Gary Rohrmayer

Eight insights that will guide you through a spiritual fast.

1. Fast SENSIBLY. Don't feel that you must fast many days to be effective. Many biblical fasts were "until evening" (Judges 20:16; II Samuel 3:35; Acts 10:30).
2. Fast SENSITIVELY. When Israel fasted before a crucial battle, the Bible says they "inquired of the Lord." (Judges 20:23; I Samuel 23) When we fast we should take special time to hear God speak. (13:1-2)
3. Fast SYSTEMATICALLY. When Jesus taught His disciples about fasting, He began with the words "when you fast" (Matthew 6:16). He was suggesting that believers should have regular times of fasting, whether one day a week or a portion of a day each week.
4. Fast SACRIFICIALLY. If we normally do not eat breakfast it is not really a sacrifice to fast breakfast. A true fast must be a sacrifice. David said, "My knees give way from fasting; my body is thin and gaunt" (Psalm 109:24). True fasting must have an humbling effect on us (Ps 35:13).
5. Fast SPECIFICALLY. God said to Israel, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? (Isaiah 58:6). We must ask God to direct us in the focus of our fasting.
6. Fast SUPERNATURALLY. The very nature of fasting requires dependence on God's supernatural power to see us through. When the early church fasted before sending out workers, the Bible says, "The Holy Spirit came" (Acts 13:2,3). We need God's Spirit as we fast.
7. Fast SOBERLY. Jesus cautioned His disciples not to make a spectacle out of fasting like the religious leaders did. This type of fasting only gets the attention of men and not of God. (Matthew 6:16-17)
8. Fast SECRETLY. Jesus cautioned His disciples never to boast about our times of fasting but rather to keep our times of fasting as a personal commitment (Matthew 6:18).