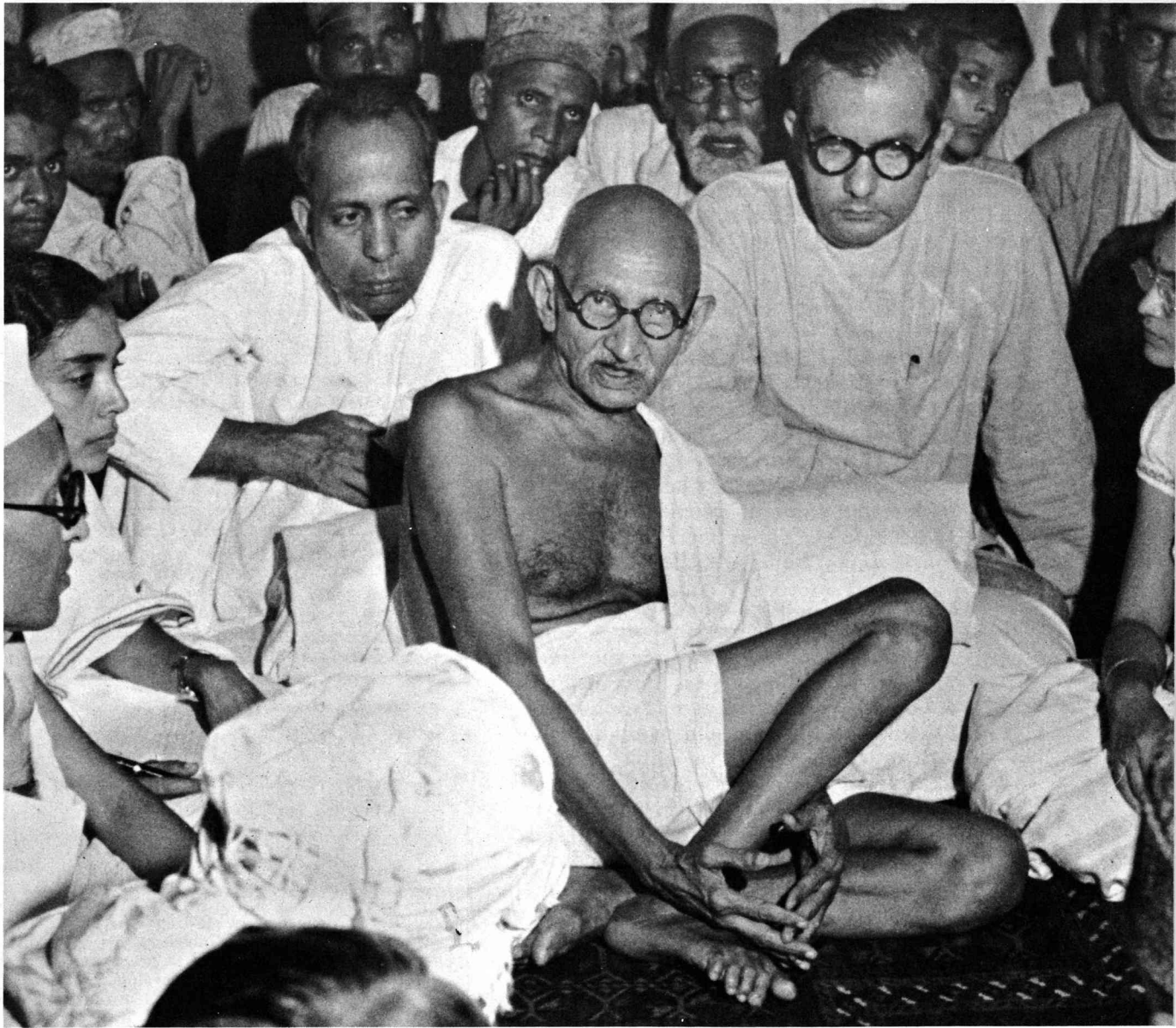


**AMBASSADOR
COLLEGE**

BIBLE

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE



Why Did Mohandas Gandhi Fast?

LESSON 48

What our STUDENTS SAY

"Dear Mr. Armstrong: It is quite hard for me to sit down and write a letter. But I just had to sit down and thank you as God's servant for sending me the wonderful Bible Course. I thank Almighty God for making it possible for me to be alive to see the amazing things that are being fulfilled in this life. And how the wonderful world tomorrow will be an altogether different place to live. No wars. No sickness, no death. All happiness. And how we can live a happy life here and now if we obey and live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

— Mrs. Clarence H., Joliet, Illinois

Lesson 47

"What I have studied of the 47th lesson of the Bible Correspondence Course is tremendous, including the introduction to it. I think too many of us tend to 'give up,' or place a limit on God's mercy."

— Lawrence S., North Hollywood, California

"I read the open letter from the Editor in Lesson 47 and it really opened my dull eyes ... I am only beginning to realize how rotten and bad I really am.

"I read what the students say about your Bible lessons and I can see that the lessons really are helping a lot of people—including me."

— Mrs. L. D., Bellefonte, Pennsylvania

"Dear Mr. Armstrong: I am not too articulate when it comes to expressing my feelings on paper, but I do want to tell you the Bible Correspondence Course truly is an inspired work! I am on my 47th lesson and at each study period I thank God for you and everyone who has a part in producing these Bible lessons.

"While studying the lessons on God's Master Plan I thought them the most fascinating thing I had ever studied. I hated to lay them aside before each lesson was finished. And now—these lessons on prayer are marvelous! They have helped me so much!"

— Student, Modesto, California

"Instant in Prayer"

"In the subtitle 'Pray Every Day' (question 1) of Lesson 47, the phrase 'instant in prayer' (Rom. 12:12) gave me food for thought.

(Please continue on page 16)

AMBASSADOR COLLEGE BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE LESSON 48

Published at Pasadena, California; Watford, England; and North Sydney, Australia, by Ambassador College. French and German editions published at Pasadena, California. Spanish edition published at Big Sandy, Texas.

© 1967 by Ambassador College
All Rights Reserved

EDITOR

HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG

DIRECTOR

C. Paul Meredith

CO-ORDINATOR

Herman L. Hoeh

Staff Writers

Lawson C. Briggs Richard H. Sedliacik

Circulation Manager

Edward C. Kleier

Art Staff

Arthur Ferdig

Gary D. Merager William S. Schuler

Basil Wolverton

Secretary

Carrol Holbrooks

YOUR ENROLLMENT has been paid by others. Bulk copies for distribution not given or sold.

ADDRESS COMMUNICATIONS to the Editor at the nearest address below:

United States and Canada: P. O. Box 111, Pasadena, California 91109.

United Kingdom and Europe: BCM Ambassador, London, W. C. 1, England.

South Africa: P. O. Box 1060, Johannesburg, Transvaal, R. S. A.

Australia and Southeast Asia: P. O. Box 345, North Sydney, N. S. W., Australia.

Latin America: Apartado 927, Big Sandy, Texas 75755.

The Philippines: P. O. Box 2603, Manila.

NOTICE: Be sure to notify the Correspondence Course Department immediately of any change in your address. Please include both old and new address. **Important!**



About Our Cover . . .

Former Indian political and religious leader, Mohandas K. Gandhi, gained political prominence by fasting often. But Gandhi fasted for the purpose of fomenting strife and division within his country. He fasted to propagate his goal of national independence, not to develop *Godly humility*. God's Word shows that Gandhi's fasting was totally in *vain*! You need to understand God's purpose for fasting and *why* He commands true Christians to fast today. This lesson reveals why fasting is absolutely essential to our *spiritual* growth and development.

Acme Photo

WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD FAST TODAY

JESUS CHRIST came to this earth so we “might have life, and . . . have it MORE ABUNDANTLY” (John 10:10). He came to give us eternal life in God’s Kingdom.

But He also came to show us how to live a rich, joyful, productive life RIGHT NOW in the *human flesh*! As part of that abundant Christian life He taught fasting.

Abundant Living

Christ *humbled* Himself often by fasting. He made fasting a PART of abundant living. Jesus instructed His disciples: “WHEN you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that YOUR FASTING may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret WILL REWARD you” (Matthew 6:17-18, RSV).

Christ did not say “IF” you fast — rather, He said “WHEN YOU FAST.” This meant there *would* be a time when CHRISTIANS SHOULD FAST!

When the disciples of John the Baptist asked Christ *why* His disciples didn’t fast, Jesus answered: “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The *days will come*, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and THEN THEY WILL FAST” (Matthew 9:15, RSV).

Christ, the bridegroom, was taken away. THOSE DAYS HAVE COME!

Why Fast?

To most people, “fast” is merely the opposite of “slow”! They don’t know that to “fast” means to voluntarily go *without* food and water.

Most people would think you’d STARVE to death if you told them you were going to fast for a day or two!

To most people, *fasting* sounds like part of an ascetic way of life — a life of suffering and misery — completely devoid of all the pleasures of abundant living.

But these are *misconceptions*. They are TOTALLY WRONG!

Fasting is *not* penance. Neither is it a “hunger strike” to try to FORCE your *own will* on God or other people. Mohandas Gandhi fasted that way.

Fasting is a little-used *tool* and key to overcoming our human nature which God has placed at our disposal. Fasting shows God that you are

in earnest about seeking Him — that you’re depending totally upon HIM for *all* your physical and spiritual needs.

Fasting for spiritual reasons is intended to help bring about a *humble attitude* and to draw one *closer* to Almighty God. This CLOSENESS to God is what produces a life of abundant living — coupled with a peace of mind never before experienced!

This lesson will show you what your Bible reveals about spiritual fasting — exactly *what* it is, what it *does*, and how to do it.

This vital, life-giving knowledge is *absolutely ESSENTIAL* to your spiritual growth and development!

God Commands Us to Fast

1. On what day in the year does God absolutely COMMAND His people to *fast*? Lev. 23: 26-27, 29, 32.

COMMENT: God commanded His people Israel to “afflict” their “souls,” or bodies, one day of the year — on the DAY OF ATONEMENT. Christians are spiritual Israelites today, as we learned in Lesson 37.

Anyone who did not *afflict* himself by FASTING upon this solemn Day of Atonement was “cut off” from among the congregation of Israel!

2. Does David clearly show us that one *afflicts* his body when he FASTS? Ps. 35:13. Notice the marginal rendering for “humbled” is *afflicted*. Did David “chasten” himself often with *fasting*? Ps. 69:10. Notice that David’s *enemies* reproached him for fasting (verses 11-12, 18).

COMMENT: The word “humbled” in Psalm 35:13 is translated from the Hebrew word “*anah*,” which means “to afflict, abase, beat down, chasten, and humble the *self*” (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*). The same Hebrew word is translated “afflict” in Leviticus 23:27-32.

3. What is the Bible example regarding abstaining from food and drink when one “afflicts” one’s soul — that is, FASTS? Deut. 9:9, 18; Esther 4:16 and Acts 9:8-9.

4. Did Luke, the author of the book of Acts, know that the Day of Atonement was a day of fasting — did he call it “the fast”? Acts 27:9. See the margin of your Bible which refers you back to Leviticus 23:27 and Numbers 29:7.

COMMENT: The Old Testament command to observe the Day of Atonement by fasting is *not the only command* God gives His people to



Wide World

NO HUMILITY HERE! — Benito Mussolini, Italy's wartime leader, addresses a crowd in central Italy in 1934. "Il Duce," the epitome of arrogance and pride, was killed by Italian partisans in 1945.

fast! Notice now the New Testament injunction for Christians to fast today — *in addition* to the Day of Atonement.

5. Did Jesus Christ fast? Mat. 4:2. What was the *purpose* of Jesus' fast? Verse 1.

COMMENT: Jesus fasted to DRAW CLOSE to God the Father *in prayer* and receive SPIRITUAL STRENGTH to withstand the sinister temptations of the Devil!

6. Does the apostle Paul show us that Jesus *never changes*? Hebrews 13:8. Is Jesus to live His life in Christians today? Phil. 2:5; Rom. 8:9 and Gal. 2:20.

COMMENT: Paul plainly shows that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. If He fasted when He trod the dusty roads of Palestine, then He will be fasting TODAY — *in us* — if He *lives in us* by His Holy Spirit!

7. Will we therefore be *following* Jesus' EXAMPLE of fasting? I Pet. 2:21 and I John 2:6.

COMMENT: Since Jesus did fast over 1900 years ago, and since Christians are those who follow Jesus' *example* — they will fast TODAY!

Christ's Greatest Trial

Jesus Christ was faced with the trial of overcoming Satan the Devil in *spiritual combat*. Had Jesus failed to overcome the Devil, He

would have *disqualified* Himself as the Savior and Ruler of all mankind!

Let's notice how Christ *prepared* Himself for this greatest of all trials.

1. Why did the Spirit of God lead Jesus into the wilderness? Mat. 4:1.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ went into the wilderness for the specific purpose of being *tempted* by Satan the Devil. He had to overcome the Devil's temptations to prove He was qualified to become the Messiah and Savior of mankind.

This was a SPIRITUAL BATTLE far more significant and stupendous than any of us can realize. Satan the Devil laid before Jesus Christ the *reality* of this temptation in a manner more poignant and real than any temptation that has ever been placed before any of us! Jesus knew He would have to be successful in overcoming the Devil.

2. What did Jesus Christ begin to do in *preparation* for His encounter with Satan? Mat. 4:2.

COMMENT: Jesus prepared Himself by FASTING! He *afflicted* His body by denying Himself food and water. Christ had to endure and overcome the desire to eat and drink for *forty long days and nights*! Then the Tempter came.

3. What was the first temptation Satan set before Christ? Verse 3.

COMMENT: Satan not only tempted Jesus to consume physical food, but also appealed to Christ's *human vanity* by telling Him to PROVE He was the very SON of God by turning stones into bread!

The twisted mind of Satan thought Christ would be at His *weakest* — since He had gone without food and water for so long. By this time Christ was experiencing hunger and thirst almost beyond *human* endurance.

But in reality, Jesus was at His STRONGEST — *spiritually* speaking!

Christ was completely *humble* before God and CLOSE to His Heavenly Father through fasting and *prayer*. He was filled with the Spirit of God and knew He could draw upon His FATHER'S POWER to *resist* the Devil!

4. What was Jesus' reply to the Devil's tempting suggestion? Verse 4.

COMMENT: Jesus had the *spiritual power* from His Father necessary to combat the great spiritual force of Satan. He depended on the Father's power for deliverance — not His own! Jesus' human strength had all but left Him by this time.

5. Finally, after enduring and overcoming the additional temptations Satan brought upon Him, what was Jesus Christ able to *command* the Devil? Verse 10.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ endured the greatest spiritual battle ever fought! Satan the Devil *obeyed* Christ and slunk away. Christ won over Satan because He humbled Himself by drawing close to God through *fasting* and MUCH PRAYER!

Thus Jesus Christ *qualified* to become our Savior and the future King of this earth.

Christ Teaches Fasting

Jesus Christ knows the kind of life to which His disciples — true Christians — are called. He knew we would have to face various trials and temptations. He knew we would need to prepare and condition ourselves as well.

The first mention of fasting in the New Testament, other than the actual example set by Jesus before His temptation, is found in the "Sermon on the Mount."

In the sixth chapter of Matthew, Jesus gave us the *example* of how to pray. We've learned how vital a part *prayer* is in the lives of all Christians. Yet, in this chapter Jesus Christ placed the *same emphasis* on FASTING as He did on prayer!

1. Exactly what did Jesus teach His disciples about fasting? Mat. 6:16-18.

COMMENT: Jesus *taught* His disciples to FAST. He gave them clear-cut, concise instructions on HOW TO FAST. He did not say "if, some-

time, you think you might want to fast" — He stated, "*WHEN YOU FAST*"! He knew His true followers *would fast*!

2. But what did the disciples of John ask Jesus concerning His disciples? Mat. 9:14.

COMMENT: The disciples of John didn't see Jesus' disciples fasting. They wondered why and asked Him.

3. What was Jesus' reply? Verse 15. Did He clearly state that there would be a time when they *would* fast? Read also the accounts given in Mark 2:18-20 and Luke 5:33-35.

COMMENT: Since Christ was with His disciples most of the time, it obviously was not necessary for them to fast in order to draw close to God. For God was actually *with them in the flesh*!

But when Christ ascended to Heaven, He was no longer with His disciples in the same intimate physical way. And so in order to *draw close* to God — who is spirit and in Heaven — the disciples followed the teaching of Christ and FASTED OFTEN to become *spiritually closer* to God.

Jesus' clear-cut and concise teaching applies to all of His spirit-begotten children today since they are still fleshly mortal beings. Jesus' teaching reveals that fasting is the way a physical human being can truly *humble* himself and really DRAW CLOSE to God in prayer!

4. After His resurrection, what *order* did Christ give His Church? Mat. 28:18-19. Did He command His Apostles to *teach* ALL THINGS He had commanded *them* to do? Verse 20. Haven't we just seen that Christ taught them to fast?

COMMENT: Since Christ does not change (Heb. 13:8), His commands to the early Church also apply to all Christians through the centuries! He expects Christians today to worship the ever-living God in the *same way*. *Therefore God expects His spirit-begotten children to FAST TODAY!*

Example of the Early Church

The early New Testament Church of God was a *fasting* church. And it was filled with SPIRITUAL POWER! Let's look at the example God's early Church set for us today.

1. When Jesus Christ struck down the apostle Paul (who was then Saul) on the road to Damascus, did Paul spend the next three days FASTING? Acts 9:8-9. Did he also spend this time *praying*? Verses 10-11.

COMMENT: A DRAMATIC CHANGE was taking place in Paul's life. This was the time of Paul's *conversion*! He was crying out to God with all of his being while he fasted. Paul was *humbling* himself before God by FASTING, and *praying* for His mercy and forgiveness!



Photo: P. Termes

Present day Damascus, capital of Syria. Shown is the Eastern Gate where the "Street Which Is Called Straight" begins. It was in ancient Damascus that the blinded apostle Paul spent three days fasting and praying to God.

2. After God sent Ananias to Paul so he might receive his sight, did Paul show his willingness and desire to humbly obey God by *burying* his old sinful way of life in the waters of baptism? Acts 9:17-18.

3. Did Paul later command Christians to follow his **EXAMPLES** of Christian living in the *exact manner* he followed the examples set by Jesus Christ? I Cor. 11:1 and Phil. 3:16-17. Did Paul *continue* to follow Christ's example by fasting often? II Cor. 11:27.

COMMENT: Paul himself set an *example* in spiritual fasting for the Church of God. In recounting his harrowing experiences as a minister of God, he related that he was in "countless fastings" — which means *he followed Christ's example* and sought to be **SPIRITUALLY CLOSER TO GOD** by doing a great deal of fasting!

4. Did the leaders of the early Church **FAST** and *pray* to learn God's will when certain men had to be selected for specific jobs? Acts 13:1-3. Did God's ministers **FAST** and *pray* when they ordained elders in the Church? Acts 14:23.

5. In his instructions to the Church at Corinth, the apostle Paul showed that God's people would be a *fasting* people. What did He

teach husbands and wives concerning the marriage relationship? I Cor. 7:4-5.

COMMENT: Paul was instructing husbands and wives not to withhold normal *marriage relations* from each other, except it be with common consent, in order to devote themselves to *fasting and prayer*. Paul clearly shows that fasting and prayer could, on occasion, *interrupt* the normal marriage relationship from time to time!

But *why*? Exactly why should a Christian **FAST**? Why did Christ fast? Why did the apostle Paul fast? What *is* fasting and *why* should you *fast*?

The PURPOSE of Fasting

Some have thought that fasting is a kind of *penance* — that God is pleased if we "punish" ourselves by a fast.

Fasting in order to drive a "bargain" with God — fasting in order to try to bend God to **YOUR** way of thinking, in order to get your own way or your *own will* about some matter — is an **ABOMINATION** to God! It is *absolutely wrong*!

We fast to **DRAW CLOSER** to God — to get our minds off the world and the flesh and *on God*!

Fasting — doing *without any* food and water — also teaches a vital, priceless *spiritual lesson*. Let's learn this vital lesson and understand *how* fasting draws us closer to God.

1. Does God have great regard for those who are *humble* and "contrite" — *repentant* — in attitude? Isa. 66:2 and 57:15. Does God give *grace* — unmerited pardon — to the humble? I Pet. 5:5.

COMMENT: True humility is *not* penance, or a state of poverty. It is an ATTITUDE OF MIND! And the one who is humble and repentant in attitude — respectful of God's Word and has a teachable spirit — is the one God *favors* and *richly blesses*!

2. Does God require men to walk in *humility* before Him? Micah 6:8 and Eph. 4:1-2.

3. Are all Christians therefore commanded to be clothed with *humility* before their Creator? I Pet. 5:6 and Col. 3:12.

4. Does God *hear the prayers* of the humble? Ps. 9:11-12 and 10:17. Will God always come to the *aid* of the humble? Job 22:29.

5. Do the *humble* and *obedient* receive riches, honor and eternal life from God? Prov. 22:4. But must the attitude of humility *always precede* honor from God? Prov. 15:33.

6. Are people "naturally humble"? Do their minds have a humble approach to Almighty God by *nature*? Rom. 8:7. What is the *natural* proclivity of our human nature? James 4:5. What are the other thoughts and actions of the natural, hostile, carnal mind? Gal. 5:19-21.

COMMENT: Envy, strife, jealousy, etc., come from a stubborn, unyielding attitude that is anything but humble! This is the natural, carnal mind with which you and I were born. The natural mind is not and CANNOT, *of itself*, be truly humble.

Some might call themselves "naturally humble". But in Jeremiah 17:9, God calls the carnal mind what it really is: "*deceitful above ALL THINGS and desperately wicked*"! By nature, man's mind *lacks* Godly humility. That's what our hearts are like! God ought to know — He created us.

God plainly states through Jeremiah that your mind is out to deceive, trick, fool, and bluff at every turn. This means your mind can *trick* you into THINKING you're humble when you're NOT! That means you probably LACK the humility necessary for *intimate, close contact with God*!

If a person thinks he's "naturally humble," his carnal mind has TOTALLY DECEIVED HIM!

7. Does the natural mind of man, with its pride and lack of Godly humility, lead to a fall? Prov. 16:18-19.

8. Does God *resist* the proud? Jas. 4:6. But

what does He give the *humble*? Same verse. What are we therefore to do? Verses 7-8. How do we become *humble* and DRAW CLOSE to God — are we to "afflict" ourselves? Verses 9-10.

9. We have clearly seen that the vanity of our carnal nature causes us to become exalted and puffed up. How did David control his tendency to become arrogant? Ps. 109:24 and 119:71. Did he understand that sincere humility before the Eternal God is acquired through *fasting*? Ps. 35:13.

COMMENT: In the Bible "fast" and "humble" often mean the same thing. Often it will be expressed "he *humbled* himself before God." This means that he *fasted* before God! So when you see the command to humble yourself, it usually means to *fast*.



Wide World

PENANCE — Body of devout Hindu in Madras, India, is pierced by shafts of tiny metal spears. Many today erroneously believe self-torture is pleasing to God and falsely assume fasting is penance.

10. Will God eventually *exalt* the humble? I Pet. 5:6 and Mat. 23:12. Did Jesus teach that no one will be accepted of God until he becomes humble? Luke 18:13-14.

COMMENT: Notice in Luke 18:11 that this Pharisee fasted weekly with a *wrong attitude*. He fasted with the intent of exalting himself in his self-righteousness. His fasting was a form of *penance*, thinking other people would be *impressed* with his suffering, his "righteousness." And he thought God would be pleased if he made himself *suffer*, and would therefore grant him *his* will.

That is *NOT* THE PURPOSE of fasting!

The purpose of fasting is to *humble* ourselves — to help us see ourselves as we really are! And to see God as He is!

True humbling is *repentance*, not penance. It leads to conversion — admitting one's human ways are all wrong and turning to God's ways, receiving the power of His Holy Spirit to completely overshadow one's own puny human strength.

Fasting is a *humbling* experience. It cuts us down and lets us know how small and weak and insufficient unto ourselves we really are. You learn *real* humility!

You learn that you are merely a very physical human being. You learn that if you don't get that supply of physical food — you'll eventually die of starvation! You learn the same is true with your spiritual life — that you'll shrivel up and die SPIRITUALLY without a constant supply of the *spiritual* "food" of God's Word and the *energizing power* of His Holy Spirit!

Without fasting, you may *mentally* admit that you are not much. But you don't really comprehend it — you *don't FEEL it!* You don't SEE how really weak and insignificant you ARE, until you begin to go without food and drink for a period of time. *Then* the lesson is driven home — right to the pit of your stomach!

Not only do you learn how weak and worthless you are, when you fast — but you are made *aware* of the greatness of God.

Being human, and as long as you feel strong and sufficient of yourself, you will by nature trust in yourself. God is not so *important* to you.

But when you fast, God becomes VERY important! You begin to feel in your innermost being how much you NEED AND DEPEND UPON GOD. Fasting brings you to grips with REALITY. You see — and *feel* — yourself as you REALLY ARE. You are brought face to face with your dependence in *everything* upon your Heavenly Father!

You begin to see how greatly you must rely upon God, and receive of His spiritual strength.

You realize you have no strength of your own, but that GOD is the source of ALL POWER, all might — the source of the *miracle-working POWER OF HIS HOLY SPIRIT!*

And so the purpose of fasting is to *humble yourself* before God by going without food and water for a period of time, during which you draw closer to God by spending a *great deal of time* in PRAYER TO GOD and the *study of His Word*. You fast to *change* your attitude and DRAW CLOSE to God. It's the *attitude* God is interested in — He wants to see a HUMBLE and REPENTANT MIND! (Isa. 66:2.)

Fasting makes you realize what Job did — that you are nothing but a heap of ashes! A mere chemical existence in the form of human flesh — that's what your life is. That's what God wants us to realize.

Then, when we recognize how feeble we really are, and how *great* God really is, we can turn and trust in ALMIGHTY God for the *spiritual power* to overcome and grow in His character!

Ahab and Manasseh Humbled Themselves

Because men have fasted and really sought God with all their hearts, *miraculous changes* in their lives, in the courses of nations, and the world's history have taken place. God *heard!* GOD ANSWERED!

Some of the most outstanding leaders known to mankind fasted — and records of these fasts and the results have been preserved for you in your Bible. Not as mere historical facts, but as LIVING EXAMPLES! These men of character went through experiences as *examples* for Christians today (I Cor. 10:11).

The Bible shows that God also heard and granted favor even to the *extremely wicked* when they humbled themselves before God with FASTING and sought Him in earnest, heart-rending *prayer!*

1. What does the Bible say of Ahab, King of Israel? I Kings 21:25. Did Elijah the prophet warn him of the punishment God was going to bring upon his house? Read verses 17-24 and *summarize* in your own words.

2. When Ahab heard Elijah's prophetic words, he was frightened — *terrified!* What did he then proceed to do — *fast?* Verse 27. The words "and went *softly*" shows that Ahab displayed *regret* even in his gait!

3. What did God say after He saw Ahab's repentant actions — his regret and *fasting?* Verse 29.

COMMENT: Because Ahab sincerely *humbled* himself before God, the punishment was *postponed* until after his death!

4. Just how wicked was King Manasseh

when he took over the rulership of Judah after the death of his father, Hezekiah? Read II Chronicles 33:1-9 and *summarize* in your own words.

COMMENT: King Manasseh is recorded as having been one of the most wicked kings in Israel's history. He led Judah in idolatry for over thirty years!

5. Did Manasseh make the nation to *sin more than* the heathen peoples who possessed the land before the children of Israel? II Kings 21:10-11. Did Manasseh *murder* many innocent people? Verse 16. What was God going to do to the nation for its vile sins? Verses 12-15.

6. Did King Manasseh and His people heed God's warnings? II Chron. 33:10. As punishment for their sins, did God cause the nation to be taken into captivity by the cruel Assyrians? II Chron. 33:11.

7. Everything now seemed lost — it looked hopeless for Manasseh and all Judah! In this terrible state of affairs, what did King Manasseh finally do? II Chron. 33:12.

COMMENT: Remember that in the Bible "humble" is often synonymous with "fast." So Manasseh "humbled himself" before God by *fasting*! When the Bible says Manasseh humbled himself *greatly*, it means he spent a great deal of time fasting before the Eternal God.

8. Did Manasseh also PRAY to God *while* he fasted? Verse 13. Did he come to know that the Eternal God is the *true* God? Did God hear and accept the humble supplications of *repentant* King Manasseh and deliver him and his people?

9. After Manasseh repented, what action did he take to *correct* his past evil ways? Verses 14-15. In what other way did Manasseh display positive obedience to the true God? Verse 16.

COMMENT: Manasseh COMPLETELY REVERSED his foul, haughty and disobedient attitude! He sought God by *fasting* and *prayer*. He humbled himself before God very greatly and prayed for the deliverance of his nation and himself. God heard — God *intervened* — and God Almighty DELIVERED him and his people, and restored Manasseh's Kingdom!

It's never too late for even the extremely wicked to turn to God if they sincerely want to. But they must take positive, REPENTANT ACTION as Manasseh did!

God Delivers King Jehoshaphat

Another example is that of King Jehoshaphat of Judah.

1. Did a huge heathen army menacingly approach Jerusalem to do battle? II Chron. 20:1-2. What was Jehoshaphat's reaction? Did

he trust in his *own* military might, as the United States would do today, if attacked? Or did he set himself to seek God's help by proclaiming a *fast* throughout the land of Judah? Verses 3-4.

2. Did fervent, sincere *prayer* accompany their fasting? Verses 5-12. In verses 8-9, was Jehoshaphat reminding God of His promise to Solomon? II Chron. 7:13-14.

3. What did God answer the king through His prophet? II Chron. 20:15-17.

4. How did God intervene to deliver Judah? Verses 22-24.

COMMENT: God heard the cry of the people because they came seeking Him with earnest *fasting* and sincere *prayer*. Once again fasting accompanied with heartfelt prayer brought results! God heard and miraculously crushed several mighty armies by causing them to fall upon each other and *destroy themselves*!

5. Were the people also blessed with great riches after God defeated the enemy? Verse 25. How many days did it take them to cart off the spoils?

6. Did God also strike great fear into the surrounding nations for Judah's future safety? Verses 29-30.

COMMENT: What a tremendous result of earnest fasting and sincere prayer! The chips were down — the odds were against them. All looked hopeless — but the entire nation turned to God for help and He blessed them beyond their wildest expectations!

But how about you? When *you* are faced with a seemingly insurmountable problem, what do you do about it? Do you attempt to fight it with your own infinitesimal human strength? *Or do you seek God by FASTING AND PRAYER?* Do you FAST, and commit your problems into God's powerful hands?

God is no respecter of persons. He will intervene for YOU as much as for King Jehoshaphat and Judah. If you *humble* yourself before God by FASTING and PRAY for His divine intervention and power, you *also* will see your problems "fall upon each other" and *destroy themselves*!

A DOOMED City Spared!

1. Was the prophet Jonah commissioned by God to take a warning message of impending doom and destruction to the *sinning* people of Nineveh? Jonah 1:1-2 and 3:4.

2. How large was this leading Assyrian city of that time? Jonah 3:3.

COMMENT: A three days' journey meant that Nineveh was a huge, sprawling city. Jonah walked through this vast city, proclaiming the destruction God was to bring upon it because of its many sins. Jonah was taking a message

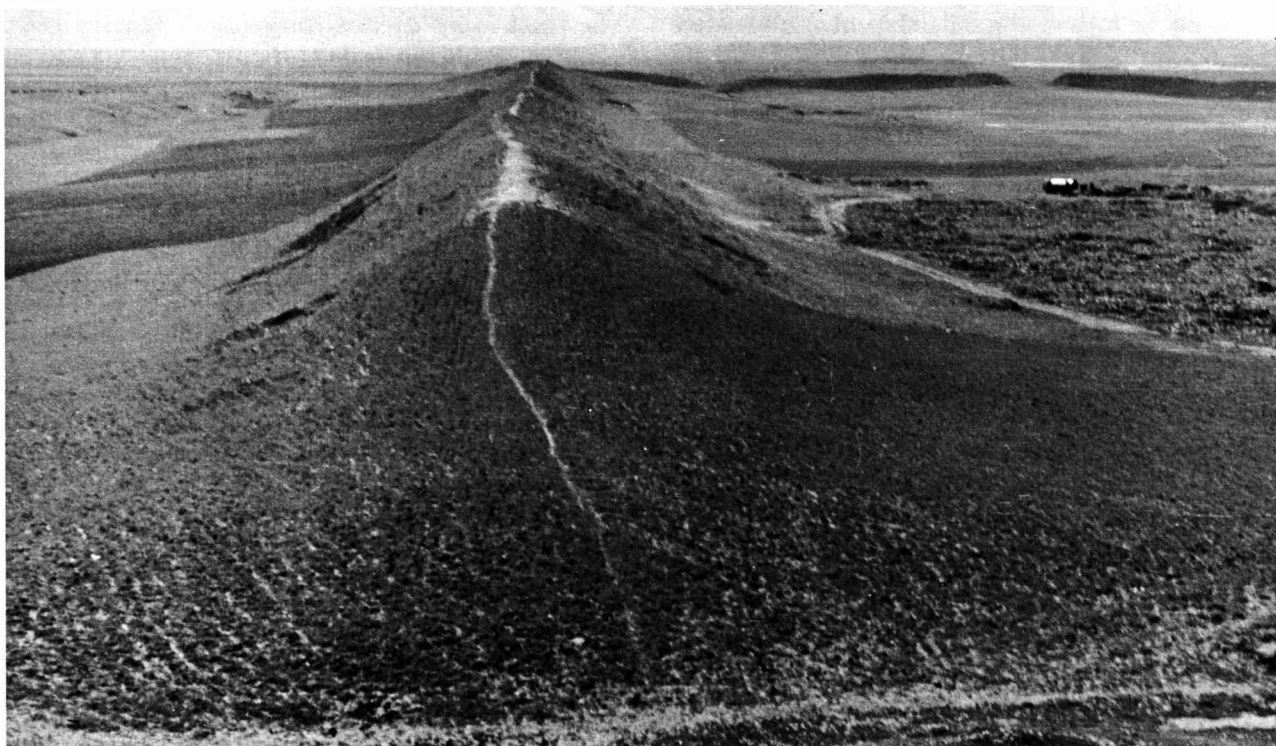


Photo: J. A. Ubieta

Mounds of dirt cover the site of ancient Nineveh. God sent Jonah to warn this great Assyrian metropolis of its impending doom.

directly from Almighty God to the *sin-laden, haughty* peoples of this Assyrian metropolis.

3. Did the people of Nineveh *believe* God's warning? Jonah 3:5. Was a **FAST** proclaimed for *all* the population? Same verse.

4. When the news of Jonah's dire message reached the king, did he command a *complete fast* for **EVERY LIVING THING** in the city? Jonah 3:6-7. Did the king also order the people to turn from their evil ways — to *repent* of the sins they were committing — and *pray* for God's mercy? Verses 8-9.

COMMENT: The king was absolutely *terrified* by Jonah's message of impending doom! He began fasting himself and commanded **EVERYONE** else to fast — *including all the animals!* This Gentile king *meant business!*

And so the people of Nineveh followed the king's example and command — they *humbled* themselves before God by fasting and *repented* of their sins.

5. Did God notice the people's fasting and repentance? Verse 10, first part. Did He therefore spare them in His mercy? Same verse, last part.

6. Did Christ mention this marvelous example of repentance to the self-righteous Pharisees? Mat. 12:41. In the Great White Throne Judgment resurrection, will the example of these people *condemn* the vain and haughty Pharisees for their rejection of Christ's warning to repent?

COMMENT: God withheld destruction from the great city of Nineveh because the people were willing to **CHANGE THEIR WAYS!** They believed God's warning message and *repented* of their sins. And they fasted in order to get off their "high horses" of vanity and show God they were in *dead earnest* about seeking His forgiveness and mercy!

God heard their sincere, earnest prayers and *spared* them!

The Jews Learn a Lesson

Ezra was another man of God who knew the value of fasting. When the children of Judah were about to return from Babylon, he realized that many perils lay in their path. He was frightened lest enemies fall upon his defenseless group, slay them, and scatter them to the winds. Notice what he did.

1. Did Ezra order the people to *fast* and *pray* to God for protection? Ezra 8:21-22. Did God answer? Verse 23.

COMMENT: God heard and delivered them. He saw how sincere they were — He saw their **FASTING** and heard their **PRAYERS** — and He protected them!

2. Is this example, as well as others we've studied, for **YOUR** benefit — for your learning and instruction? Rom. 15:4 and I Cor. 10:11. Are you *following* it?

3. How did Daniel, on a previous occasion,

approach God when he desired *special understanding*? Daniel 9:3. Also read Daniel's prayer to God in verses 4-20.

COMMENT: Daniel humbled himself before God by *fasting*! He also confessed his sins and the sins of his people, and claimed God's mercies and forgivenesses.

4. When his fervent prayer was ended, did the archangel Gabriel come to give him the understanding he sought? Verses 21-23.

5. Later, did Daniel once again seek special understanding by fasting and prayer? Daniel 10:2-3, 12.

COMMENT: Daniel FASTED and PRAYED. He was "greatly beloved" because of his sincerely repentant and obedient attitude toward God. From the first day he began "chastening" himself *with fasting*, his prayers were HEARD! God sent the archangel Gabriel to reveal some of the most vital prophecies of the Bible!

God's servants have always been FASTING servants! Fasting has helped to change their lives and has *literally* CHANGED HISTORY! Many times God miraculously INTERVENED because His people *fasted*!

They *humbled* themselves by afflicting their bodies with fasting — admitting that they were insufficient of themselves. They *extolled* God's greatness, His divine might and power, and DEPENDED upon Him. They admitted their carnality and sinful human nature — they FASTED AND REPENTED of their sins!

As a result, God heard their prayers and SUPERNATURALLY DELIVERED AND BLESSED THEM! But what about you?

Is fasting a part of *your* Christian life?

What About YOU?

Does your life lack real *spiritual impact*? Are you bogging down in countless problems, trials, difficulties and frustrations?

Then YOU NEED TO FAST!

If you have been drawing CLOSE TO GOD by prayer, Bible study *and* occasional FASTING as Jesus Christ *commands* us to do, then you will be *growing spiritually*!

You'll be conquering your human nature and learning to submit to the WILL OF GOD. You will be receiving — if you've been converted — the POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT to zealously serve God as you should! You'll be a spiritual MIGHTY MAN OR WOMAN OF VALOR, instead of a spiritual *weakling*!

God exhorts you, and *all* Christians, "therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with *all your heart*, and *with FASTING*, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your HEART, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is *gracious and merciful, slow to anger*, and of GREAT KINDNESS,

and repenteth Him [or changes His mind] of the evil. Who knoweth if He will return and repent, and LEAVE A BLESSING behind Him . . . ?" (Joel 2:12-14).

God has shown you His will about fasting. True Christians plainly *need to fast*! You have only *yourself* to blame if you fail to obey God in this vital point of His Word!

How NOT to Fast

Certain cautions need to be made plain, so that when you fast, it will *not* be IN VAIN.

Fasting is a *personal* matter. It is between God and *you*! Others should not know you are fasting unless it is your mate or some other member of your family who is directly affected by your not eating. You should be especially careful not to fast as did the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees.

1. What did Jesus warn His disciples about *insincere* fasting? Mat. 6:16.

COMMENT: The Scribes and Pharisees of Christ's day did not fast for the deep spiritual purpose that Christ intended. They fasted out of pure VANITY! They fasted to get the approbation of *men* — not God!

When they fasted, they deliberately let their hair hang down and would not wash their faces. They walked about the streets in a downcast, dejected manner with grimaces of pain written all over their faces — all the time *bragging* about their fasting.

These hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees were fasting to be *seen of MEN* — not God! They wanted others to SEE them and say, "Oh, look at that poor fellow. He's *fasting*!" These hypocrites hoped the people would think they were very *righteous* men.

The Pharisees were guilty of fasting *INSINCERELY*! Christ commands us *not* to fast in this manner.

2. How did Jesus say we should fast? Mat. 6:17-18.

COMMENT: Christ tells us to *wash* our faces and *comb* our hair — to SMILE when we fast. Why? Because your fasting is to be seen of God — not men!

3. Did God rebuke His ancient people for fasting in vain? Zech. 7:5-7.

COMMENT: Fasting for VANITY is *useless*! Fasting — yet not having your *heart* set on returning to God and drawing near to Him — is futile.

Such a fast will do you no good whatsoever! And hypocritical fasting — fasting to be seen of MEN — is loathsome *in God's sight*. God will turn away from anyone fasting in such a self-righteous, insincere attitude. It is NOT well-pleasing to Him!

4. Did ancient Israel make a *pretense* of

seeking God and His ways when they fasted? Isa. 58:2.

COMMENT: With some today, fasting is a hypocritical parade — a self-righteous display — a “holier than thou” approach, even as it was with ancient Israel. *It is not sincere REPENTANCE from the heart* — a sincere CHASTENING of the self!

5. What did the people answer God in reply to His condemnation of their *insincerity* in seeking Him? Verse 3, first part. Did God show them that their *attitude* in fasting was entirely wrong? Verse 3, last part and verse 4.

COMMENT: The *Revised Standard Version* makes verse 4 much clearer: “Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice be heard on high.” In other words, such a fast is futile — VAIN!

Their attitude for fasting was not that of earnestly seeking God’s will — rather, the people were seeking their own LUSTFUL WILL! *They were guilty of fasting insincerely!*

They did not desire to change their vile, sinful ways. They were merely fasting *selfishly* to try to GET their *own* way. This is not the humble and contrite, or *repentant*, attitude that God respects and accepts.

6. What else did God say about such hypocritical fasting? Verse 5.

COMMENT: Fasting for *penance* — merely as an act of contrition and suffering to get God to NOTICE YOU — is loathsome to God. Such insincere and self-righteous fasting is nothing more than just plain VAINTY!

7. What kind of fasting does God want — what type of fast is well-pleasing in His sight? Verses 6-7.

COMMENT: “To loose the bands of wickedness” means to QUIT SINNING! Fasting to *draw close to God* and to purge your life of all sin — learning to walk by God’s living laws of joy and happiness — is what God desires!

8. What blessings will God bestow upon those who fast and seek Him in the RIGHT ATTITUDE? Verses 8-11. Isn’t this kind of fasting *worthwhile* and WELL-PLEASING to God?

COMMENT: God wants to see a sincere, humble, *self-searching* fast. A fast during which one is striving to root out sin and is drawing *close* to God.

9. Will God hear the prayers of those who fast hypocritically? Isa. 59:2 and Jer. 14:10, 12.

COMMENT: God will not hear their prayers because they are *not willing* to put sin out of their lives. They want the blessings of God without putting out the very agent — SIN — that *cuts them off* from God and brings CURSES upon them!



Wide World

Penance of any kind is loathsome to God!

When one seeks God with *prayer* and *fasting*, his whole intent should be that of meekly surrendering to God’s will. Often this means a COMPLETE CHANGE in thoughts, attitudes, and habits. One must be willing to *surrender everything* to God — bringing every thought into captivity to Jesus Christ (II Cor. 10:5).

This is the kind of fasting God RESPECTS and ACCEPTS.

How Long? and When?

The Bible does not set specific time limits for each kind of fasting, except for the Day of Atonement which is a commanded *day-long* fast — from sunset to sunset — as we already know.

David fasted for *seven days* when his child by Bathsheba was sick unto death (II Sam. 12:16-18), doing without nourishment of any kind. But this was a very *serious* matter. David had committed an ENORMOUS SIN in God’s sight! He knew he had to TOTALLY REPENT and have his heart cleaned up by the Spirit of God (Ps. 51:1-19).

Generally speaking, fasting for spiritual reasons may be from one to three days. If the problem is serious, or the need *urgent*, it certainly would not be wrong to fast longer. But

Dear Student:

In order to avoid any possible misunderstanding concerning the procurement of advice about fasting, we found it necessary to make the following changes in new printings of Lesson 48.

On page 13, Column 1, the last paragraph (which continues at top of column 2) now reads as follows:

A special note of caution. Anyone fasting for longer than three to five days should definitely seek WISE COUNSEL prior to attempting such a fast! Unless one is under the constant daily observation and supervision of a competant physician who is favorably sympathetic with and is fully experienced in fasting, that individual should probably never fast longer than about a week. And if the individual is under 55 years of age. Between ages 55 and 65 fasting ought to be limited to no more than seven days -- and over 65 to three days. Never go to extremes! If necessary take a series of shorter fasts. (Some may also need to seek advice if they plan to fast more than one day -- depending on their health.)

To bring your lesson up to date, be sure to cross out the original statement in the lesson and refer to the new wording above.

On page 14, column 2, paragraph 6, the sentence in parentheses mentioning DIABETES has been deleted. Cross it out with a pencil or pen.

Insert this sheet in your notebook between pages 12 and 13 of Lesson 48 for future reference.

Thank you,

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE DEPT.

in the case of longer fasts, *great care* needs to be maintained!

Moses, Elijah, and Christ Himself are the only three examples in the Bible where a servant of God fasted *forty days*. They had very *special* missions to perform and had to prepare themselves with prolonged fasting and prayer. But such fasting for this degenerate age is absolutely NOT advisable for you, or anyone else!!

Fasting MUST NOT BE CONTINUED TOO LONG!

An *unwise, over-lengthy fast* CAN PROVE FATAL!

Moses, Elijah, and Christ were able to fast forty days. They were physically in far better and stronger condition than most of us today. It would be almost totally impossible for a person today to fast forty days without food and water and *not die*!

SUCH A FAST WOULD BE MOST UNWISE FOR YOU!

Never go to extremes! Generally, one to three days' fasting is enough.

But *when* should you fast?

A one-day fast may be taken anytime during the week. But if your work is strenuous and you feel fasting would hinder you in your job, perhaps Sunday would be the best time.

While working at your job, it usually will not be possible to fast much more than a day or two at a time. During such fasts you should utilize the normal mealtime for sincere, heart-rending *prayers to God* — devoted to the specific reasons for fasting.

If you feel the need for a longer fast from time to time, you can use the opportunities that vacations and certain "days off" afford us. There will certainly be times during the year when you may employ several days in a row for fasting.

If you contemplate a three-day fast, you might find it more convenient to fast over the weekend. A fast from Friday through Sunday will not generally interfere greatly with one's work. And during the weekend you will also have *more time* to draw close to God through BIBLE STUDY and PRAYER.

One caution needs to be observed, however. Since the Sabbath is a *Holy Day* of God and a FEAST DAY, it is not generally advisable to spend the Sabbath fasting. But on certain occasions it is permissible, especially if the spiritual problem is URGENT. However, since the Sabbath is a feast, you should NOT make it your *constant routine* to fast every Sabbath!

If you ever think you should fast for *longer* than three days, you should definitely seek WISE COUNSEL prior to attempting such a *lengthy fast*! (Some may also need to seek advice if they plan to fast more than *one* day — depending on their health.) If you have *any questions* about fasting, be sure to consult one of God's ministers.

If this is not possible, then write to Mr. Armstrong for advice concerning your situation.

For further information on HOW to fast, and fasting for *physical* reasons of health, be sure to write for Mr. Armstrong's article "The Plain Truth About Fasting."

Learn to Fast Progressively

Some may have to learn to fast *progressively* and gradually work up to fasting for one or more days at a time.

A good way to begin is to make the positive decision to fast for *one meal*. You might decide that breakfast would be the meal to begin with.

The procedure, then, would be to go to bed the previous night with the *positive realization* that the following morning you are going to put away the temptation and desire to eat and drink according to your regular routine. Put yourself in the positive mental attitude that you *need to draw closer to God*!

When morning comes, go about your normal routine of dressing and grooming for the day — all the while realizing that it is NOT just the normal routine, but rather a time when you are giving special attention to *afflicting* your body — humbling yourself before God.

When the time comes for the usual morning meal, devote that time to prayer in place of satisfying your physical hunger and thirst. During this prayer ask God to help you draw closer to Him and *drink in* of His Holy Spirit.

Next time you decide to fast, go without eating for *two* meals, again spending your normal mealtime in prayer to God. Finally, the next time go without food and drink for a full *twenty-four hours*! That way you will have gradually accustomed yourself to fasting.

By learning to fast progressively, you'll find that fasting for a day or two is not as difficult as you may have thought — especially if you have your mind on the *purpose* of fasting and are spending your time properly!

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong has a routine which he often follows while fasting which is excellent — regardless of the specific spiritual purpose for fasting. During the waking hours of the fast, Mr. Armstrong will spend *one hour* in fervent prayer to God, utilize the *next hour* in Bible study and then follow the *third hour* with meditation and reflection upon the things studied, and the lessons to be learned.

During the meditation period, Mr. Armstrong will sometimes take an invigorating walk — preferably in an area where he can be near to God's creation.

By following such a routine, one will quickly find himself much *closer* to God and filled with the *spiritual power* necessary to cope with the problems at hand.

Anyone who has learned to fast knows that one experiences a depth of understanding and a profound closeness to God in fasting that can not be experienced in any other way. Following a routine such as Mr. Armstrong often follows in fasting can be the means for many to conquer obstacles in their Christian lives that cannot be mastered in any other way!

How Often Should We Fast?

Nowhere in the Bible do we have an exact statement of how *often* we should fast — except, of course, once a year on the Day of Atonement. Yet we have several *examples* which will help us to understand how often *we* should practice fasting in our lives.

1. Did the apostle Paul fast *often*? II Cor. 11:27.

COMMENT: Paul had no specific command in the Old Testament teaching him how often to fast. However, Paul was acutely aware of the race he was running and how *diligently* he needed to strive to overcome himself and enter God's Kingdom. He considered it necessary to *fast often* — even in the face of the trials and afflictions he constantly endured — to maintain the SPIRITUAL STRENGTH necessary to serve and obey God.

2. Did the Gentile, Cornelius, obviously fast quite often? Acts 10:1-2, 30-32. Was he therefore selected by God to be the first Gentile to receive the gospel and the Holy Spirit? Acts 10:34, 44-45 and 11:18.

COMMENT: Cornelius lived such a life of service and overcoming before God, that the apostle Peter was sent to him to expound the gospel of the Kingdom and *baptize* him and his repentant family. It is most significant that Cornelius had been praying and *fasting* when God decided to send Peter.

3. Have we seen that the prophet Daniel *chastened* himself a great deal by fasting *often*? Dan. 9:3 and 10:2-3.

COMMENT: We have seen that fasting played a vital part in the lives of those God used down through history. From these examples, the principle we should apply in determining how often to fast should be based upon the *needs in our lives*.

The *purpose* of fasting, as it is amply demonstrated in God's Word, is not to punish ourselves as a form of penance, but to *HUMBLE* ourselves and *draw closer to God in prayer*! Therefore we should fast *frequently* enough and *long* enough to keep ourselves CLOSE TO GOD — in the vital spiritual condition that will enable us to overcome and endure to the end.

Everyone of us wants to live the vital, progressive and growing *spiritual* life of a dedicated Christian. Therefore Christ has placed

fasting at our disposal as a vital tool and key to overcoming.

Fasting should become a *VERY REAL PART OF OUR LIVES*!

We can fall short of the tremendous goal and reward God has prepared for us if we *neglect to utilize* this vital tool!

Follow God's Directions — You Won't "Starve"!

Some few who have never fasted are *fearful* of fasting. Their dilemma occurs because of a *misunderstanding* of the word "fast." They confuse fasting with "starvation"! This is a totally wrong concept. Fasting is NOT STARVATION!

When you fast your body automatically cuts in and utilizes a reserve fuel supply. You need not worry about starvation when fasting. Most people use this false scare as an *EXCUSE* for *not* fasting.

There is not one single case recorded in the Bible of a person dying as a result of fasting as God directed. But there are many recorded examples of people who would have been *saved* if they had fasted!

There is no excuse or reason for anyone in *normal good health* to be fearful of fasting. God hasn't commanded you to do anything that's harmful to your body if you're in *good health to begin with*! (However, if you want to fast, but have a health problem which might be aggravated by fasting — such as DIABETES — be sure to write for information before fasting.)

Fasting is not intended to get your mind on yourself and how you might "starve" to death! The idea is ridiculous. Rather, get your mind *off your fears and ON THE POWER OF THE CREATOR GOD! Don't be afraid to fast!*

Now here are some perfectly *normal reactions* in your body which you can expect to experience while fasting — reactions which are *good for you*.

The most common sensation experienced when one first begins fasting is the churning of the stomach. But this will stop after a short time. The stomach is merely doing some *adjusting* since it isn't receiving any food.

During a fast some encounter a slight headache for a while. This is due to the poisons in your system that the body is throwing off. During a fast, especially of several days duration, a *chemical housecleaning* will take place. If you don't have a headache, then you may have a "thick" feeling in your head for a while at the beginning of the fast, which will gradually disappear.

After missing a few meals you will begin to feel a little weak. This is only normal and

natural since no food or drink is entering the stomach. As mentioned before, if you have a job where heavy work requires a great deal of energy, then it would be wise to fast when you have some time off from work.

When you feel a little weak during a fast, realize that God wants you to learn by this that you're a physical, earthy being. That your temporary *physical* life is totally dependent on the physical food you eat!

By analogy, the same is true *spiritually*. Without receiving God's *spiritual* energy through His Holy Spirit, you become weak spiritually. That is the great lesson God wants you to learn when you feel physically weak from not eating.

So once you've started a fast — *try to STICK WITH IT!* Don't quit fasting because you feel a little *weak* — God wants you to realize how weak you become spiritually *without* His divine power!

Other Reasons for Fasting

Many times in our lives we are faced with making important *decisions* which affect our lives, and possibly the lives of others. God tells us to seek wise counsel and a multitude of counselors in making such decisions (Prov. 11:14).

God is our greatest Counselor. We should seek Him diligently for wisdom in any decision we must *reach*.

There can be no better way to seek God's counsel and wisdom than by *fasting* and *prayer*! If we begin to fast when there is an important decision to be made, and cry out to God for wisdom, He will surely give it to us.

1. What example do we find in the Bible of fasting and prayer *before* an important decision had to be made? Acts 13:1-3.

COMMENT: In the Church at Antioch, a decision had to be made as to who would be sent on an evangelistic journey into Asia Minor. Notice that they *fasted* and *prayed* and God revealed *His* selection to His ministers through the Holy Spirit!

2. On what other important occasion did God's ministers *fast* and *pray*? Acts 14:23.

COMMENT: Again we clearly see that before elders were ordained in the Churches in Asia Minor, the evangelists and ministers prayed to God with *fasting*, before coming to their all-important decision.

There are still other reasons for *fasting*. If you've made a wretched failure in something — humble yourself before God and ask His forgiveness and pray for His power to overcome.

If you discover that your attitude is *lethargic* and you just can't seem to pray as you should — then *FAST and pray!* That's the way to draw *close* to God. If you feel your prayers aren't being heard, that is the time to *humble* yourself

before God. God *hears* the humble and contrite — the repentant in attitude.

The time you really need to fast — and **QUICKLY** — is when you've realized that you have *STRAYED* from God, or *desperately* need his **HELP!**

Of course, there will be times when you'll need to *humble* yourself and **PRAY** for God's Work and His ministers. And there'll be times when you should fast and pray for *other* individuals and their problems as David did (Ps. 35:13).

But you can also fast in order to *praise* God — to give Him *thanks* for calling you into the knowledge of His truth. When you fast, it need not always be when you're facing a great problem, but simply to say "Thank you" for all of God's abundant blessings!

So the next time you need special help to overcome a serious problem, to make an important decision in your life, or when you're really concerned for someone else's difficulties — **FAST. Fast and PRAY!**

Cry out to God with all your being! Draw close to God with fasting and prayer and He will hear!

Fast and Pray for Spiritual Power

When was the last time you fasted? Do you just fast "once a year" — on the Day of Atonement when God *commands* it? If so, God knows how spiritually *WEAK* you really are! You may not *realize* it — but it's true!

The longer you go without fasting, the further you tend to drift away from the reality of God and His **GREAT POWER!** The further you drift from a close, *intimate contact* with Almighty God. And the *weaker* you become spiritually!

YOU NEED TO FAST! You need to seek God and draw close to Him by *fasting and prayer!*

If you draw close to God, acknowledge your **NEED** for Him, and depend on Him — He will strengthen you by *filling you with His Holy Spirit!* He will give you the **SPIRIT OF POWER, LOVE AND A SOUND MIND** (II Tim. 1:7). You'll receive His joy, peace, patience, gentleness, humility, faith and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

God will literally **INSPIRE YOU WITH HIS HOLY SPIRIT!**

Notice now what Jesus says to you.

1. Even while you are going *without* physical food and drink, how will you be receiving eternal, **SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT?** John 7:37-39. Do you also receive spiritual "food" through the *study of God's Word* when fasting? Deut. 8:3; Mat. 4:4 and John 6:63.

COMMENT: By fasting, studying the Bible and praying, you recharge your "spiritual batteries,"

so to speak, by receiving *more* of God's Holy Spirit. You receive SPIRITUAL POWER from God!

2. At one point during His ministry, a man came to Jesus' disciples and asked them to cast a demon out of his son. They couldn't do it (Mark 9:17-18). But when Jesus appeared on the scene, how did He rebuke the foul spirit? Verse 25. Did the demon leave? Verses 26-27. What did Jesus tell His disciples when they wondered why *they* couldn't cast this wicked spirit out? Verse 29.

COMMENT: Because Jesus was close to the Father through much *prayer* and *fasting*, He received the SPIRITUAL POWER necessary to cast out this particularly obstinate and rebellious demon!

3. Did Jesus admit He could do NO spiritual works of *Himself*? John 5:30. Then *where* did Jesus say the spiritual power He demonstrated time and again really came from? John 14:10.

COMMENT: Jesus received *spiritual power* from God the Father to do mighty miracles and accomplish the work of God — because He **FASTED AND PRAYED A GREAT DEAL!**

You **ALSO** can receive that spiritual power. By drawing close to God with *prayer* and *fasting*, you can receive new vigor, enthusiasm, spiritual steadfastness and **REAL POWER!**

Fasting can help *change your approach to God*, broaden your horizons and fill you with greater faith. Fasting will not only cause you to be more *thankful* for the blessings of God — the little things like food and drink — but it can help change your entire approach and **OUT-LOOK toward everything!**

Fasting and prayer can literally *alter and change YOUR WHOLE LIFE!*

Fast SOON!

Do you want God to intervene on *your* behalf? Do you really want to **RECEIVE MORE** of the Holy Spirit? Do you desire to have close, *intimate contact* with your Heavenly Father, who bestows every good and perfect gift?

Do you desire to have greater spiritual **POWER** and **IMPACT** in your Christian life? Do you want to be **FILLED** with the Spirit of God — the spirit of love, **POWER** and sound-mindedness?

Do you desire to WALK WITH GOD?

Then *follow the examples* set for you in God's Word! Seek God by chastening and humbling yourself before Him with **FASTING!**

Remember the examples of Moses, David, Jehoshaphat, Daniel, and the nation of Judah in Ezra's time. Remember the New Testament examples of Christ and Paul! Remember the very words of Jesus Christ, speaking to you and me:

"The days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and THEN SHALL THEY FAST IN THOSE DAYS" (Mark 2:20).

If you will obey Christ, and seek God by fasting whenever you need to, your life will be **MIRACULOUSLY CHANGED!** You'll be blessed beyond your ability to comprehend. You will be blessed with spiritual love, *closeness to God*, and **DYNAMIC SPIRITUAL POWER!**

What our STUDENTS SAY

(Continued from page 2)

If man would not take everything for granted but gave his Creator the credit due Him for His creation, instant prayer of praise every day would be of second nature.

"Does not an audience applaud the participants of an opera or play well performed? Does not the viewer of a beautiful work of art enquire as to the artist? In all walks of life, is not the outstanding performer praised and applauded for his work? Then it must be that man takes the works of his Creator for granted because wondrous is His creation — yet man does not praise Him.

"The day after the blackout in the north-eastern area of the United States, many persons commented on the beautiful moon that shone on the night of the blackout (I suppose that many city dwellers never gave it a thought that a moon existed before the night of the blackout). If these commentators had gone a step further and praised the Creator of such a beautiful moon — (in my opinion) this would be 'instant in prayer.'

"In our daily routine of work and play, an observant person with the right spirit can be instant in prayer. To view the beauty of the sunrise and sunset with the knowledge of its Creator in mind should result in instant prayer of praise daily. The simple act of quenching one's thirst daily as one receives a pleasant sensation in drinking a glass of water is cause enough to remember its Creator. To remember its Creator as one bites into a sweet succulent fruit is 'instant in prayer.'

"In Psalm 104, David was able to observe everyday occurrences keeping his Creator in mind. But as stated in Lesson 47, prayer by kneeling every day is necessary to cultivate a mind ready for being 'instant in prayer.'"

— Harvey N., New York, New York

• *You're absolutely right, Harvey!*