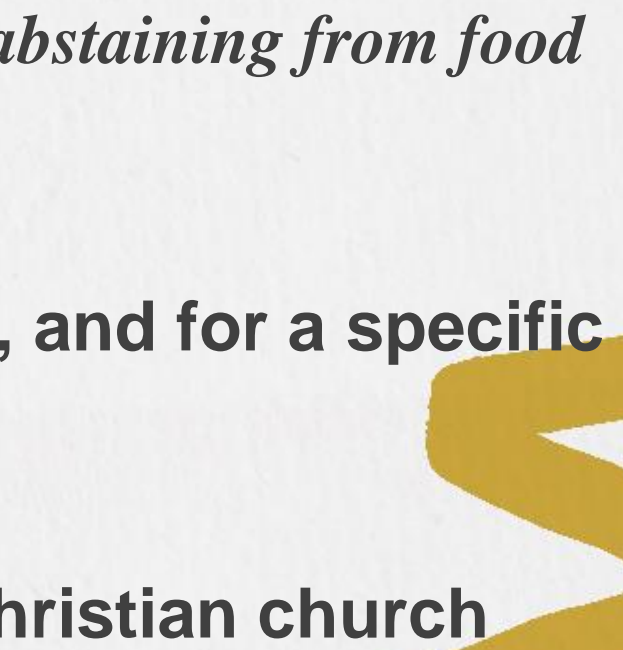


FASTING

AS FOR ME
MY HOUSE




Introduction

- **Fasting - “*to abstain from food, to go without food (or drink)*” (Oxford Dictionary)**
 - **In the Christian context: *fasting is abstaining from food for spiritual purposes***
 - **Usually for defined period of time, and for a specific purpose**
 - **Has long been a practice of the Christian church**
- 

In a culture where the landscape is dotted with shrines to the 'Golden Arches' and an assortment of Pizza Temples, fasting seems out of place, out of step with our times'

(Foster, p. 59)



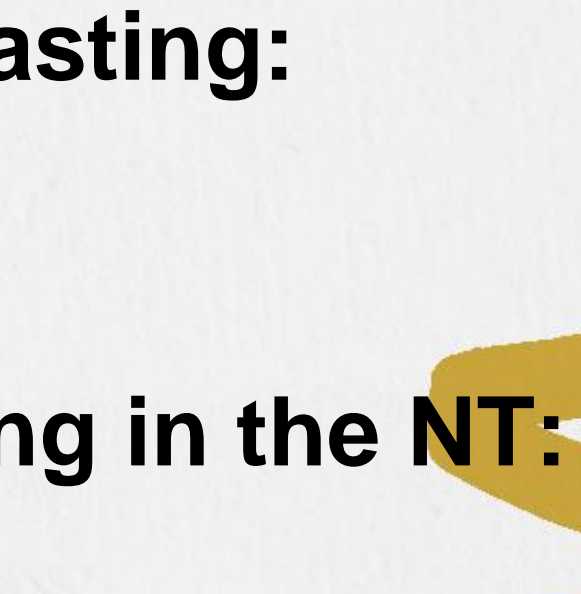
Introduction

Many Bible champions - examples of fasting:

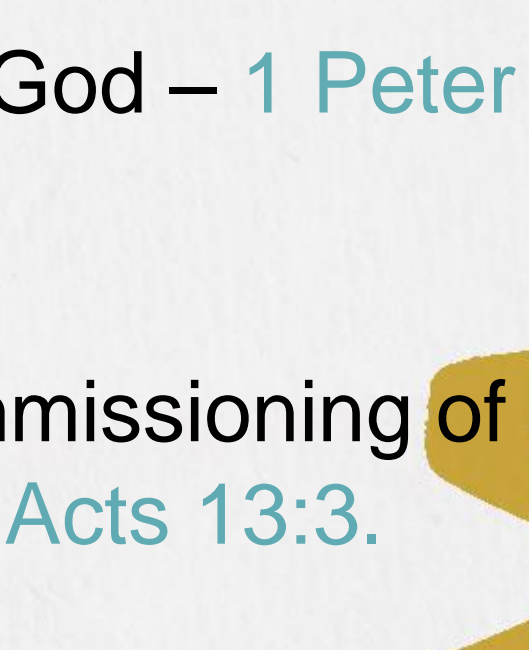
- **Moses the law giver**
- **David the king**
- **Elijah the prophet**
- **Daniel the interpreter of visions**
- **Hannah in deep supplication**
- **Anna the prophetess**
- **Jesus and his apostles**

**Later Christian leaders: Luther, Calvin, Knox,
John Wesley, David Brainerd**

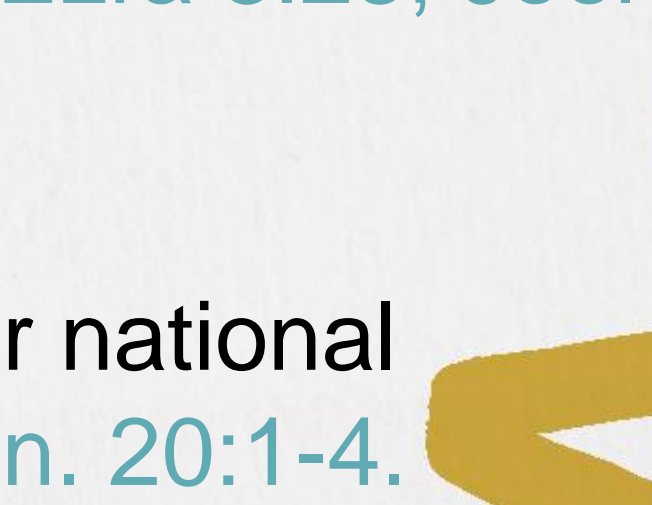
A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner of the slide. It features a thick, yellow, wavy line that starts from the right edge and moves towards the bottom left. Along this path, there are several teal-colored footprints, suggesting a journey or a path of discovery.

- **Definitive chapter on fasting:
Isaiah 58**
 - **First reference to fasting in the NT:
Jesus, Luke 4:2**
- 

Why do we fast?

- For personal holiness – Psalm 69:10
 - To humble ourselves before God – 1 Peter 5:6, Ezra 8:21
 - Special occasions – e.g. commissioning of missionaries and ministers – Acts 13:3.
Elders - Acts 14:23.
- 

Why do we fast?

- To seek God earnestly – Ezra 8:23, Joel 2:12.
 - Could also be for group or national emergencies: e.g. 2 Chron. 20:1-4.
- 


Why do we fast?

“Fasting helps to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, to sacrifice ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God.”

— Andrew Murray



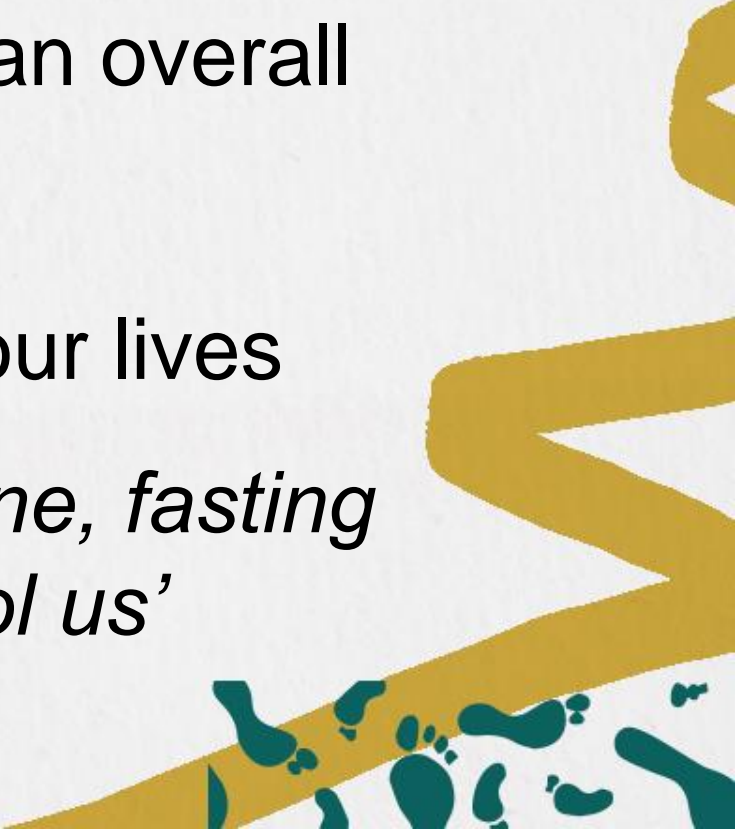
Why do we fast?

- To bring freedom and deliverance – Isaiah 58:6; Luke 4:18.
 - For revelation from God – Daniel 9:2, 3, 21, 22
- 

Why do we fast?

- Fasting involves intense discipline – one of the traditional ‘Christian Disciplines’
- It is intended to bring us into an overall disciplined life – ‘disciple’
- No place for cheap grace in our lives
- *‘More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us’*

(Foster, p. 67)



HOW DO WE FAST?

Three Main Forms Of Fasting

(all involving literal abstinence from food):

- **The Normal Fast**

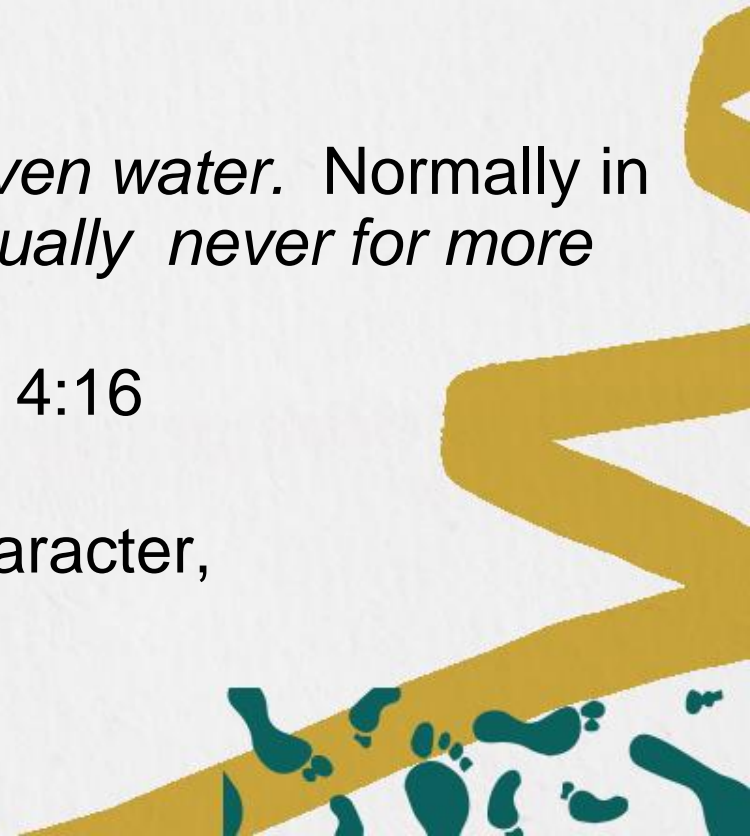
Abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, but not from water.

- **The Absolute Fast**

Abstaining from all food and drink, *even water*. Normally in response to a very serious crisis (*Usually never for more than three days*)

Acts 9:9; Ezra 10:6; Ezra 9:3; Esther 4:16

Occasionally truly supernatural in character,
e.g. Moses – 40 days



How Do We Fast?

- The Partial Fast

Restriction of diet e.g. Daniel 10:3.

All these fasts can be public or private, regular or occasional, involuntary or voluntary - all in response to differing needs and circumstances



When We Fast

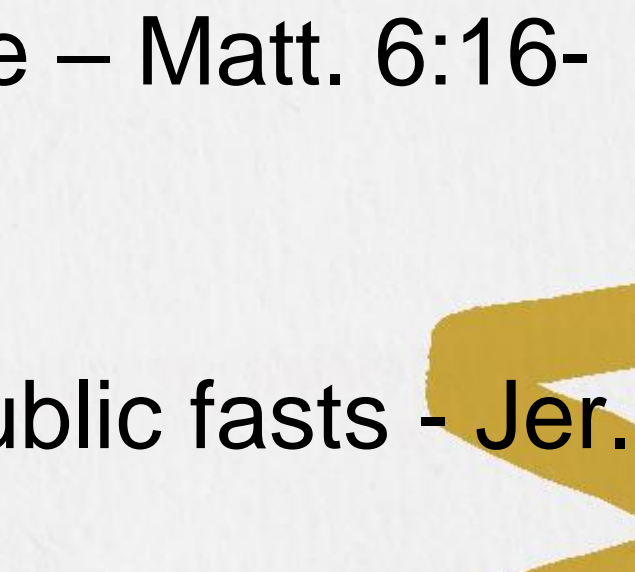
- Matthew 6:2, 5, 16: *Jesus expected us to fast.* ‘**When**’, not ‘If’.

Should be a regular part of our Christian lives and discipline.

Could be practised weekly or monthly, or at special times.

When We Fast

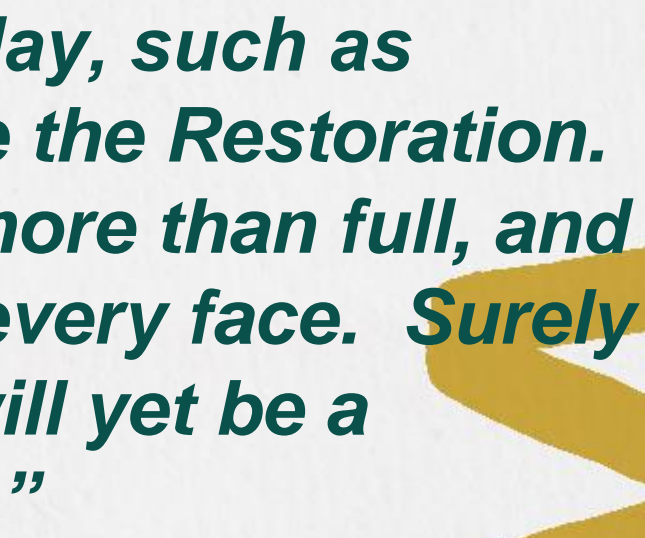
Private versus Public Fasting

- Fasting normally in private – Matt. 6:16-18.
 - But scripture speaks of public fasts - Jer. 36:6, Joel 2:15.
- 

When We Fast

- John Wesley on a special public fast in England in 1756:

“The fast day was a glorious day, such as London has scarce seen since the Restoration. Every church in the city was more than full, and a solemn seriousness sat on every face. Surely God hears prayer, and there will yet be a lengthening of our tranquillity.”



To Whom Do We Fast?

Fasting not self-centred - focus to be on God and His glory when we fast

- See Isaiah 58:3, 5 - God is not interested in such fasts

To Whom Do We Fast?

“First, let it be done unto the Lord, with our eyes singly fixed on Him. Let our intention herein be .. to glorify our Father ... to wait for an increase of purifying grace ... to add seriousness and earnestness to our prayers ... and to obtain all the great and precious promises ... in Christ Jesus. ... Let us beware of fancying we merit anything from God by our fasting”.

John Wesley



Other benefits, practical aspects

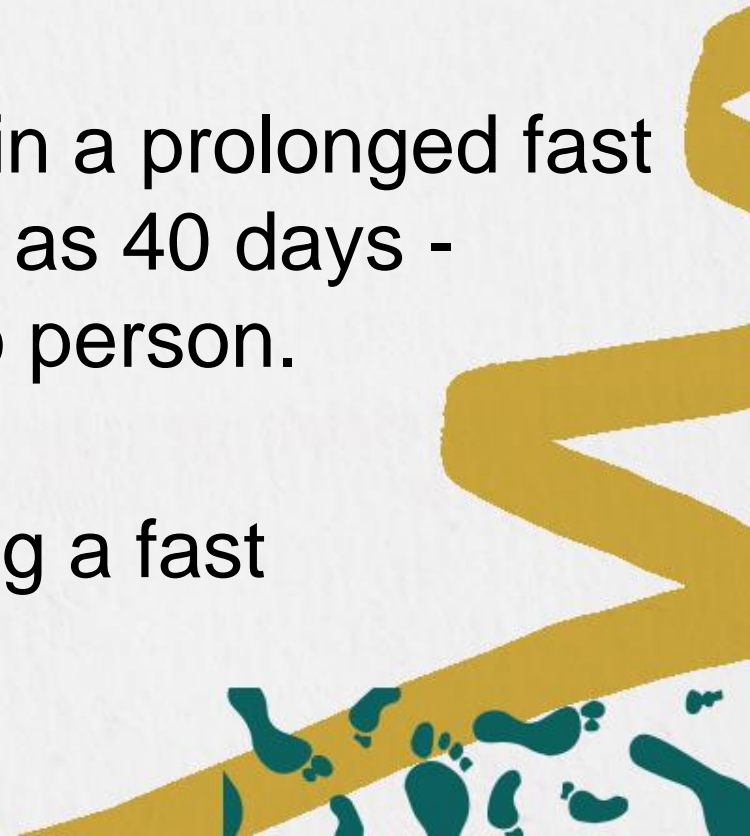
- Beneficial for the body
- Benefit of exercising self-control
- Nature of a prolonged fast (several days or weeks):
3 phases through which the body passes:
 - craving for food
 - feeling of weakness
 - growing strength with little concern about food

Other benefits, practical aspects

Termination of final phase - beginning of hunger pangs, onset of starvation and ultimately, death

Healthy human body can sustain a prolonged fast (not without water) for as long as 40 days - period will vary from person to person.

Practical aspects about breaking a fast



Selected scriptures on fasting

- Exodus 34:28 - Moses' first period of forty days on Sinai.
- Leviticus 16:29,31 – On the Day of Atonement.
- Deuteronomy 9:9,18 - Moses; two periods of forty days on Sinai.
- 1 Samuel 1:7-8 - Hannah's prayer for a child.
- 1 Kings 17:6,14-16 - Elijah's restricted diet at Cherith and Zarephath.
- 1 Kings 19:8 - Elijah on his journey to Horeb.
- Ezra 8:21-23 - Proclaimed by Ezra at the river Ahava
- Ezra 9:5 - Ezra mourning for the faithlessness of the exiles.
- Nehemiah 1:4 - Nehemiah for the restoration of Jerusalem.
- Esther 4:3 - By the Jews following Haman's decree.
- Psalm 35:13 - David on behalf of others who were sick.
- Isaiah 58 - The kind of fasting which pleases God.
- Daniel 1:12-16 – Daniel and his companions refuse the King's food.
- Daniel 9:3 – Daniel praying for Jerusalem.
- Daniel 10:2,3 – Daniel's three weeks' partial fast.
- Joel 2:12 – When returning to God with all the heart.
- Matthew 4:2 – By our Lord for 40 days.
- Matthew 6:16-18 – Not to be practised as the hypocrites do.
- Luke 2:37 – By Anna worshipping in the temple.
- Acts 9:9 – Saul of Tarsus after his encounter with Christ.
- Acts 10:30 – By Cornelius when an angel appeared to him.
- Acts 13:2,3 – By prophets and teachers in Antioch.
- Acts 14:23 – At the appointment of elders in the churches
- 2 Corinthians 6:5 – An ingredient of the apostolic ministry.
- 2 Corinthians 11:27 – In the list of Paul's sufferings.

Questions?



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