

HYPOCRISY IN FASTING
(Matthew 6:16-18)

- I. BACKGROUND on Fasting
 - A. Practiced in some PAGAN cultures
 - B. Practiced in the OLD TESTAMENT
 - 1. Only fast COMMANDED was associated with the Day of Atonement
(Lev. 16:29; cf. 23:27)
 - 2. Other COMMEMORATIVE fasts instituted over time
 - 3. Many engaged in VOLUNTARY fasts on OCCASION
 - C. Practiced in the NEW TESTAMENT
 - 1. None COMMANDED
 - 2. Some engaged in VOLUNTARY fasts on OCCASION
 - 3. Always for a SPIRITUAL purpose
 - 4. Never presented as having ANY intrinsic VALUE
- II. Pharisaical PRACTICE of Fasting (Matt. 6:16)
 - A. It was SCHEDULED: each WEEK on days two and five
 - B. It was PUBLIC: held on weekly MARKET DAYS
 - C. It was PRETENTIOUS

1. They “put on a GLOOMY FACE”
2. They “NEGLECT their APPEARANCE”

D. It was POINTLESS

1. They do it “to be NOTICED by MEN”
2. They GOT the reward they WANTED

III. PROPER Fasting (Matt. 6:17-18)

A. Jesus indicates it is ACCEPTABLE and NORMAL for the Christian

1. Appropriate when in SORROW (2 Sam. 12:16; 3:35; Ps. 35:13)
2. Appropriate when in DANGER (2 Chron. 20:3; Esther 4:16)
3. Appropriate when expressing PENITENCE (1 Kings 21:27; Ezra 10:6; Jonah 3:5, 7)
4. Appropriate when SEEKING GOD’S WILL (Dan. 9:2-3; 21-22; 10:3)
5. Appropriate when beginning an important TASK or MINISTRY (Matt. 4:1-2; Acts 13:2-3; 14:23)

B. Genuine fasting is always associated with PRAYER

C. Genuine fasting is always linked with a PURE HEART (Zech. 7:5, 9-10)

D. Genuine fasting is WITHOUT PRETENSE (Matt. 6:17-18)

1. Practice NORMAL grooming and hygiene
2. Do NOTHING to attract ATTENTION

E. The Father NEVER fails to NOTICE and REWARD those who fast sincerely