

Fasting as a Regular Practice in the New Testament

In the Bible, fasting is at times undertaken by the people of God out of desperation or in other special circumstances.

However, fasting was also undertaken as a regular spiritual practice (in the same way that prayer or Scripture study was). This was true even for New Covenant Jesus followers.

Here are some examples:

1. First century Jews fasted as a regular practice.
 - a. For instance, a corporate fast each year on the Day of Atonement.
 - b. And individual fasting more regularly, "I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get."
Luke 18:12
2. Jesus assumed His followers would fast. And instructed them in how to approach fasting.
 - a. "And when you fast..."
 - i. Matthew 6:16
 - ii. (Fasting here is listed alongside giving alms and prayer as an act of righteousness)
 - b. "But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast"
 - i. Matthew 9:15
3. The early church regularly fasted in the book of Acts
 - a. "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting..."
 - i. Acts 13:2
 - b. "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."
 - i. Acts 14:23
4. John the Baptist fasted
 - a. Matt. 11:18
5. John the Baptist's disciples fasted
 - a. Luke 5:33
6. The prophet Anna in the Temple who was present at Jesus's temple presentation fasted
 - a. Luke 2:37