

“Preparing for the Day of Atonement—Part 1”

This article is from the “Among Friends” section of the Church of God Big Sandy’s website (churchofgodbigandy.com). It was posted for the weekend of Sept. 27, 2025.

By Dave Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—At our Bible study on Wednesday night, I began a two-part series. The presentation was titled “Preparing for the Day of Atonement—Part 1.” Since we celebrated the Feast of Trumpets on Tuesday, Sept. 23, and we will celebrate the Day of Atonement on Thursday, Oct. 2, there are only two Wednesday nights (Sept. 24 and Oct. 1) between the two celebrations.

Last Wednesday was the first Bible study. An interesting twist this year is that our next Wednesday-night Bible study (Oct. 1) will actually be a part of our observing the Day of Atonement—since sundown for us will be around 7:04 and our Bible study starts at 7:00.

Since our Bible-study presentations are primarily given for our friends and brethren around the country, I enjoy our small crowd on Wednesday night. I will certainly understand if the brethren want to stay home to start their fast. But it is vital for a sound technician (generally Michael Bald) to be there. Even though I would understand if our pianist (Dixon Cartwright) wants to be at home, I won’t be surprised if he comes to play music for us.

The presentation on Wednesday night was about fasting. A subtitle for the presentation would be “Three Situations for Fasting.” But, before I discussed the three concepts, I gave a few foundational scriptures.

“When you fast”

- Matthew 6:16-18—The Son of God began His comments about fasting by saying “When you fast . . .”
- Luke 5:33-35—When the disciples asked Christ why His disciples at that time were not fasting, He asked: “Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them?”
- Luke 18:9-14—When Christ gave a parable about people thinking they were more righteous than other people, He pointed out that the Pharisee fasted for the wrong reason.

- Acts 13:3—When Barnabas and Paul were chosen to serve the Lord, the brethren in Antioch fasted and prayed before laying hands on them.
- Acts 14:23—When the brethren appointed elders (to serve) in every church, they prayed with fasting.
- 1 Corinthians 7:1-5—Paul wrote that marital love should be consensual, and one of the few reasons for a delay in marital love was time for fasting and prayer.

Three situations

When considering three situations for fasting, a person could take a chronological approach—before, during and after.

In the presentation and in this article, I am reversing the order—after, during and before.

After a sin—part of repentance

- 1 Samuel 7:5-6—The people fasted and prayed: “We have sinned against the LORD.”
- 1 Kings 21:2-29—After Jezebel arranged a large fast through deception (producing a forged letter of her husband, King Ahab), Ahab conducted a meaningful personal fast.
- 1 Kings 21:8-16—Jezebel forged a letter (she wrote it and sealed it with her husband’s seal) and tricked the elders and the nobles into conducting a fast—during which time Naboth was assassinated.
- 1 Kings 21:27—Ahab tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his body, fasted, lay in sackcloth and went about mourning.
- Ezra 10:1-6—When Ezra came there, he ate no bread and drank no water as he mourned.
- Nehemiah 1:3-11—Nehemiah said: “We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which you commanded Your servant Moses.”
- Nehemiah 9:1-3—“The children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth and with dust on their heads.”
- Daniel 9:3-19—Daniel said: “I set my face toward the LORD God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.”
- Daniel 9:5—Daniel said: “We have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled.”
- Daniel 9:19—Daniel said: “O LORD, hear! O LORD, forgive! O LORD, listen and act!”

During a trial—seeking help

- Judges 20:21-26—After the children of Israel were defeated by the Benjamites on two days, they went to the house of God and fasted.
- 2 Samuel 12:15-23—When the child that Uriah's wife bore to David became ill, David fasted for the baby to live.
- 2 Chronicles 20:3-4—When the armies were approaching Judah, King Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast.
- Ezra 8:21-23—Ezra proclaimed a fast—being ashamed to ask for an escort of soldiers.
- Esther 4:1-3—There was great mourning among the Jews with fasting, weeping and wailing—and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.
- Esther 4:16—Esther sent a message to Mordecai: "Gather the Jews who are present and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise."
- Jonah 3:5-10—"The people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth—from the greatest to the least of them."
- Matthew 17:21—The Son of God said: "This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

Before important events

Fasting is a wonderful means for connecting with the Father before important events.

- Exodus 34:28—Moses fasted for 40 days and 40 nights (neither eating bread nor drinking water). And the Lord wrote the word of the covenant (the Ten Commandments) on the tablets.
- Matthew 4:1-11—When the Son of God was to be tempted by the devil, He fasted 40 days and 40 nights.