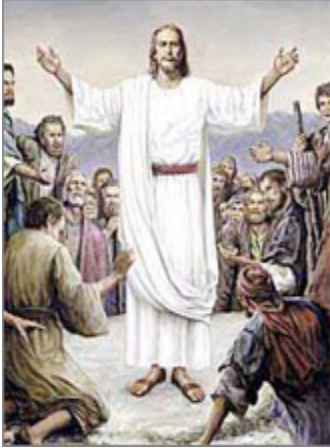


## **JESUS DEFENDED THE CONDUCT OF HIS DISCIPLES ON FASTING**



Fasting was a common ritual in the Old Testament. Sometimes it was an expression of mourning and a symbol of sorrow. More often it was an act of contrition and penitence. Combined with prayer, fasting was an expression of self-denial and submissive to God's will.

Jesus responded to the question by posing a counter-question. He used the wedding analogy to make a point. The important issue is not "whether" to fast, but "when" to fast.

Fasting was one of the three most important religious duties, along with prayer and almsgiving. Jesus gave a simple explanation. There's a time for fasting and a time for feasting (or celebrating). To walk as a disciple with Jesus is to experience a whole new joy of relationship akin to the joy of the wedding party in celebrating with the groom and bride their wedding bliss. But there also comes a time when the Lord's disciples must bear the cross of affliction and purification. For the disciple there is both a time for rejoicing in the Lord's presence and celebrating his goodness and a time for seeking the Lord with humility and fasting and for mourning over sin. Do you take joy in the Lord's presence with you and do you express sorrow and contrition for your sins? Jesus goes on to warn his disciples about the problem of the "closed mind" that refuses to learn new things.

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