

# Matthew 9:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

## Analysis

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John's disciples question Jesus about fasting: 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?' (διατι ημεις και οι Φαρισαιοι νηστευομεν πολλα οι δε μαθηται σου ου νηστευουσιν). Fasting was central to Jewish piety, practiced twice weekly by Pharisees (Luke 18:12) plus special occasions. John's disciples practiced rigorous asceticism following their teacher's example. Jesus' disciples, by contrast, feast. The question reveals confusion about appropriate religious expression. Jesus will answer by distinguishing between old covenant preparation and new covenant celebration. The question assumes fasting demonstrates superior spirituality. Jesus challenges this assumption, teaching that external practices matter less than the heart's orientation and recognition of God's redemptive presence.

## Historical Context

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Jewish fasting had multiple purposes: mourning, repentance, petition, and preparation for God's action. The Pharisees fasted Mondays and Thursdays. John the Baptist's ascetic lifestyle (Matthew 3:4) naturally led his disciples to practice similar disciplines. First-century Judaism emphasized fasting as demonstrating devotion and humbling oneself before God. Jesus doesn't condemn fasting (Matthew 6:16-18) but insists it serve appropriate purposes. Fasting expresses longing for God's presence; when the Bridegroom is present, fasting is inappropriate. Early Christians fasted (Acts 13:2-3, 14:23) but recognized it as means, not end.

## Related Passages

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**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. What is the proper role of spiritual disciplines like fasting in Christian life?
2. How do we avoid legalism while maintaining spiritual practices?
3. What does this passage teach about the difference between old and new covenant spirituality?

## Interlinear Text

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Τότε προσέρχονται αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταί Ἰωάννου λέγοντες

**Then**      **came**      **to him**      **disciples**      **of John**      **saying**  
G5119      G4334      G846      G3588      G3101      G2491      G3004

Διατί ἡμεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι νηστεύουσιν πολλά οἱ

**Why**      **do we**      **and**      **the Pharisees**      **fast**      **oft**      G3588  
G1302      G2249      G2532      G5330      G3522      G4183

δὲ μαθηταί σου οὐ νηστεύουσιν

**but**      **disciples**      **thy**      **not**      **fast**  
G1161      G3101      G4675      G3756      G3522

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 6:16** (Parallel theme): Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

**John 3:25** (References John): Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

