

Asceticism & Fasting



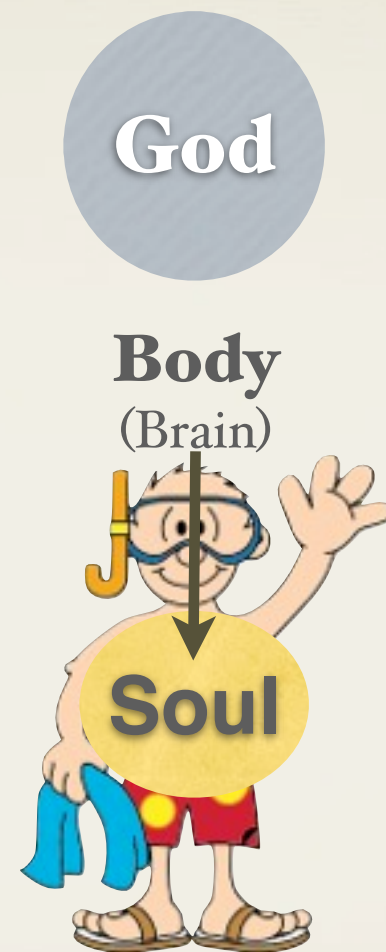
Orthodox Way of Life

- * What does it mean to be saved?
- * *We must be content to hope that we shall be saved—our salvation is not in sight—we must hope to be saved since we are not saved yet.* Rom 8:24-25
- * *Think of God's mercy, and worship Him in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering your bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God.* Romans 12:1
- * *You must wake up now...The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon. Let us give up all the things we prefer to do under cover of the dark. Let us arm ourselves and appear in the light.* Romans 13:11-12

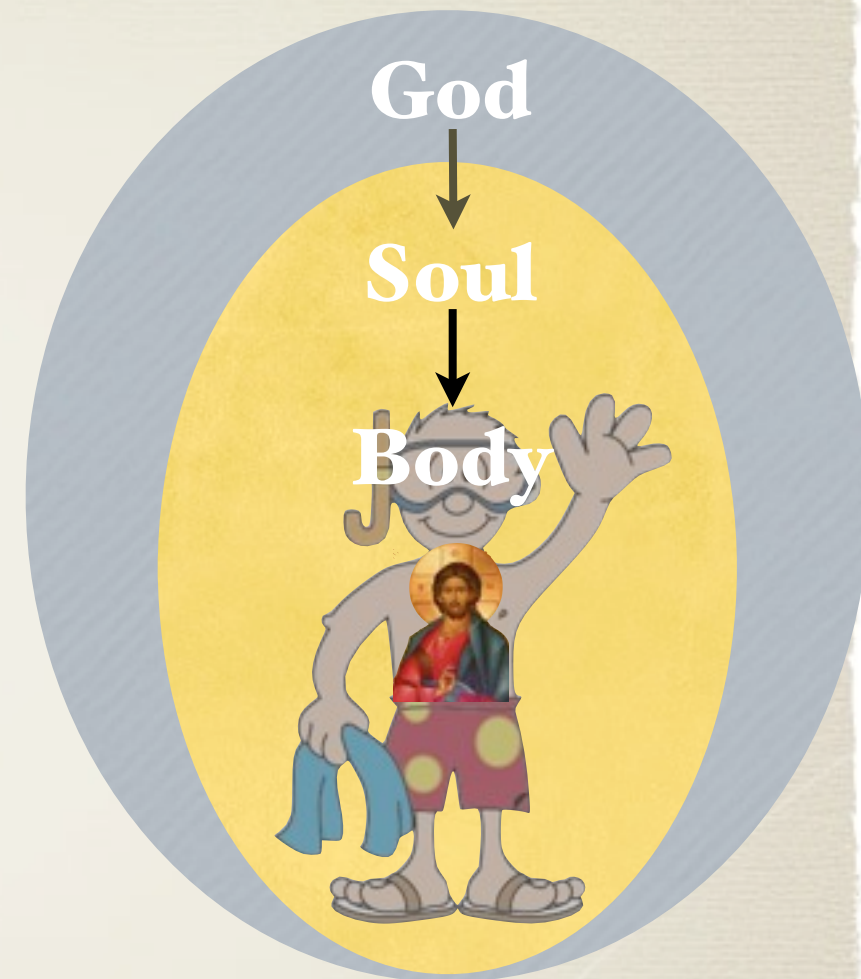
Way of Life

Our Fallen Condition

- * Our concern about bodily needs
- * Fear of death & sickness
- * Desire for social acceptance
- * All our self-centered thinking.



Our Present Condition



Our Natural Condition

Way of Life

- * Why do we need to work at perfecting ourselves?
- * Made in image of God with free - will

Implications of this ?

- * Like Adam and Eve can choose to willingly obey God or obey our own desires.
We are free to sin and act separated from God.
- * We are engaged in what Paul calls “Spiritual warfare.”
- * Good News: have Christ’s Church to guide us towards Union.

Divine Economy - Plan

- * How did God provide for us to regain our unity?
- * Jesus Christ came for our salvation.
Incarnation - Miraculous birth to a virgin.
Taught, Crucified, Resurrected, Ascended
(opening the gates of paradise), sent Holy Spirit,
and established the Church.
Gave us our universal Salvation - The path
All out of unconditional love.
- * So how do we return to our natural condition?



With Faith and Love

- * Have Faith in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Have Zeal for your salvation.
Desire eternal life with Him.
Because of Love want to do what God commands.
- * What to do when we realize that we are not capable of doing this?
- * No choice - rise up and oppose the inclinations of our body. We are responsible for our actions.
- * We enter into a necessary struggle with ourselves.
This is the start of asceticism.



Spiritual Warfare

- * Can't be lulled to sleep by reliance on faith alone or ethnic tradition (I am Orthodox).



Spiritual warfare is necessary

Forget about satisfying your bodies with all their cravings.

Romans 13:14

- * *It is not listening to the Law but keeping it that will make people holy in the sight of God.* - Romans 2:13
- * *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* (Eph 6:11)

Spiritual Warfare



Saint Theophan says,

"This is so essential that all the saints say the only **true path** to virtue is **by pain and hard work**.

On the contrary, **lightness and ease** are a sign of a **false path**, for the *'kingdom of God suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force'* (Matt 11:12).

- * Any one who is not struggling, not in prodvig (ascetic struggle), is in prelest (spiritual deception). The Apostle says: *~whoever does not endure is not a son.* (Heb 12:8)"
- * Finally:
- * "Now that you have decided, do not just stand there – **attack.**"



Spiritual Warfare

- * *You must not*
 - ...let sin reign in your mortal bodies or command your obedience to bodily passions.*
 - ...not let any part of your body turn into an unholy weapon fighting on the side of sin.*
- * *You should*
 - ...offer yourselves to God and consider yourselves dead men brought back to life.*
 - ...make every part of your body into a weapon fighting on the side of God.*
- * *Then sin will no longer dominate your life, since you are living by grace and not by law.*

Ascetic Disciplines

- * How do we attack? What are Ascetic disciplines?
- * Greek term askisis (ἄσκησις): practice, training or exercise - Athletic preparation



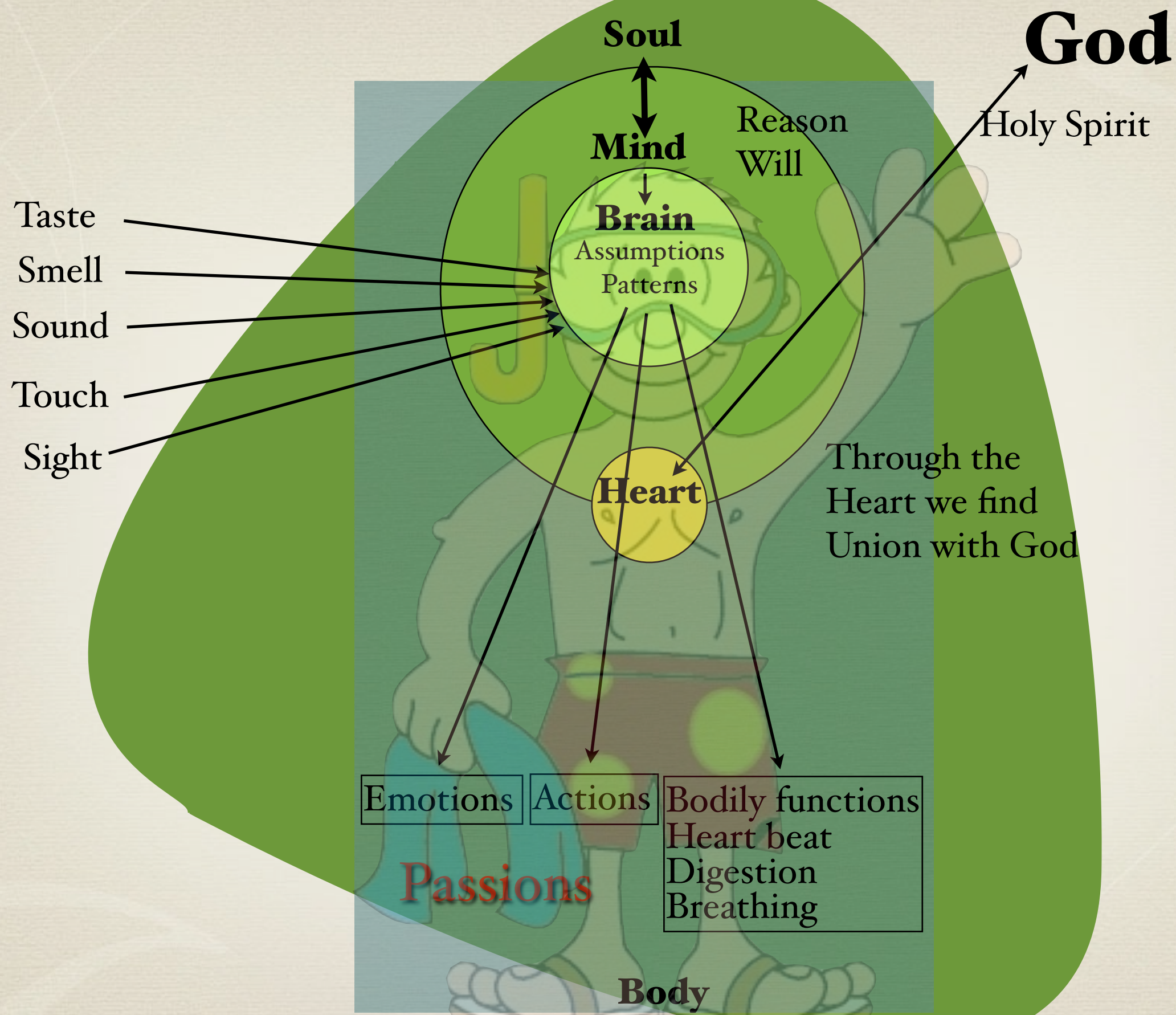
Saint Paul uses the image of a boxer.

"I harden my body with blows and bring it under complete control, to keep myself from being disqualified after having called others to the contest".

- * Asceticism acknowledges that there is a state of constant warfare raging between good and evil . . .
- * Fasting, prayer, worship, vigils, Bible study....

Way of LIfe

- * Lets reflect on how our psychosomatic system works.
Soul, Mind, Heart, Senses, Brain, Body, Passions, Spirit



Soul (Psyche)

- * Breath of Life From Creator of Life
The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.
(Gen 2:7)
- * Soul makes the physical body conscious and capable of willful actions.
- * Mind is part of the soul.
- * Not a derivative of the brain or the body.
- * Soul is the image of God and has the powers of nourishment, imagination and instinct and intelligence.



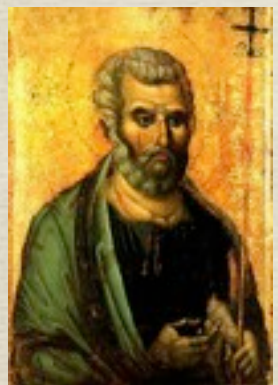
Heart

Jesus: *"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."* Matt 5:8

What did He mean by Heart?

- * Innermost part of our being & part of our subconsciousness.
- * Where the knowledge of God is revealed to us.
- * Control center that reigns over the body.
- * Place from which grace penetrates throughout the body and the mind.
- * Where Christ comes to dwell within us.
- * The Fathers see the heart as both a bodily organ and the center of our being.

Peter says, *"Do not let your adornment be merely outward... rather let it be the hidden person of the heart."* 1Peter 3:3-4



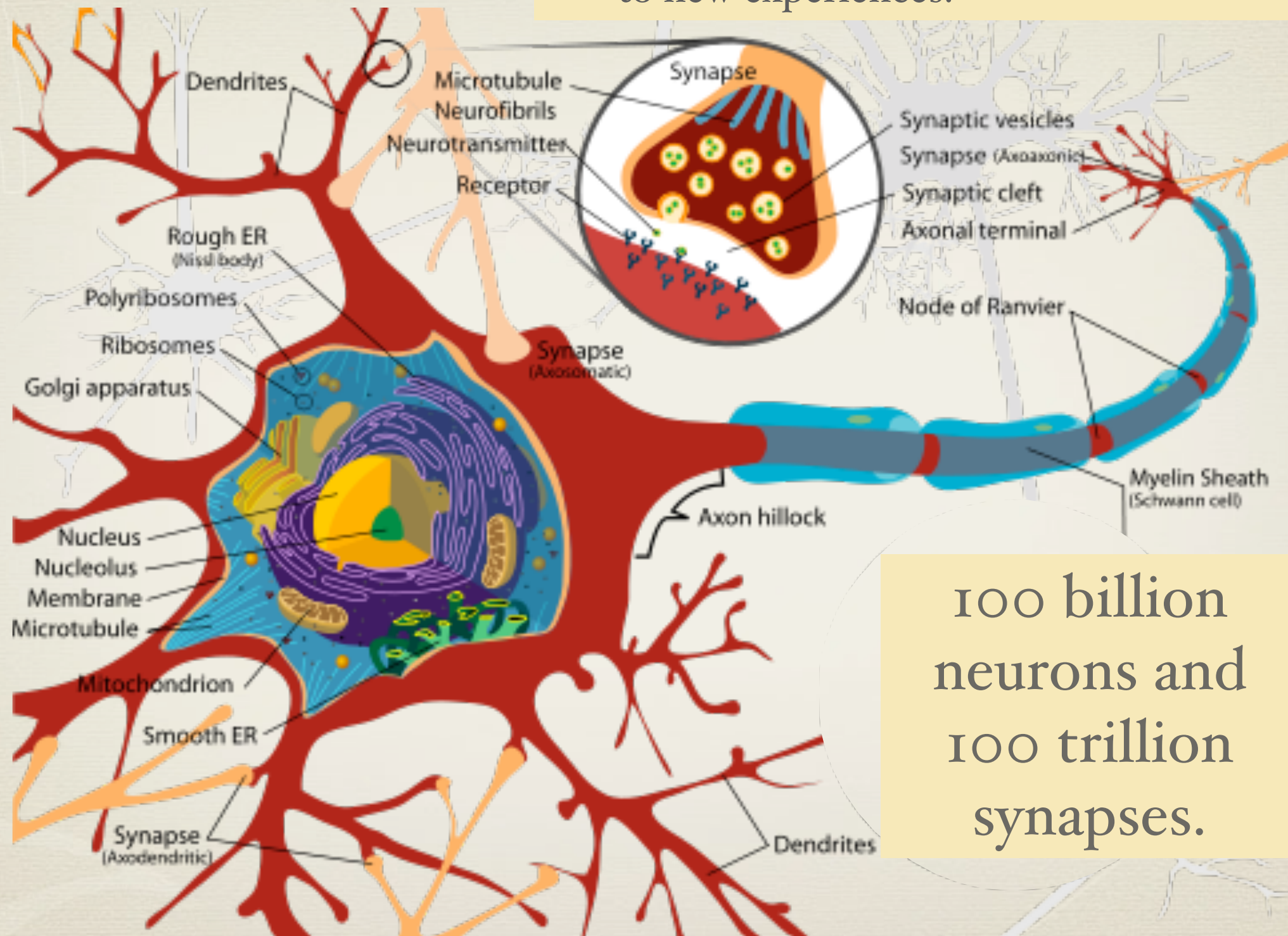


Brain

- * A part of the **Body** - What is its function?
- * Integrates soul and body and the external world.
- * Allows the body to adapt and interact with its environment.
- * Takes input from all the senses and creates a integrated view of the world.
- * Contains the means for regulation all the bodily functions.
- * Focused on the body and its needs and desires (passions)
- * Incredibly complex network of physical connections.

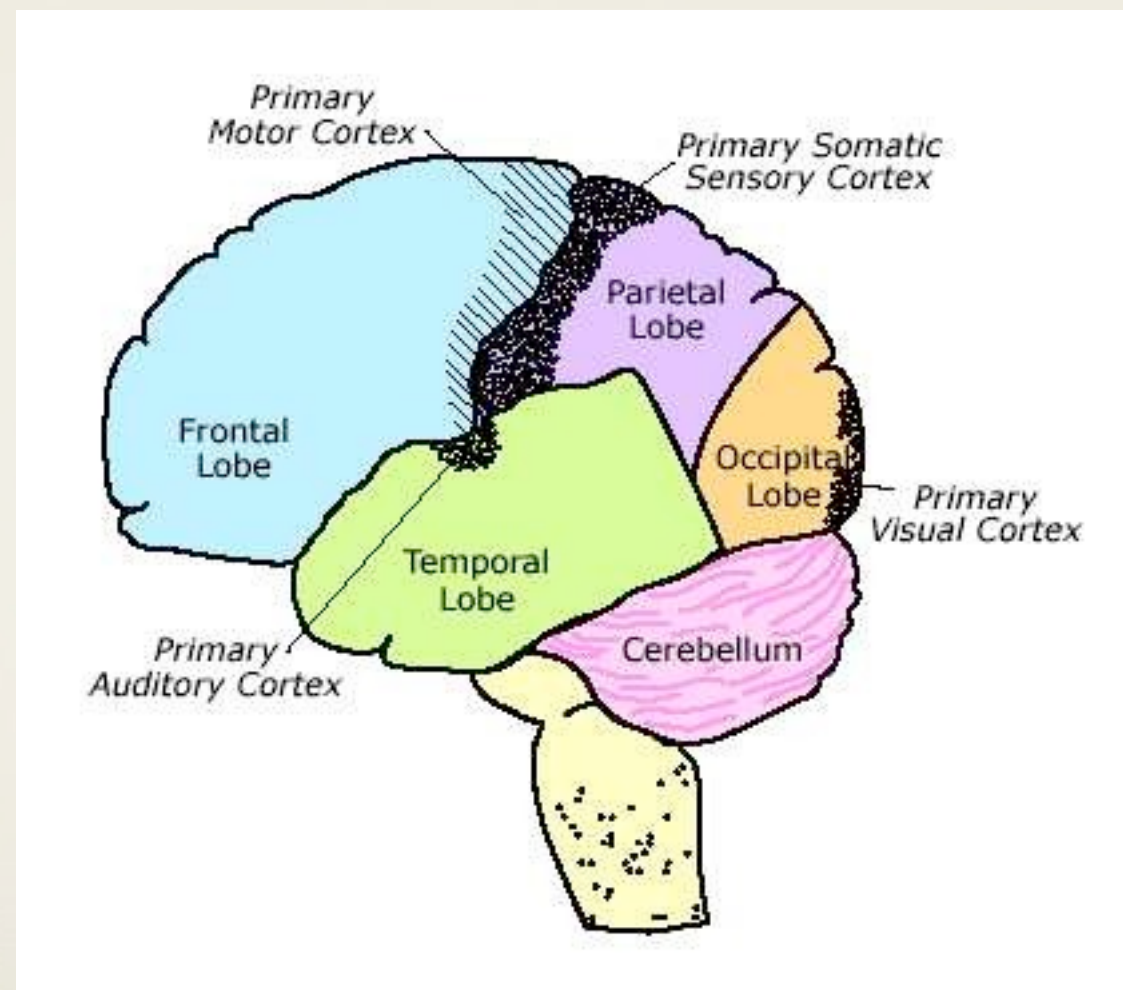
Neurons

Synapses are awash in hormones and neurotransmitters that modulate the transmission of signals, and they constantly form and dissolve, weaken and strengthen in response to new experiences.



100 billion
neurons and
100 trillion
synapses.

Brain



A part of our Physical Body

Spiritual Warfare

- * Think about It!
- * Why is it that we find it so difficult to do what God commands us to do?
- * Why are our intentions so often not carried out?

How Paul Struggles

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

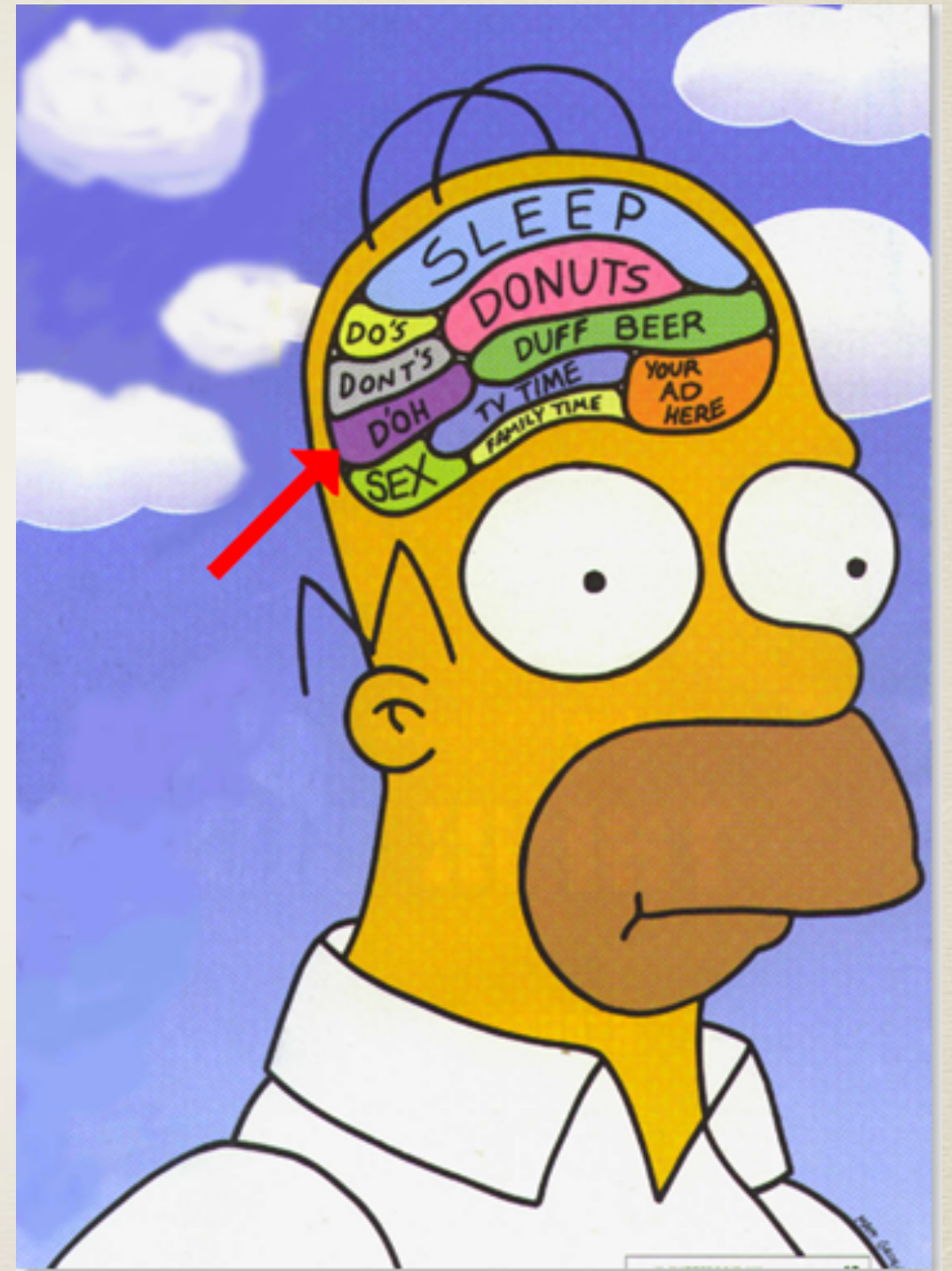
I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

But *I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.* (Rom 7:18 -23)

Brain

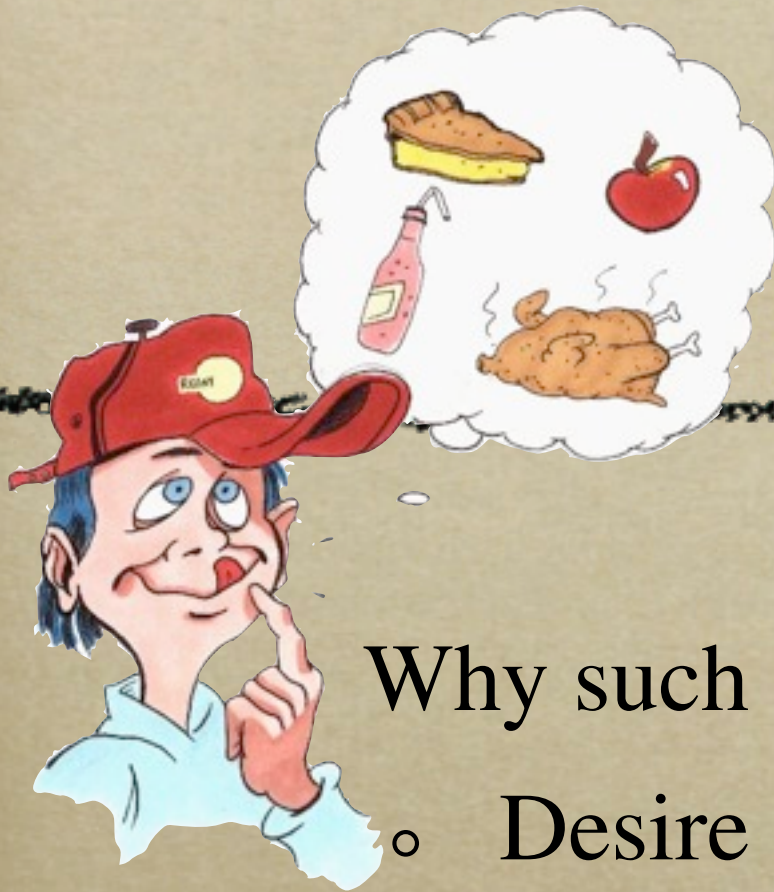
- * Mental programming
- * Our brain has etched in it patterns of behavior.
- * What is its primary concern?
- * Reality of our current condition.
- * The devil knows our weakness and continually tempts us.
- * But who chooses?
- * Devil has no power unless we give it to him.



Fasting

- * Fasting is one of main disciplines in our Spiritual battle
- * What are some of the questions you have about this activity?
- * Common questions:
Why do we fast? Did Jesus fast? When did fasting originate? What is purpose of fasting? Is it only a matter dieting? What is inner significance of fasting? How do we fast?

Fasting



Why such an important discipline?

- Desire for food one of our most basic desires.
- What do we experience when we hunger?
- What is at work when we deny hunger?
- Fasting lifts us up
to a greater awareness of our soul
and exercises its authority.
- Lifts us above passions and brain's domination

Fasting



- Is there anything bad about desire food?
- Saint Gregory – 3 degrees to eating:
abstinence, adequacy and overindulgence.

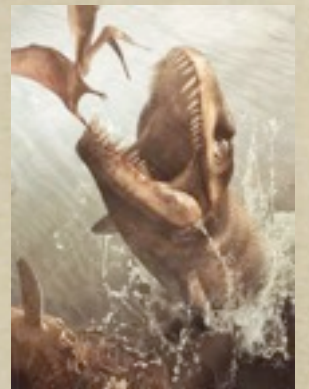
*To abstain means to remain a little hungry after eating;
to eat adequately means neither to feel hungry nor weighed
down.*

*But eating beyond satisfaction is the door to gluttony
through which lust comes in.* St. Gregory of Sinai

- Fasting helps control gluttony,
which helps to control lust, greed and other sinful ways.
A fundamental discipline - puts soul in command.

Fasting

- Gluttony - excessive craving for food.
Lust - excessive craving for anything—and
Greed - excessive desire to accumulate things.
How do you see these related?
- Lust and greed are never satisfied, as James says:
"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain." James 4:1-2
- Why are gluttony, lust and greed sins?
 - They control our will and separate us from God.
- Control of desire for food leads to control of these other desires.



Fasting

- Easy to be gluttonous in an affluent society
Convenience and abundance of what the heart desires.
- Observe children's eating habits.
Between 16 and 33 % of children and adolescents are obese. Causes?
- Obesity occurs when a person eats more calories than the body burns up.
General lack of eating discipline.
- Gluttony is stimulated every time we see an advertisement, especially food and drink.
- Root of gluttony is lack of self-control. Easily tempted.
- James adds insightfully, *"Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed."* James 1:14



Fasting is Scriptural

- *Old and New Testaments
Moses, Prophets, Jesus, Apostles
and Church Fathers.*
- Proverbs
*The righteous has enough to satisfy
his appetite, But the stomach of the
wicked is in need.* Proverbs 13:25



Moses



OK, but they're
not gonna like it!

- *When I went up into the mountain to receive the tables of stone...I was in the mountain forty days and forty nights, I ate no bread and drank no water.* Deuteronomy 9:9 (LXX)

Prophet Jonah



Prophet Jonah: *It was by fasting among other things that the people of Nineveh were saved from his prediction of peril.*

Jonah 3:7 (LXX)

Prophet Joel



Fasting associated with repentance:

“Now, says the Lord your God, turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting and with wailing, and with mourning.” Joel 2:12 (LXX)

Prophet Daniel



Fasting with repentance and prayer are an aid in seeking God and the spiritual life:

And I set my face toward the Lord God, to seek him diligently by prayer and supplication, with fastings and sackcloth. And I Prayed to the Lord my God, and confessed...

Daniel 9:3-4 (LXX)



Jesus Fasted

- Immediately after His Baptism, what did He do?

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward hungry.

- What was His instruction for Apostles in the case of the epileptic boy whose demon the Apostles could not cast out?

This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.

- When challenged by Pharisees about His disciples what did He say?

Can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.



Jesus Fasted

- The Lord Himself gave instructions for fasting:
- *But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face; That you appear not unto men to fast, but unto your Father which is in secret.* Matthew. 6:17-18
- Why did he say this?

Apostles

- The Apostles taught about fasting

Paul says,

*Do not destroy the work of God
for the sake of food. All things
indeed are pure, but it is evil for
the man who eats with offense.*

Romans 14:20



Apostles

- Coupled fasting with liturgical acts

- Acts of the Apostles:

As they ministered (liturgical rite) to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.



Apostles



Apostle Paul describes his own spiritual life as one of sacrifice, vigils, thirst, and fasting lived “*in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*”

- He refers to fasting in the context of marriage saying by mutual consent husband and wife abstain from marital relations periodically while fasting and prayer.

Apostles

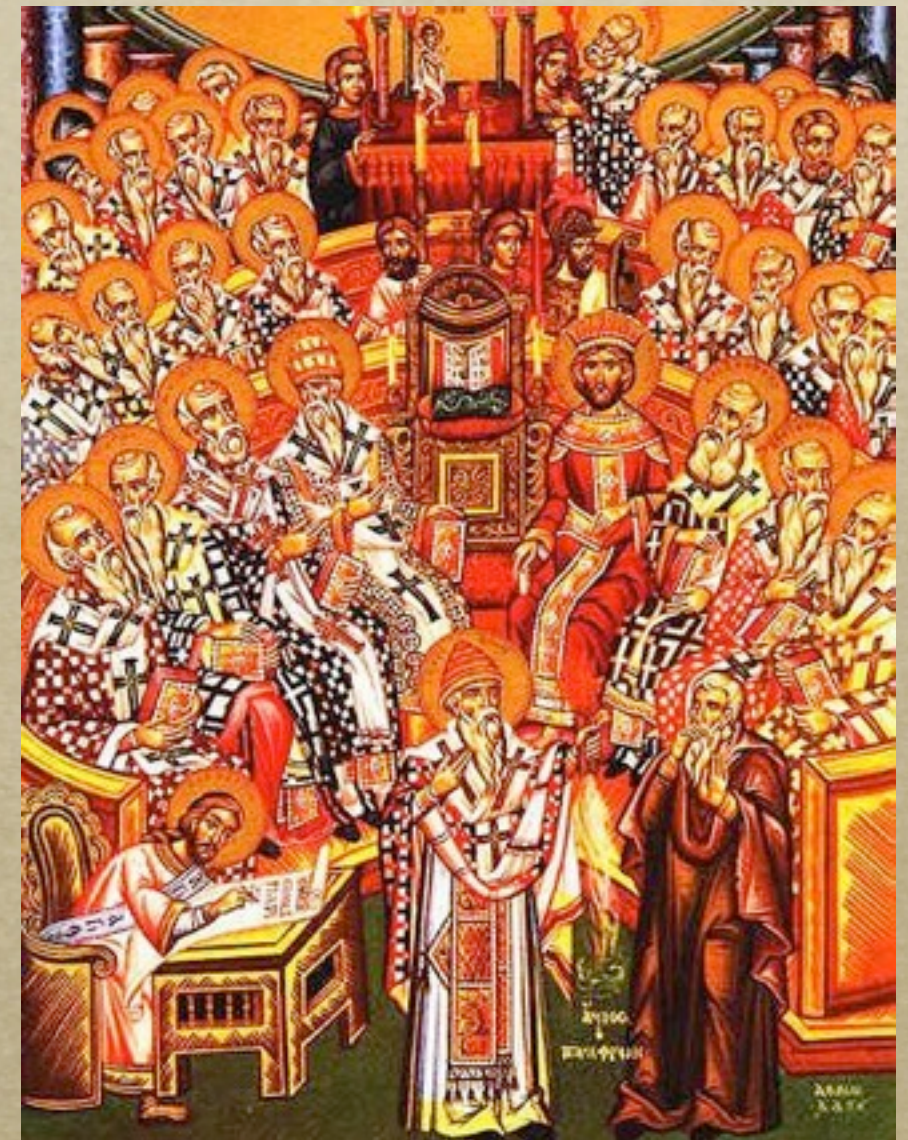
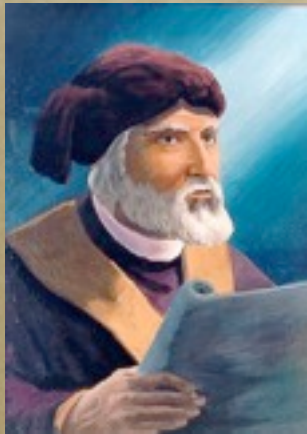
- The first century - Didache
“The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles”
- *Your fasts must not be identical with those of the hypocrites. They fast on Mondays and Thursdays; but you should fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.*
- The fasting referred to here was a complete abstention from both food and drink until sundown.



Church Fathers

- Church Fathers fasted.

Ecclesiastical writer Tertullian (220 d.) notes that spiritual growth requires confession and prayer fed by “*fasting, ...not for the stomach’s sake, ...but for the soul’s.*”



Church Fathers



Saint Gregory (391) - practice of receiving the Eucharist after fasting.



Saint Basil (379) wrote much on fasting.



John Cassian (435): *Therefore, fastings, vigils, meditation on the Scriptures, self-denial, and the abnegation of all possessions are not perfection, but aids to perfection: because the end of that science does not lie in these, but by means of these we arrive at the end.*

Church Fathers



Saint Athanasius (373) - Fasting more than just food.

...let us vie with each other in observing the purity of the fast by watchfulness in prayers, by study of the Scriptures, by distributing to the poor, and let us be at peace with our enemies. Let us bind up those who are scattered abroad, banish pride, and return to lowliness of mind, being at peace with all men, and urging the brethren unto love. Letter XIV.

Church Fathers

Athanasius describes the benefits of fasting.

It “...cures ills and dries up bodily humors, casts out demons and turns away evil thoughts; it makes the mind brighter, the heart clean, and the body holy; and it presents man before the Throne of God.”

- *Makes the mind Brighter*



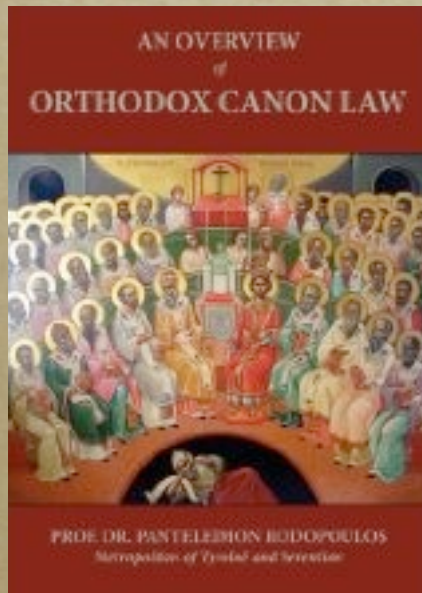
Harvard psychiatrist John Ratey, MD conducted research on people who fasted and found a “*significant increase of activity in the motor cortex during fasting.*”

University of Chicago students fasted for seven days, mental alertness increased and their progress in schoolwork was cited as remarkable.

Focus is God

- *Fasting is also know scientifically to be good for health.*
- *Diet is not the proper reason to fast.*
- *Our focus is on God*

Canons of Church



Canons of Church affirm fasting

- If you do not honor the Wednesday and Friday fast you are to be excommunicated.
- Must fast prior to taking Communion
- Strict fast during entire Lenten period
- Do not fast on Sunday and Saturday
- If ill or weak relaxation of guidelines appropriate

Pascha Fast



- Following the time of the Didache (End 1st Century), Pascha observed with a 40 hour fast at start, then a week long fast, then a 40 day fast - known to us as Great Lent.

40 day fast well established by 4th century but observed differently in different places.

Fasting

- Always been essential part of Orthodox Christian Life.
- Necessary discipline to combat the passions and open the door to the renewal of the Holy Spirit.

How to Fast



- Fasting foods should be simple and plain and not extravagant.
- The more effort that goes into their creativity and preparation, the more its value is reduced.
- Should not be prepared to satisfy our craving for certain tastes
 - Break from our automatic response to food,
 - Give thanks to the provider, our Lord,
 - Increase our self-control.
- Apostle Paul tells us: *For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

Romans 14:7

Fasting



- *Fasting guidelines*

Severity of Fasts

1. Abstention from meat
2. Abstention also from animal products, such as eggs, milk, butter and cheese.
3. Abstention from fish
4. Abstention from oil and wine.



When Do We Fast?



Wednesday and Friday fast



*Fasting in preparation for receiving
Communion*

When Do We Fast?

- Day before Christmas (Dec 24)
- Day before Theophany (Jan 5)
- Exaltation of the Cross (Sept. 14)
- Beheading of John the Baptist (Aug. 29)
- Five fasting periods



When Do We Fast?

Five Fasting Periods

- Great Lent
- Holy Week
- Apostles Fast
Second Monday after Pentecost and continues until the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul on June 29
- Fast of the Dormition (Aug 1-14)
- Fast of Nativity (Nov 15 - Dec 24)



Publican and the Pharisee

Prodigal Son

Last Judgment

Forgiveness

P
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LENT

Period of strict fasting

Holy Week

REGULATIONS ON FASTING

WEEKS OR DAYS

THE HOLY CANONS SPECIFY THE FOLLOWING

FROM:

Sundown on
Cheese Fare Sunday
to Pascha

ABSTINENCE OF:

Meat/Meat Products
Dairy Products
Fish/Shell Fish
Olive Oil
Wine

NO ABSTINENCE OF:

Fruit
Vegetables
Vegetable Products

SATURDAY* & SUNDAYS

Throughout the
Great Fast

*(All but Great Saturday on which a strict
fast is kept)

ABSTINENCE OF:

Meat/Meat Products
Dairy Products
Fish

NO ABSTINENCE OF:

Shellfish
Fruit
Vegetables
Vegetable Products
Olive Oil
Wine

Feast of the Annunciation
(March 25th)
and
Palm Sunday

ABSTINENCE OF:

Meat/Meat Products
Dairy Products

NO ABSTINENCE OF:

Shellfish & Fish
Fruit
Vegetables
Vegetable Products
Olive Oil
Wine

RECIPES

VEGAN COOK BOOKS

SOYMILK

MARGARINE

VEGETABLE OILS

PEANUT BUTTER

SIMPLE CASSEROLES

Fasting

Fast-free Periods

- Nativity to Eve of Theophany.
- Week following the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee.
- Bright Week — the week after Pascha.
- Trinity Week — the week after Pentecost, ending with All Saints Sunday.

26  9:00a Orthros 10:00a Divine Liturgy 1 yr memorial - Pete L. Kythas	27 	28  4:10p Greek School	29  4:00p Greek School 7:00p Choir Practice 10:00a Bible Study	30  9:30 Divine Liturgy - Andrew the Apostle 4:10p Greek School 6:00p Orthodoxy Class	1 	2  2:00p Greek School bakes Koulourakia
3  9:00a Orthros 10:00a Divine Liturgy Greek School Carolers	4  10:00am Divine Liturgy 12:00n Saint Barbara Nameday celebration luncheon at Hilton	5  4:10p Greek School	6  9:30a Divine Liturgy for St. Nicholas 4:00p Greek School 7:00p Choir Practice 10:30a Bible Study	7  4:10p Greek School 6:00p Orthodoxy Class	8  4:30pm Nativity Pageant Rehearsal	9 
10  9:00a Orthros 10:00a Divine Liturgy Santa's Luncheon 6:00p AHEPA Christmas Party at Ceaser's	11  7:00p Laconian Meeting at Olive Tree	12  9:30a Divine Liturgy for St. Spyidon 4:10p Greek School	13  4:00p Greek School 5:30p Agape trip to Hollywild and Dinner 7:00p Choir Practice 10:00a Bible Study	14  4:10p Greek School	15  4:30pm Nativity Pageant Rehearsal	16 
17  9:00a Orthros 10:00a Divine Liturgy Nativity Pageant Greek School Carolers	18 	19  4:10p Greek School	20  4:00p Greek School 7:00p Choir Practice 10:00a Bible Study	21  4:10p Greek School	22 	23 

Fasting guidelines from the Archdiocese calendar:  fish allowed  Wine and oil allowed  Strict Fast
 Dairy, eggs and fish allowed

Fasting

- Fasting not negative practice
- Not meant to confine spirituality within set of laws
- Not meant to punish the body
- Is a constructive adherence to a practical therapy to cure spiritual illness.
- Not a rejection of certain foods but a realignment of our attitude towards food and the body.

Fasting

- Do not try and invent special rules
- Learning Obedience is part of discipline
- Follow the acceptable pattern given by Holy Tradition.
Contains collective conscience of the people of God.

How to Begin

- Difficult
- Begin with **Wed. and Fri.** fast
 - commit
 - Meat
 - Then dairy
 - Build a habit
- Frequent Communion
- Lenten fast - strict first week and Holy Week
- Then other fasts w/o meat



Fasting



- A means to an end.
- Not a virtue - an ascetic discipline
- Engage in it to grow spiritually and walk the path towards Salvation.

Fasting



- *How do you fast? Questions?*

