

The Importance of Fasting

God's Word is not silent nor underwhelming about the magnitude of fasting. Fasting is a time you set aside when you need God to perform a breakthrough in your life on some spiritual level, whether you are dealing with personal problems, financial turmoil, health issues, or any other obstacle. We are often taught to deal with our struggles through prayer. But we don't hear much about fasting and the role it plays in the believer's life. In fact, fasting could be the very thing that changes your spiritual life with Christ.

Jesus taught His disciples, "Do wedding guests mourn while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will **fast**." (Matthew 9:15). Fasting is the spiritual connection to Christ while He is not here on earth.

The Principle of Fasting

In the Bible, fasting occurs when there is a need for a spiritual breakthrough due to the burdens of life. These burdens could be emotional, circumstantial, relational, ministerial, directional, or any other kind.

What exactly is fasting? Fasting is a deliberate abstinence from physical gratification—usually going without food for a period of time—to achieve a greater spiritual goal. Fasting is intentionally denying the flesh in order to gain a response from the spirit. It means renouncing the natural in order to invoke the supernatural. When fasting, you say "no" to yourself and "yes" to God. Zechariah 7:5-6 "Say to all your people and your priests, 'During these seventy years of exile, when you fasted and mourned in the summer and in the early autumn, was it really for me that you were fasting? And even now in your holy festivals, aren't you eating and drinking just to please yourselves?' When we eat, we eat for ourselves. We eat because we need to, and sometimes we eat just because we can. God tells us in these verses that when we fast, we fast for Him. When we fast we are saying that the cry of our souls is greater than the cry of our appetite. It is more important that God feed us and meet our spiritual needs than to take that time to meet our physical need for food.

The question of fasting is simply this: Are you willing to give up steak and potatoes to gain spiritual riches? Are you willing to give up that which gratifies the

flesh in order to make an investment that builds up the spirit? Fasting is a test of how serious you are in your walk with God by what you are willing to deny yourself. The principle of fasting means giving up a craving of the body because you have a deeper need of the spirit.

The Purpose of Fasting

Isaiah 58:3-4 “We have fasted before you!” They say. “Why aren’t you impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don’t even notice it!” “I will tell you why!” I respond. “It’s because you are fasting to please yourselves. Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers. What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me.”

Fasting, when done in the proper way, is a means of reaching heaven with your prayers. Verse 5 says: “You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like reeds bending in the wind. You dress in burlap and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the Lord?” Fasting as God intends is meant to be a humbling experience.

Sacrificing the desires of the flesh is self-denial, and self-denial brings humility when your thoughts aren’t focused on yourself. Jesus tells us that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). That is heavenly nourishment, not earthly food. The Bible teaches a very important principle at the heart of Christianity: You must die to self if you want to truly live. James 4:10 says: “Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.” Fasting is one way to bow down to God and acknowledge your need for Him in all areas of your life.

The Practice of Fasting

So how do we do it? “I mourned and fasted, but it brought me insults. I wore sackcloth as my clothing, and I was a joke to them. Those who sit at the city gate talk about me, and drunkards make up songs about me. But as for me, Lord, my prayer to you is for a time of favor. In your abundant, faithful love, God, answer me with your sure salvation. Rescue me from the miry mud; don’t let me sink. Let me be rescued from those who hate me and from the deep water. Don’t let the

floodwaters sweep over me or the deep swallow me up; don't let the Pit close its mouth over me. ' (Psalm 69:10-15). When the psalmist came before God, he was dealing with the crisis of trouble from his enemies, and he cried out with fasting. Others made fun of him, but he trusted in God.

Fasting is a powerful thing when your world is closing in. Fasting is prayer, it is praise, it is proclamation—it is hearing God's Word. If you feel trapped in your crisis or struggle, throw yourself on the mercy of God in humility while giving up the craving of your flesh so that you can focus on the greater need of your spirit.

The Product of Fasting

What can you expect when you fast?

Isaiah 58:6 'Isn't this the fast I choose: To break the chains of wickedness, to untie the ropes of the yoke, to set the oppressed free, and to tear off every yoke?' You fast so that God can get deep in your heart and break the chains that bind you. Fasting also takes your focus off yourself and puts it on the needs of others: 'Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the poor and homeless into your house, to clothe the naked when you see him, and not to ignore your own flesh and blood?' (v. 7). Verse 8 displays the results of God's deliverance: "Then your light will appear like the dawn."

When we fast, the flesh gets weak, and Paul says when we are weak, God is our strength: "But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness." Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me." (2 Corinthians 12:9).

4 Different Fasts

- Liquid Fast – No Solid Food
- Daniel Fast – Fruit and Vegetables Only
- Media Fast – No TV or Social Media
- Lunch Fast – No Lunch