

The Power of Fasting

Matthew 6:16-18 – “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Fasting is often misunderstood as a mere religious duty or a practice of self-denial alone. But Scripture reveals it as a powerful spiritual tool—a way to humble ourselves, seek God’s face, and align our hearts with His will. It is not about earning God’s favor, but about creating space for His presence to move in our lives, especially in times of need, confusion, or spiritual longing.

Fasting: A posture of humility and dependence

Psalms 35:12-14 “They repay me evil for the good I have done; I am overwhelmed with sorrow. When they were sick, I wore sackcloth, and refrained from eating food. (If I am lying, may my prayers go unanswered.) I mourned for them as I would for a friend or my brother. I bowed down in sorrow as if I were mourning for my mother.”

Ezra 8:21-23 “I called for a fast there by the Ahava Canal, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and seek from him a safe journey for us, our children, and all our property. I was embarrassed to request soldiers and horsemen from the king to protect us from the enemy along the way, because we had said to the king, “The good hand of our God is on everyone who is seeking him, but his great anger is against everyone who forsakes him.” So we fasted and prayed to our God about this, and he answered us.”

- Fasting is an outward expression of an inward surrender. It declares, “God, I need You more than I need food.”
- In Psalm 35, David fasted in a time of distress, humbling himself before God. In Ezra, God’s people fasted for protection and guidance, acknowledging their dependence on Him.
- When we fast, we are telling God—and ourselves—that our spiritual hunger is greater than our physical hunger.

Fasting to seek God’s direction and breakthrough

Acts 13:2-3 - “While they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, after they had fasted and prayed and placed their hands on them, they sent them off.”

Jonah 3:5-10 “The people of Nineveh believed in God, and they declared a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, took off his royal robe, put on sackcloth, and sat on ashes. He issued a

proclamation and said, "In Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles: No human or animal, cattle or sheep, is to taste anything; they must not eat and they must not drink water. Every person and animal must put on sackcloth and must cry earnestly to God, and everyone must turn from their evil way of living and from the violence that they do. Who knows? Perhaps God might be willing to change his mind and relent and turn from his fierce anger so that we might not die." When God saw their actions—that they turned from their evil way of living.—God relented concerning the judgment he had threatened them with and did not destroy them."

- In Acts, the church fasted and worshiped, and the Holy Spirit spoke clearly, setting apart Barnabas and Saul for ministry.
- The people of Nineveh fasted in repentance, and God relented from judgment. Fasting can prepare the heart for repentance and open the way for God's mercy.
- If you are in a season of waiting or decision, fasting can sharpen your spiritual sensitivity to hear God's voice.

Fasting as spiritual warfare

Matthew 17:21 - "But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

Isaiah 58:6 NET - "No, this is the kind of fast I want: I want you to remove the sinful chains, to tear away the ropes of the burdensome yoke, to set free the oppressed, and to break every burdensome yoke."

- Jesus taught that some spiritual strongholds are only broken "by prayer and fasting." Fasting strengthens prayer and deepens our authority in Christ.
- Isaiah 58 defines true fasting as "to loose the chains of injustice" and "set the oppressed free." It is not just abstaining from food, but engaging in God's purposes.
- When you face persistent spiritual opposition, fasting can be a weapon that shifts the atmosphere and invites God's intervention.

Practicing fasting

- Start small: If you are new to fasting, begin with a single meal or a day. The focus is not on duration but on the heart.
- Pray with purpose: Use the time you would spend eating to pray, read Scripture, or worship. Let your physical hunger point you to spiritual hunger.
- Stay humble: Follow Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6—fast secretly before God, not for the praise of people.
- Listen and obey: Be open to how God may speak or lead during or after a fast. Sometimes the breakthrough comes in the quiet after the fast.

Fasting is not a way to manipulate God, but a way to meet Him in a posture of dependency. It reminds us that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the

mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). In darkness, in confusion, in spiritual battle—fasting can be a pathway to hope, clarity, and power.

References:

- Desiring God – “Fasting for Beginners”-
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/fasting-for-beginners>
- Cru (Campus Crusade for Christ) – “What is Fasting and How Do You Do It?” -
<https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/what-is-fasting.html>
- BibleProject – “Fasting: What Does the Bible Say?” -
<https://bibleproject.com/articles/what-is-fasting/>