



Prayer and Fasting Applications for Today

“And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.” – Mark 9:28-29

We read about prayer and fasting in the Bible, but does it really apply to us today? Does it really matter and does it really work? The answer to all these questions is YES! Fasting is still very relevant for today and is needed now more than ever by God’s people.

Fasting seems to be a bit of a lost art. Yet, there is such power in fasting when one seeks after Christ with their whole heart. This power is why satan has effectively hidden this spiritual gem from most of the Christian church today.

The first important lesson to learn about fasting is that it is ALWAYS combined with prayer. Prayer is seeking after God’s heart – a conversation with your creator. Conversation denotes relationship so therefore, fasting is an extension of your relationship with Jesus. It is not a merit badge to earn you favor with God. In fact, without prayer – without a right relationship with God – one cannot hope to gain anything by fasting except meaningless sacrifice.

However, when you are walking with Jesus and His Spirit abides in you, then fasting becomes a very powerful tool to battle thru many of the spiritual wars we face in our lives. The bible says: *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.” – Ephes. 6:12, 2 Cor. 10:4*

It is important to understand the reasons for fasting and how to apply its principles into our lives. It’s another tool in our God-given artillery to moving into victory. This document strives to put together very basic, simple rules and ideas for fasting to get you started. We pray that the Lord will lead you from here and that you will find your relationship with Jesus growing to deeper and deeper levels as you walk with Him.

Reasons for Fasting

1. Deliverance:

“Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai: “Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!” – Esther 4:15-16

There are moments in our lives where desperate circumstances call for desperate measures. Just like Esther, we too face situations that need the Almighty hand of God. The spiritual warfare around us is very fierce – especially when you are carrying light to an otherwise very dark corner of the world (just ask any missionary). Just like Esther, we may humble ourselves and fast before the Lord

seeking His hand to deliver us from the hand of the enemy and thwart his plans. Our prayers can be powerful and effective.

Even David said: *“My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh is feeble from lack of fatness. Help me, O LORD my God! Oh, save me according to Your mercy, that they may know that this is Your hand - that You, LORD, have done it!”* –Psalm 109:24, 26-27 David desired those around him to see the hand of the Lord thru his deliverance.

What are the areas in your life that need deliverance? Perhaps it’s not you, but a loved one or close friend. Maybe it’s a situation in your home, church, or school. Maybe it’s a habit, stronghold, or vice that you just can’t seem to break free from. God has promised deliverance to those who seek after Him.

2. Repentance:

“Now, therefore,” says the LORD, “Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.” So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm.” – Joel 2:12-13

For whatever reason, sacrificing something that seems important to us brings humility and an open heart that is harder to come by with other methods. Fasting has a way of bringing us to a state of humility and realness with God that allows Him to speak to us and move upon us in a way He could not otherwise. When we are sincerely repentant and seeking a restored relationship with God, fasting becomes a symbol of our strong desire to put aside our own wants to seek after what God wants. It shows thru action our desire for right relationship with Him after failing Him miserably.

Every year at Yom Kippur (or Day of Atonement), the Israelites were to have a day of fasting and seeking after God. It was a day when God’s judgment was given and the temple was cleansed from sin. This day of fasting symbolized many things, but one was the need for a total commitment to God and the putting away of sin. (Lev. 23:27, 29 & Jer. 36:6)

What about you? Where does your relationship stand with Jesus today? Has religion become commonplace and just a ritual to get that “Jesus token”? Perhaps, you have failed Him or there is something in your life that you know you need to lay before the Lord in repentance. These are perfect opportunities to utilize your fasting tool and seek the Lord while He may be found. God is desperate to restore His children. You won’t be turned away!

3. Healing:

“But as for me, when they were sick, My clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; And my prayer would return to my own heart. I paced about as though he were my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns for his mother.” – Psalm 35:13-14



Our world is full of sickness and sorrow due to our sinful state. Of all the prayer requests that are given, prayer for a physical ailment is the most common. Sometimes God sees best to answer those prayers for healing here on earth and sometimes He decides to wait until His return to restore. Fasting for a need of physical healing or any other type of healing is appropriate.

“Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.” – Matthew 17:19-21

Sometimes only thru seeking the Lord thru fasting and prayer is how the enemy is defeated. Seek the Lord to see what He would have you to do. God longs to heal us of our spiritual, emotional, and physical scars.

4. Seeking After God:

“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.” – Acts 13:2-3

It was after times of fasting and praying together as a group, that the Lord came upon His people. They weren't all separate praying in their own homes. They were all together, seeking the Lord despite possible inconvenience of time. There is much to be said for prayer groups. Many people fail to recognize the importance of sacrifice to come together with their brothers and sisters in prayer. Many of the decisions we make today would be much more effective if we would talk less and pray more. We are desperate for the Holy Spirit, yet we seem too busy and caught up in the cares of our lives to feel our need to dedicate time to meet and pray with our fellow brothers and sisters. *“So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” – Acts 14:23*

Fasting to seek the Lord either personally or as a whole group is effective in its results. Just ask those who have experienced an All Night Prayer Vigil or read the results of how Daniel the prophet fasted to gain clarity and understanding in what God was revealing to him. The clarity that can come from fasting is effective when we are seeking the Lord to understand what He wants us to know. Even Jesus fasted and prayed and set the example for us in seeking after God. (Matt. 4:2)

Types of Fasting:

1. *Simple, plain diet*
2. *No food (most common)*
3. *No food or juice (most extreme)*



The fast of the bible is always about food. It's either a plain-diet fast like Daniel and his friends before the Babylonian court or no food at all. In some extreme cases, fasting in the bible came without even water (Esther, Elijah, Jesus).

The question asked most frequently is if it is okay to simply fast by not watching TV, surfing the internet, staying away from sugar or some other form of denial. The issue with this type of sacrifice is that it can cause grey areas to occur of what a sacrifice really is in the eyes of God. If we enter a fast only giving up something we really should be giving up anyway to conform to God's will in our life, that isn't fasting, that is obedience! True biblical fasting involved the essential basic of food. Food is a basic need for everyone. Our bodies need food to be sustained and strengthened. When someone felt the need to fast, the act of withholding food – an essential need – would require faith in God's ability to sustain and act *in place of* necessary sustenance. Appetite has always been man's downfall since the beginning (Gen. 3:1-7). Fasting from basic food becomes a discipline over our natural appetite by relying in God by faith as we follow in obedience to His call to fast. It becomes a walk in faith.

When considering a fast, remember that the length of your fast will depend on what the Lord is leading you to do and the purpose for your fast. A fast can last hours, a day, or even longer. The bible mentions people who fasted for a day (Ezra 8:21-23), some 3 days or more (Esther 4:16), and some for 40 days (1 Kings 19:8). Before any fast, pray and seek the Lord for His guidance on what He would have you to do. Fasting is not a "heaven token". It's a tool in our spiritual warfare battles and can only be directed by God in order to be effective. It's thru our relationship with Him that we live, not earning our way to Him.

Fasting Principles:

1. Fasting to be seen only by God – its from the heart and God will reward

"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." – Matthew 6:16-18

True fasting is from the heart and is obedient to God's will. It's not about outward show. It's about seeking after God, not self and when we truly seek God, we will find Him if we are seeking with all our heart. (Jer. 29:13)

2. Fasting is not to be works-based; it's not for salvation

"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?" – Isaiah 58:6-7



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- 3. Fasting is a tool to seek after God's heart and can only be done with a right relationship with God**
"Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me - for Me?'" – Zechariah 7:5

Fasting needs to be done through God's direction. Sometimes just the fact you are sacrificing something God is asking of you is a discipline of itself. It teaches you to lay down the flesh and its desires and seek after God. Just that alone can have a transformation on the heart. But, if I fast and neglect the rest of what God has instructed me, then I've turned it into a performance act that will get me no where. God is seeking for my heart and fasting can be a great tool for Him to reach those deeper areas within me and form a more intimate relationship.

- 4. Abstain from marital relations with your spouse while fasting**
"Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." – 1 Corinthians 7:5

When we are seeking after God in an important matter that requires fasting, putting off other affections during that time is essential because God needs your whole heart, not one divided. Put aside all other affections during your time of fasting so that you can hear and understand God's will and thoughts for you during this time.

