

Fasting

Isaiah 58:3-7 ESV - ‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’ Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the Lord? “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?”

Matthew 6:16-18 ESV - “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.

Matthew 9:14 – 15 - Jesus Questioned About Fasting

14 Then John’s disciples came and asked him, “How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?”

15 Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

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What is fasting?

Christian fasting is the act of intentionally abstaining from food or a regularly enjoyed good gift from God to focus on a period of spiritual growth or deepening our relationship with God. In the act of fasting, we humbly deny the flesh to focus on and glorify God, become more in tune with His Spirit, and go deeper in our prayer life.

Biblical fasting should not be considered a method for dieting, but a method for growing into deeper communion with God and being more in tune with His Spirit. The primary Biblical reason to fast is to take our eyes off of the things of the flesh and to open our eyes to the things of God.

....during the fast, we must keep in mind that Scripture commands us to continuously die to self, and our rewards aren’t stored up in earthly treasures but treasures in heaven. We must live a life of putting off temporary fleshly satisfaction to store up eternal satisfaction.

Fasting is more than cutting something out for a period of time; it’s a sacrificial lifestyle before God and telling Him “I belong to You, not to the things of this world.” Fasting isn’t simply a one-time act of humility, it’s a continuous sacrifice of servant living for God and for others.

Fasting is for stretching ourselves to enrich our dependence on Jesus by being in a weak state before Him, for He says “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Fasting is also a way to demonstrate to the Lord that we are serious about Him by fixing our eyes on Him alone.

Some Motivations for Fasting Include:

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- For God’s intervention.
- For humility.
- For repentance.
- To break demonic bondage.
- To deepen spiritual hunger for God.
- For clarity on a decision you have to make.
- To test and see what desires control us.

(<https://justdisciple.com/christian-fasting/>)

Fasting is found throughout the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, over fifty times.

Biblical Examples of Fasting:

- David’s Fast for the Healing of His Sick Child
- Jesus’ Fast for 40 Days and 40 Nights
- The Prophetess Anna
- Ezra and the Israelites Fast for a Safe Journey
- Moses’ Fast Before Receiving the Commandments
- Daniel fasted for an answer to prayer and an understanding a vision
- Nineveh Fasts in an Act of Repentance
- Paul fasted often
- Nehemiah Fasted in Grief

1. Have you ever done a fast or do you regularly practice fasting? If so, why did you do it for the first time? If you have done it more than once, why did you keep doing it?
2. How did or does fasting impact your spiritual life?
3. Is there something that has a hold on you that would be good to step away from and be watchful?