



Discipleship Training Program

Christianity 101 – Lesson Six

Fasting

Memory Text

Matthew 17:21 *“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”*

The Bible clearly shows that **prayer** is definitely linked with **fasting**. True fasting is **intensified prayer**. Things are accomplished through prayer with fasting which cannot be accomplished by prayer alone.

What Are Some Bible Examples Of Fasting?

- A. **Moses** – 40 days
- Exodus 24:17-18** *“And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. ¹⁸And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.”*
 - Deuteronomy 9:9** *“When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water.”*
- B. **Elijah** – 40 days
- I Kings 19:8** *“And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.”*
- C. **Jesus** – 40 days
- Matthew 4:2** *“And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.”*
 - Luke 4:2** *“Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.”*

Note: This type of fast is called a “**prophets** fast”. Moses and Elijah fasted 40 days without food or water. They were supernaturally sustained by the presence of God. These were God-directed fasts. One should not attempt to imitate them unless it is the will of God.

- D. **Daniel** – 21 days
- Daniel 10:1-3** *“In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. ²In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. ³I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.”*
- E. **David** – 7 days
- II Samuel 12:16-18** *“David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. ¹⁷And the*

elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. ¹⁸And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?"

What Are Some Other Fasts In The Bible?

- A. Israel had one **day** of fasting, the Day of Atonement.
 - a. **Numbers 29:7** "And ye shall have on the tenth day of this seventh month an holy convocation; and ye shall afflict your souls: ye shall not do any work therein:"
 - b. **Acts 27:9** "Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them,"
 - i. This was a day of affliction of soul.
- B. Esther fasted three days and three nights without **food** or **water**.
 - a. **Esther 4:16** "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish."
- C. Paul fasted **three** - days.
 - a. **Acts 9:9** "And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink."
- D. Paul fasted **often**.
 - a. **II Corinthians 11:27** "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."
- E. The church at Antioch fasted (Group Fasting)
 - a. **Acts 13:2** "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

Can We Have The Wrong Motive In Fasting?

Yes! The Bible speaks of those whose motives were wrong – their fasting was **vain**.

- A. The King of Israel, Ahab, fasted with evil motives
 - a. **I Kings 21:4** "And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread."
- B. The Jews fasted to **themselves**, not to the Lord
 - a. **Zechariah 7:1-14** "And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu; ²When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD, ³And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? ⁴Then came the

word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, ⁵Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? ⁶And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? ⁷Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain? ⁸And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, ⁹Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother: ¹⁰And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. ¹¹But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. ¹²Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts. ¹³Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts: ¹⁴But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

- C. The **Pharisees** fasted twice a week, hypocritically
- Matthew 9:14** "Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast off, but thy disciples fast not?"
 - Luke 18:12** "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."

What Is The Proper Motive In Fasting?

Isaiah 58 is called "the fasting chapter". It gives us a description of the proper fast before God. Note especially verses 6-7, and the promises of God which follow in verses 8-14. This chapter shows the proper motivation for a fast.

How Are We To Fast?

- Fast unto the **Lord**, not unto **men**; as the Pharisees, disfiguring their faces.
 - Matthew 6:16-18** "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. ¹⁷But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; ¹⁸That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."
- Humble** ourselves with fasting.
 - Psalms 35:13** "But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom."
- Chasten our **souls** in prayer and fasting
 - Psalms 69:10-11** "When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. ¹¹I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them."

- D. Fast with pure **motivation**
- a. **Isaiah 58:6-7** "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"
- E. Fasting and prayer should not be used as "**works**" to **earn** something from God, but to bring ourselves into line with His Word and will.

Note: If a believer cannot take an extended fast, it is good to fast one or two meals, when possible, and devote this time to prayer. It is also wise to drink plenty of water during fasting for cleansing purposes. It is absolutely important to PRAY in order to receive the full benefit God intended in fasting.

When Should We Fast?

- A. When **directed** by the Spirit of God
- a. **Luke 4:1-2** "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ²Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing; and when they were ended, he afterward hungered."
- B. When we know as **individuals** that **we** need to.
- a. **Matthew 6:16-18** "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. ¹⁷But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; ¹⁸That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."
- C. When the **church** as a **whole** is called to fast for special occasions
- a. **Joel 1:14** "Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD,"
 - b. **Joel 2:15-16** "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: ¹⁶Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet."

What Are Some Results To Fasting In Bible Times?

- A. A **nation** was delivered from death.
- a. **Esther 4**
- B. The city of Ninevah was saved from divine **judgment**.
- a. **Jonah 3:5** "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them."
- C. **Demon** spirits were cast out.
- a. **Matthew 17:14-21** "And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, ¹⁵Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he

falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. ¹⁶And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. ¹⁷Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. ¹⁸And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. ¹⁹Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? ²⁰And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. ²¹Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

D. **Elders** were ordained

- a. **Acts 14:23** "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."

E. The **will** of the Lord was revealed

- a. **Acts 9:9-15** "And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. ¹⁰And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. ¹¹And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, ¹²And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. ¹³Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: ¹⁴And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. ¹⁵But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:"
- b. **Acts 13:1-4** "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ²As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. ³And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. ⁴So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus."

Why We Should Fast

A. In **obedience** to God's Word

- a. **Joel 2:12** "Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:"
- b. **Matthew 6:16** "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."
- c. **Matthew 9:15** "And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber 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."

- B. To receive God's grace and power
- a. **Ezra 8:23,31** "So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us. ³¹Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way."
 - b. **II Chronicles 7:14** "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."
- C. To overcome temptation
- a. **Luke 4:1,2,14** "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ²Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about."
 - b. **Matthew 9:15-17** "And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber 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. ¹⁶No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. ¹⁷Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."
- D. To be cleaned from sin
- a. **Jonah 3:5** "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them."
 - b. **Daniel 9:3** "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:"
 - c. **I Samuel 7:6** "And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh."
 - d. **Nehemiah 9:1,2** "Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. ²And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers."
- E. To weaken the flesh and receive spiritual power
- a. **II Corinthians 12:9,10** "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."
 - b. **Psalms 109:24** "My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness."
- F. To accomplish God's will
- a. **Acts 13:3** "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

- b. **Acts 14:23** *"And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."*
- G. To find **help** in difficult situations
- a. **II Samuel 12:16** *"David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth."*
- b. **Esther 4:16** *"Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish."*
- H. To find God's **direction**
- a. **Ezra 8:21,23** *"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us."*
- I. To obtain Divine **revelation**
- a. **Daniel 1:8-17** *"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. ⁹Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. ¹⁰And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king. ¹¹Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹²Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. ¹³Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. ¹⁴So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. ¹⁵And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. ¹⁶Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse. ¹⁷As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams."*
- b. **Daniel 10:7-8** *"And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. ⁸Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength."*