

## Fasting the Biblical and New Covenant Way

Have you ever fasted? Should you fast? What's the point for fasting? Have you been fasting, or have you been on a personal hunger strike? Hung tight as I help you understand the biblical position and perspective of the same.

Straight outta gate, Fasting is not commanded explicitly in the New Testament.

**Text:** Matthew 6:16-18 "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites..."

- 1) The word "WHEN" signifies that something will occur, if not now in the future. On the other hand, "IF" is a condition which implies that there is a possibility for something not to occur.
- 2) So, is fasting optional for a believer? It is essential. You are expected to fast. You should fast.
- 3) Growing up, we fasted, and nothing was strange about it, but this day and age believers especially some of our grace friends believe they should not fast.
  - a) Truth is fasting is not a grace or law thing. While some argue that fasting is legalistic, they miss the point that prayer can also be legalistic, reading the word can also be legalistic and the list goes on.
  - b) To determine if something we do legalism or legalistic is not based on the act itself but the **motive behind the action**.
    - I. If the motive you are doing what you are doing is to earn *right standing or righteousness with God*, have God bless you, move in your life, appease an angry God; then what you have done is legalist and profits you nothing.

- II. Legalism or being legalistic is when we do the right thing with a motive of seeking to earn righteousness, holiness, heaven, and blessing from God.

I know sometimes the church tells everyone, "We are fasting for 40 days." And almost everyone is like, "*Oh no. Come one*" But then you have people who have never fasted for a single day try it out and start pretending the rest of the 39 days. You don't want people fasting as hypocrites. Why don't you give people an option to learn how to do that?

For instance, I would say, we are doing it for 40 days, but if can do all great, but if not, do what you can as you learn and grow. This positions them to do it with a right motive not to please the pastor and so forth.

### **Jesus fasted**

Matthew 4:1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

- a) You are led up by the Spirit of God. If you want to go up, you need to be led by the Spirit of God, who now is in you if you are a believer.
- b) Tempted of God? **NO!** Tempted of the devil. The devil is the tempter.

Matthew 4:2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

- a) Notice it says when. Jesus fasted 40 days and 40 nights. This was a supernatural fast. Do not recommend it.

The other person that did it this way was Moses.

b) After that period of fasting, he got hungry.

c) **Notice that this was a food fast.** Today there are many things people choose to fast, and I think it is okay, but true biblical fasting is **FOOD fast**. Not just eliminating or fasting one of the foods, like *"I'm fasting Ice cream, I'm fasting cake, but will continue to eat meat and chicken."*

I. It is not a social media fast while that is important, it is not all these things that we have innovatively come up with so that we can continue to eat food.

d) It is about dealing with the desires and the appetite of the body speaking of food specifically

Matthew 4:3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

a) Again, Satan is referred to as the tempter.

b) Notice how the question is framed. It started by **"IF."** Very slick, deceptive, and cunning, veiled to ensnare Him.

c) The temptation was not about changing the stones into bread and eat. The devil was tempting Jesus' belief in WHO HE WAS? He was wanting Him to doubt that He was the Son of God and then do a miracle of changing the stones into bread to prove to Himself.

d) This would have been sin. Jesus saw if for what it truly was and pushed back.

Matthew 4:4 But he answered and said, *It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* 7 Jesus said unto him, *It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* 10 Then saith Jesus unto him, *Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

- a) Jesus was in the Word (meditation) when He was fasting. He was not just roaming the wilderness. He was in communion with His Father.
- b) This was key to His victory. He was not just fasting, PERIOD. He combined it with spending time with the God and the Word.
- c) For Jesus to respond "it is written" is because He was a man of the Word and knew the Word and when the right time came, He spoke it and defeated the enemy. He did not come up with anything He wanted to say, He stuck to what was written.
- d) Fasting without the Word of Communion with the Father is not Biblical fasting. It is more of weight loss fast or hunger strike.

Matthew 4:11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

- a) It is the Word defeated Satan the tempter.

### **Fasting the Godly way**

#### 1) Word

Matthew 4:1-11 shows the proficiency Jesus had about the Word of God while He was fasting. A godly fast MUST have the Word of God.

#### 2) Focus and attention on God

- a) One thing that stood out about Jesus and His fasting was the **attention and focus He had on the Word of God and communion with Him (prayer)**. True fasting MUST include prayer and the Word.
- b) Collecting food to break your fast during the fasting period? Very tempting.

### 3) Check your motives - Why are you fasting?

#### a) Seen by men

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. 17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18 That 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.

I. Here Jesus deals with one of the motives people have when they fast which is to be seen by men. You should not fast to appear fasting to men.

II. Fasting is a secret or private thing, not a public demonstration.

#### b) To become more powerful

Colossians 2:9-10 and John 1:16 reveal that you have the fulness of God and you are complete in Him. You should not be seeking to get what you already have and fasting does not achieve that.

I. Fasting does not cause you to be more powerful but rather helps subdue the flesh and give ascendancy to Spirit man and God's voice.

### **Isaiah 58 reveals what a proper fast looks like.**

a) A fast isn't a time for pleasure, rather a day a day for a man to afflict his soul

b) To afflict our souls and depart from our normal routines and activities.

c) Time of seeking the Lord, and not to be done lightly.

d) Other ways to fast:

- I. Bless others the way we would bless ourselves.
- II. Give to the needs of other things like food, clothing, house and clothe the poor and needy, make time to go to hospital to visit the sick and pray for them and so forth.

**...to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes**

Daniel 9:3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

- a) Fasting, if done according to the Word, is a form of seeking the Lord.

- I. Seeking does not mean getting something from the Lord, but really to **set face and focus on the Lord including ministering to Him.**

- b) A proper fast also involves repenting from sin and carnality. We see this a lot. Many people tend to be nicer when they are fasting. Muslims? Generous, kind etc.

**...But by prayer and fasting**

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, 15 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. 16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. 17 Then 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. 18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. 19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? 20 And 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. 21 **Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.**

a) This "kind"

- I. **Demons do not fear your fasting or respond to the same.**  
This was not saying or teaching that this demon would only come out by prayer and fasting. The name of Jesus and faith in that name would do just that. If you go back to verse 20, the issue for the disciples was not necessarily the demon but their unbelief.

*"20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your **unbelief**."*  
Their unbelief was the reason they failed to cast out this demon. They needed to spend time with the Lord and deny the flesh and its senses (Fasting) to get rid of this unbelief that was hindering the breakthrough.

This is what Jesus was saying would need fasting and prayer.

- II. What fasting achieves is that it deals with unbelief (through prayer and fasting) and allows you to have good communion with God, hearing His voice, and direction. Unbelief was the barrier for this demon coming out and fasting was a form of subduing the flesh and the voice of unbelief.

b) Fasting And Prayer.

- I. Notice it did not say fasting, PERIOD; but FASTING AND PRAYER.
- II. So, **fasting must go along with prayer** to be effective and prayer is simply communion with God. In this communion with Him we receive revelation and guidance from Him which helps us deal with the unbelief that hindered the demon from leaving the child.

a. Nehemiah 1:4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned *certain* days, and **fasted, and prayed** before the God of heaven,

b. Fasting and prayer are often linked together (Luke 2:37; 5:33, Acts 31:2-3; Acts 14:23)

In the Book of Acts we see that fasting and prayer were done a lot when making important decisions.

### **Why Fast? The Benefits.**

c) Important decisions (Acts 13:2; 14:23).

In the Book of Acts we see that fasting and prayer were done a lot when making important decisions.

d) Serving the Lord

Luke 2:37 And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

- I. This is strange to an average believer. They have never heard of fasting as a form of serving the Lord.
- II. This widow served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

e) Ministers to the Lord

Acts 13:2-3 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. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

- I. If you understand that fasting is more than not eating, then it can make sense how it ministers to the Lord.
- II. Fasting ministers to the Lord and blesses Him. When a believer takes time and spends time with the Lord in fasting and prayer, He ministers and blesses the Lord.

f) Hearing the voice of God.

Acts 13:2-3 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. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.



- I. Fasting and prayer silences the stranger voices and gives room for God's voice to get louder on the inside of us as we are still and focused on Him.

You have many voices inside of you. The voice of your spirit man (the real you) hidden on the deepest inner part of you.

- II. Your soul also has a voice – Mind, will and emotions.
- III. The voice of your body of flesh. The voice of the flesh is usually the loudest of all the voices and it leads many people. They go by their five senses.
  - a. Once it is silenced, the real You – Your spirit man rises above the noise of the flesh, and you can hear God better and be led by God better. This happens as you deny the flesh and focus on God and His Word.

g) Establishes who has the authority – The flesh or you.

- I. During fasting, your body is trained to recognize and **obey the real boss – Your spirit man**. This training is important if we do not want to be led by the flesh and having the flesh dominate and tell us what to do.

h) Teaches you self-control

- I. **The flesh needs to recognize that it cannot have whatever it wants whenever it wants.** This has hurt many both spiritually and physically because the flesh has been the driver of their lives, and the result is only crushing.
- II. Fasting denies the flesh it's number one desire – food, and it begins to die and take the back seat.
- III. Sex is not the number one desire for the flesh. The flesh can survive without sex, but not food. The number one fuel to the flesh is food, not sex.
  - a. So fasting food is much stronger and effective to deny the flesh than fasting "Sex."

i) Mortifying the flesh and denies the flesh, Food and pleasure.

I. Romans 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (Underline mine).

a. Note: The Word "**mortify**" was translated from a Greek Word that means to "**kill**."

b. If we do not fast which is one of the proven ways to mortify the flesh, we end up living after the flesh. Meaning the flesh is leading our lives and we are after it (following it).

c. Fasting is a spiritual activity and if done with the right motives yield spiritual results like getting you focused on the Spiritual things thereby mortifying the flesh.

II. Colossians 3:1-5 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. 5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

We can't just rebuke our flesh, and it leaves. We must subdue it and mortify it. We do this daily.

Some of the ways we mortify our members (Verse 5) is by:

a. Seeking those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

b. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

III. How do we seek those things? **One way is fasting**. Fasting, if done the right way helps us to set our affection on the things above and not on the earthly things like food and pleasure.

## j) **Miracles and breakthroughs**

Isaiah 58:9 Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

- I. We have learned in church that "If you need to get anything from God and he is not responding fast, fast."
  - a. Right? Wrong! This is a wrong use of fasting.
- II. Fasting does not twist God's hand and make Him do something because He sees you have fasted.
  - a. I and many others I know have fasted before to see somethings come to pass in the past and God did not move one inch. Nothing happened!
  - b. Fasting is not a way to get God to do what we want or desire.
  - c. Fasting changes, us, not God. Moves us, not God.
  - d. Fasting is not a way to appear more spiritual than others.
- III. There are biblical principles that govern answered prayer and I'm not going to teach those today, but fasting does not suspend or freeze those principles.
- IV. Remember, you **cannot earn** anything God based on your fasting, holiness and good deeds.
  - a. God moves in your life His Grace, the name of Jesus, and faith in His Word. It is never based on your good deeds and righteous acts such as fasting.
- V. Fasting does not produce breakthroughs. What does the name of Jesus and faith in His name do?
- VI. It simply allows and positions you to:
  - a. Hear God,
  - b. get your heart in the right place,
  - c. and be led by the Spirit, not the flesh.

- VII. Usually when all these are in place, miracles, and breakthrough happen because you have quieted the loud flesh, and you can hear the still small voice of God.
- VIII. I have not found a New Testament teaching from Jesus and Paul that when you need a breakthrough, you need to go on a 3 or 10 or 40 days fast. I'm not against fasting and I do fast, but not for the reasons of the Old Covenant.
- IX. If you want a breakthrough, fast, not to get a breakthrough, but **to hear God and be led by the Lord.**
- a. A miracle or breakthrough is just a **byproduct** of seeking God through prayer and fasting, as an example, and it helps **quiet your flesh and soul** and helps you set your affection on the things above.

### **Health shall spring forth speedily**

Isaiah 58:8 Then shall **thy light break forth as the morning**, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.

While there are health benefits to fasting (without food) as a whole, the purpose of a biblical fast is not to lose weight, but rather a deeper fellowship with God—hence prayer and fasting.