

Prayer & Fasting

What Is Fasting?

Most of us have read about people fasting in our Bibles, but few followers of Jesus currently practice fasting on a regular basis. So, what is the biblical concept of fasting? Spend a moment reflecting on these simple definitions:

- ☐ Fasting is voluntarily going without food – or any other regularly enjoyed, good gift from God – for the sake of some spiritual purpose. (David Mathis)
- ☐ Fasting is giving up food (or something else) for a period of time in order to focus your thoughts on God. (Lauren Sanchez)
- ☐ The person choosing to fast is taking time away from the needs of the body in order to give intentional time and attention to God. (Tom Albin)

Notice the two key elements: voluntarily giving something up for a period of time and focusing on God. Our goal in this season of fasting is to practice self-denial to deepen our walk with Jesus and hear from Him in a new and fresh way.

Suggestions for Fasting

First, decide what you are going to deny yourself and for how long. The “what” of fasting could be specific meals, certain types of food, TV, texting, social media, car radio, etc. Then decide how long you will do this. You might give up food one day a week (John Wesley fasted every Friday) or give up coffee (seriously?!) For a week. BUT giving something up by itself is not biblical fasting. We then set aside specific time to spend with God beyond what we normally do. We want the pains of whatever we have sacrificed to remind us to turn our eyes on Jesus and listen. Brittany Yesudasan describes this time well:

During your fast, set aside specific and significant time to worship and seek God in prayer. Plan ahead so your time can be unhurried and conducive to enjoying the Lord. Many people begin this time by repenting of any sins the Holy Spirit brings to mind and asking for God’s forgiveness. This is essential to ensure that sin is not hindering your communication with God.

Biblical Examples of Prayer & Fasting

- ☐ 2 Chronicles 20:1-4 – God’s people fasting in a crisis seeking His direction.
- ☐ Esther 4:15-16 – Esther asking people to fast and pray on her behalf for wisdom and protection.
- ☐ 2 Samuel 1:11-12 – David and his army fasting in a season of loss and grief.
- ☐ Joel 1:13-14 – A call to corporate fasting and prayer to repent and humble themselves before God.
- ☐ Luke 4:1-4 – Jesus fasting before beginning his public ministry.
- ☐ Acts 13:1-3 – Church leaders fasting and receiving God’s direction for future ministry.