



B3-C05-S04

Fasting Humbling the Flesh to Seek God

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Fasting

Fasting is primarily the act of willingly abstaining from some or all food, drink, or both, for a period of time. An absolute fast is normally defined as abstinence from all food and liquid for a defined period, usually a single day (24 hours), or several days. Other fasts may be only partially restrictive, limiting particular foods or substance. The fast may also be intermittent in nature.

The central idea in fasting is the voluntary denial of an otherwise normal function for the sake of intense spiritual activity. Fasting is a special potent **sacrifice** we make in order to receive a specific type of answer or outcome to a special prayer request.

The Purpose of Fasting, and Why Many Fasts Fail

Fasting is not a tool to force God's hand. It is a chosen humbling of the flesh so the heart can submit to God.

Many people fast and still receive no answer because they treat fasting like a spiritual payment. God does not respond to hunger, He responds to repentance, obedience, and truth in the inward man.

A fast is powerful only when it is joined to a clean conscience, real forgiveness, and a readiness to obey whatever God commands next.

The "acceptable fast" is discussed in the Book of **Isaiah 58:6–7 (KJV)**. In this Study, the nation of Israel is rebuked for their type of fasting, and given this exhortation:

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?
Is 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?

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The acceptable fast is not merely abstinence from food or water. It is a return to obedience, mercy, justice, and humility. If fasting does not produce repentance and changed behavior, God rejects it, even if the stomach is empty.

On the next verses we are shown some of the effects of fasting on the health of its observers.

Isaiah 58:8–9 (KJV) Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I."

Zechariah 7:5–10, also repeats this message.

Speak 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? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? Should 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?

And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And 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.

These passages show the standard God uses to judge a fast. If a person fasts while continuing oppression, unforgiveness, sexual sin, dishonesty, or rebellion against God's commands, that fast is not accepted. The fast becomes religious performance.

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“Christ” (יהוֹשֻׁעַ Jehoshua Hamashiach) warned his followers against fasting only to make others admire them. He provided practical steps on how to fast in private. **Matthew 6:16–18 (KJV)** 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.

Moses fasted for forty days and forty nights, twice, the first, before he received the tablets on the mountain with YHWH. And the second, after coming down, seeing the Israelites practicing idolatry, and breaking the tablets in anger.

(Deuteronomy 9:7–21)

King David fasted when the son of his adulterous union with Bathsheba was struck sick by YHWH, in punishment for the adultery and for David's murder of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite. Nevertheless, the son died, upon which David broke his fast (**2 Samuel 12:15–25**).

David used fasting as an act of humbling his soul (**Psalm 35:13**).

King Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast throughout Judah for victory over the Moabites and Ammonites who were attacking them (**2 Chronicles 20:3**).

The prophet Joel called for a fast to avert the judgment of YHWH. (**Joel 1:14,2:12, 15**)

The people of Nineveh, in response to Jonah's prophecy, fasted to avert the judgment of YHWH (**Jonah 3:7**).

The Jews of Persia, following Mordechai's example, fasted because of the genocidal decree of Haman. Queen Esther declared a three-day fast for all the Jews prior to risking her life in visiting King Ahasuerus uninvited (**Esther 4**).

The prophetess Anna, who proclaimed the baby “Christ” (יהוֹשֻׁעַ Jehoshua) to be the Messiah, prayed and fasted regularly in the Temple (**Luke 2:37**).

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“Christ” (יהוֹשֻׁעַ Jehoshua Hamashiach) fasted for forty days and forty nights while in the desert, being tempted by Satan to turn stones into bread and eat them, among other temptations. ([Matthew 4:2](#), [Luke 4:2](#)).

Saul, better known by the Greek variant of his name, Paul, did not eat or drink anything for three days after he converted on the road to Damascus. ([Acts 9:9](#))

The church in Antioch were worshipping the Lord and fasting when the Holy Spirit told them to send Barnabas and Paul for work ([Acts 13:2](#)).

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders with prayer and fasting ([Acts 14:23](#)).

Why People Fasted in Scripture:

1. Repentance and mourning over sin ([Ezra 10:6](#), [Nehemiah 9:1](#))
2. Seeking direction and help from God ([Ezra 8:23](#))
3. Intercession in crisis and danger ([Esther 4:16](#))
4. Humbling the soul before God ([Psalm 35:13](#))
5. Consecration for ministry decisions and commissioning ([Acts 13:2–3](#), [Acts 14:23](#))
6. Crying out for mercy under coming judgment ([Joel 1:14](#), [Jonah 3:7](#))

How People Fasted in Scripture (Methods, Not Formulas):

Scripture records different lengths and types of fasts. These are not formulas that guarantee results. They are examples of people humbling themselves before God.

Examples of durations:

1. One day ([1 Samuel 7:6](#))
2. Three days ([Esther 4:16](#), [Acts 9:9](#))
3. Seven days ([1 Samuel 31:13](#))
4. Twenty-one days, partial fast ([Daniel 10:2–3](#))
5. Forty days ([Exodus 34:28](#), [Matthew 4:2](#))

Other details sometimes included: sackcloth and mourning ([Ezra 10:6](#), [Daniel 9:3](#)), fasting privately without seeking attention ([Matthew 6:16–18](#)), agreement between husband and wife for a limited time ([1 Corinthians 7:5](#)).

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“Christ” (יהושע Jehoshua Hamashiach) presented Himself unto the Father as a sacrifice in complete obedience unto Him.

Ephesians 5:2 (KJV) And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Fasting is a sacrifice made.

2 Corinthians 6:5 (KJV) In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

2 Corinthians 11:27 (KJV) In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

We are to be a living sacrifice unto YHWH.

Romans 12:1 (KJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Philippians 2:16 (KJV) Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. 17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

Hebrews 13:15 (KJV) By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.

To OBEY is better than sacrifice.

1 Samuel 15:22 (KJV) And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

But fasting without obedience is nothing. See B3-C02-S01- “Love Proven Only Through Obedience” for better understanding.

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Common Errors That Corrupt a Fast

1. Fasting to be seen, respected, or admired ([Matthew 6:16–18](#)).
2. Fasting while refusing to forgive others, while keeping bitterness, or while stirring strife ([Isaiah 58, Zechariah 7](#)).
3. Fasting while continuing known sin and calling it “weakness” instead of repentance ([John 14:15](#)).
4. Treating fasting like a trade, “If I fast, God must answer.” That spirit is not submission, it is manipulation.
5. Using fasting as a replacement for obedience. Fasting does not cover rebellion. ([1 Samuel 15:22](#))

John 9:31 (KJV) Now we know that **YHWH heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of YHWH, and doeth his will, him he heareth.**

Remember when we put John 14 verses in a different perspective in B3-C02-S04- “Truth or Deceit Testing What You Believe”?

Love Proves Itself by Obedience:

John 14:15 (KJV) If ye love me, keep my commandments.

John 14:21 (KJV) He that does not hath my commandments, and does not keepeth them, he it is that hateth me: and he that hateth me shall be hated of my Father, and I will hate him, and will not manifest myself to him.

John 14:23 (KJV) “Christ” **יהוֹשֻׁעַ** (Jehoshua Hamashiach) answered and said unto him, **If a man does not love me, he will not keep my words: and my Father will not love him,** and we will **not** come unto him, and make our abode with him.

Fasting without obedience is like bowing the head while keeping the sin. God is not impressed by a hungry body when the heart refuses to surrender.

Once you understand and get the part of obedience in the right place, you can start to see the whole big picture about fasting and its importance.

A partial fast. This is described in the book of Daniel. For three weeks, Daniel, who was a prophet during a time when Israel lived in exile, abstained only from pleasant breads, meats and alcoholic wine **Daniel 10:2-3 (KJV)** In those

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days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I 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..

A complete fast in Scripture sometimes meant no food, and in rare cases it included no water for a short time under extreme circumstances. Wisdom is required. Scripture never commands believers to harm their bodies. The goal is humility and obedience, not self-destruction.

Acts 9:9 (KJV) And he was **three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.**

Exodus 34:28 (KJV) And he was there with the LORD forty days and **forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water.** And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

1 Kings 13:9 (KJV) For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, **Eat no bread, nor drink water,** nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.

Ezra 10:6 (KJV) Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, **he did eat no bread, nor drink water:** for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.

Esther 4:16 (KJV) 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.

Jonah 3:7 (KJV) And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, **Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:**

A Simple Biblical Guide Before You Fast

Before you fast, examine yourself:

1. What sin is God confronting in me right now?
2. Who do I need to forgive, and what do I need to make right?
3. What act of obedience am I delaying?
4. Am I fasting to be heard by people, or to be corrected by God?

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If your fast produces repentance, truth, and obedience, it is accepted. If it produces pride, performance, and stubbornness, it is rejected.

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