

# *New Testament*



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# New Testament Fasting

## Introduction:

Fasting in the Old Testament was a ritual that was meant to be seen by all. The individual on a fast would sit in an ash heap wearing sackcloth and rub ashes all over his body. Everyone knew without a doubt that the person was fasting. He or she was in a crisis and was hoping to get God's attention. That has all changed in the New Testament, because of the fact that God lives within our hearts. When we talk about fasting today, it is not the Old Testament fast with that sort of public display. Instead of an outward show to make your voice heard by God, the New Testament fast promotes an inward change to tune your heart to hear God's voice. It is the new wine that alters your state of mind, changes your heart and intoxicates you with the things of God. In Mark 2:20, after Jesus was taken up, He instructed the New Testament church to fast. The Old Testament fast could never change a heart and make it sensitive to God, but the New Testament fast can. On the other hand, the New Testament fast could have never helped an Old Testament believer for it would have been like pouring new wine into an old wineskin. We are born again people in this new dispensation and we have new wine to drink called New Testament fasting.

Text: *Joel 2:12 Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with fasting.*

## ◆ Fasting in the Bible

- Old Testament Fasting (Mark 2:19-20, Isaiah 58).

- Persons fasting wore sackcloth garments and ashes, and sat in view of the public.

***Nehemiah 9:1** On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and having dust on their heads.*

***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.*

- The person fasting wanted their actions noticed and their voice to be heard on High.

***Isaiah 58:3** Why have we fasted, they say, and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?*

***Daniel 9:3** So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes (New International Version).*

- Various reasons people fasted in the Old Testament:

- For strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness (The New Testament is not about the praise or ambition of men).
- To get God's attention (in the New Testament you fast to get your attention on God).
- In the hopes that God would alleviate or divert a crisis situation (New Testament fasting will help you get into faith about the situation).

*Isaiah 58:4 (Old Testament Fast) Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. 5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? 8 (New Testament Fast) 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 reward. 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. 11 And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.*

- Old Testament fasting was like the old wine to the Old Testament saint, while New Testament fasting is like the new wine to the New Testament saint.
  - New wine (New Testament Fasting) will alter your state of mind and make you intoxicated with the pursuit of God.

- Fasting will make you insensitive to your flesh, just like a drunken man is oblivious to his surroundings.

***Psalms 104:15*** *And wine that maketh glad the heart of man.*

***Mark 2:19*** *And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20* *But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. 21* *No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. 22* *And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.*

Note: If new wine was put into a wineskin that had been previously used, the fermentation process would burst the old wineskin. When Jesus said that new wine cannot go into old wineskins, He was explaining that the New Testament way of fasting is not compatible with the Old Testament practices.

- New Testament Fasting (Mark 2:19-20, Matthew 6:16-22).

*Mark 2:19* And Jesus said unto them, can the children of the bride chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. **20** But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

- The person fasting wears the garment of praise.

*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.

*Isaiah 61:3* To appoint unto them that mourn (fast) in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

- The person fasts in secret (does nothing to draw attention to himself).

- You do not fast to make your voice heard on high, you fast to allow His voice to be heard in you. In other words, you fast to make yourself sensitive to hear God's voice.

- Fasting is expected of every Christian (Matthew 6:16).

*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. 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.*

- New Testament fasting affects your heart, Old Testament fasting never could.

***Joel 2:12-13** Foretells the fast to come when the individual rends his heart and not his garment.*

***Joel 2:12** "Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." **13** Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.*

***Job 32:18-19**"For I am full of words, and the spirit within me compels me; inside I am like bottled-up wine, like new wineskins ready to burst."*

*Notes:*

Note: Hearing the voice of God is a necessity for every Christian. There are many voices in the earth but there is only *one voice* that can truly change a life and that is the voice of God. When He speaks the darkness is pierced and there is fullness of joy that enlightens the soul. God's voice carries the authority and power of heaven and He only has to whisper to cause demons to shake in terror and the earth to melt (Psalms 46:6). When you hear His voice it quiets your soul, brings stability, and helps you overcome any problem you face (Matthew 16:13-19). The Church is built on hearing the voice of God. The Bible was written by hearing the voice of God (2 Peter 1:16-19). Noah built an ark to save his family when he heard the voice of God. Without hearing and obeying God's voice, he and his family would have been destroyed in the flood. Good things take place when you listen. *Think about all that could have been avoided in your life, if you had taken the time to hear and really listen.* One word from God can change your life forever. I am glad I heard Him speak that special day many years ago when He convinced me of my need for Him and I asked Jesus into my heart and life. Hearing that word of salvation has eternally changed my course from hell to heaven.

Mark 4:14-20 says that if your ground is good then you can produce good things. The variable that determines how much you produce is the type of ground. Fasting is the spiritual plow that prepares your heart (ground) to produce good things in your life. It is a spiritual tool that can transform hard, stony ground and make it fertile. It can cause barren ground to produce deep roots. It can also convert a ground of thorns and make it receptive to the seed of God's Word.

In short, fasting transforms your heart. Regular fasting helps your heart become good ground and produce fruit that is life changing.



- What to expect in a New Testament Fast (Mark 4: 15-20);

- Mark 4:15-20 is not as much about the seed as it is about the different kinds of ground.
- Fasting is a ground changer.
- Fasting breaks up the hardness of your heart by;
  - Changing stony ground into fertile.
  - Changing hard ground into pliable.
  - Changing thorny ground into receptive.
- Fasting produces sensitivity of heart.
- Fasting helps reveal more of God in your life.
  - God is in you, but how much of Him is displayed?
  - Fasting will help you go from just 10%, 30%, or 60% to hopefully 100% of God being seen in you.

***Mark 4:15** And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. **16** And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; **17** And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time:*

*afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. **18** And these are they, which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, **19** And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. **20** And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.*

■ Fasting can help change your heart into a:

- True heart (Hebrews 10:22).
- Soft heart (Job 23:16).
- Pure heart (Matthew 5:8).
- New heart (Ezekiel 36:26).
- Clean heart (Psalms 51:10).
- Responsive heart (Acts 2:37).
- Fixed heart (Psalms 57:7).
- Seeking heart (Jeremiah 24:7).
- Unblamable heart (1 Thessalonians 3:13).
- Perfect heart (II Chronicles 16:9).

- **Three Things Fasting Accomplishes as taught by Jesus (Luke 4:1-13).**

Note: In Luke 4:1, Jesus went into the wilderness to fast. He did not rub ashes on his body or wear sackcloth, so we know it was a New Testament fast. Three temptations confronted Jesus in that fast. The first was the devil questioning if He was the Son of God (“If you be the son of God”). So fasting deals first of all, with *doubt* in your life. Fasting exposes doubt so you can get rid of it. The second confrontation was the devil wanting to give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world that Adam had given to him. Those kingdoms rightfully belonged to Jesus, but because of Adam’s high treason in the Garden of Eden, the devil possessed them. However, Jesus refused to desire them and He resisted the devil. Fasting deals with your *desires*. In a fast you can get to the place that you do not desire food, or other things, you only desire the Lord. The third confrontation was the devil taking Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and saying to Him that God would rescue Him if He jumped. Fasting deals with *illogical or presumptive actions* that you sometimes do, expecting God to rescue you. The temptation to do something while crossing your fingers and hoping God comes through will be avoided if you fast. Fasting can help change your heart to desire only Him and thereby avoid the traps that many fall into.

**Luke 4:1** And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, **2** Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. **3** And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. **4** And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. **5** And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. **6** And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. **7** If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. **8** And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy

*God, and him only shalt thou serve. 9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: 10 For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: 11 And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 12 And Jesus answering said unto him, it is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. 13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.*

■ Fasting addresses doubt (Luke 4:3).

- If thou be the Son of God?
- Fasting does not make you more a Son of God.
- Fasting makes you aware of who you already are.
- Fasting helps you to stop focusing on your limitations and see God's greatness instead.

■ Fasting addresses desire (Luke 4:6-7).

- Desire God more than anything else (Job 23:12).

***Job 23:12** Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.*

- Seek first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33).

***Matthew 6:33** But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

- Fasting is part of diligently seeking Him (Hebrews 11:6).

*Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

Note: Seeking God, despite your fast-paced life, should be a priority for all Christians. Even in a small town you cannot escape the bustle of city life. Whether you are single or have children or grand children, combined with work, school, church, and family activities – life is full! It is good to have a full life because God meant for you to find things for your hands to do. Yet in the midst of the running to and fro, you must take time to slow down and seek God. I believe that is one of the reasons God put a day of rest in the Ten Commandments. It was not merely a suggestion for you, but a command. Even though the Ten Commandments were fulfilled in Jesus, they are still the standard. Keeping the Sabbath day holy is not just about going to church one day a week but about making a day of extended focus on Him. So clear your calendar for that one day a week and make time for spiritual renewal and growth. Fun and relaxation to renew your body and mind are important too but I am talking about the rest that comes from the presence of God, which renews your spirit. This day can be an all day event or split up over the week, but hopefully when your week is finished you will have had 12 hours (a day's worth) of spiritual refreshing.

If you divided the Sabbath (12 hours) over a period of 7 days then that means you would spend approximately one hour and forty-five minutes with Jesus daily. Think about how your life would refocus and refresh! Your life would be balanced because Jesus is your fulcrum (center). Do not be legalistic and condemn yourself if you miss a day. You are not punching a time clock in prayer to earn God's favor. Rather, you have the awesome privilege as sons and daughters to commune intimately with your Father God and Creator of the Universe.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus asked his disciples if they could at least pray for an hour (Matthew 26:40). This scripture reveals that it is not unreasonable to pray for an hour a day, but do not stop there. Spend the next 45 minutes listening and worshipping. You need to be like Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus even though her life was demanding and her sister was upset at her. Jesus said one thing was needed for that day – rest at his feet (Luke 10:39-42). What Mary had done would never be taken from her. The time you give to God will yield life, peace, wisdom and renewal.

- Fasting addresses illogical or presumptive actions (Luke 4:9).
  - It is easy to assume that God in His mercy will rescue you from a negative situation so you go ahead and act, even though you know it is wrong.
    - \* God is only obligated to rescue the obedient.
  - Many Christians tempt God by being foolish with “so called” faith actions.
  - Your faith actions should be in agreement with God’s revealed will and this character.
  - Fasting helps you hear what He is saying to do.
  - Your faith action should be an obedient response to what God says to do.
  - Fasting will help you remain stable so you do not act without truly hearing God first.

**Example: Just because you are full of faith does not mean you can walk on water.**

- \* In 1 Kings 18, Elijah sent his servant to check for rain.
  - Elijah did not do anything until he saw the hand.
  - When Elijah saw the cloud like a hand he knew God was in it.
  - It is obvious when God's hand is in something.
  - Elijah did not wait to see the whole body, or even the whole arm.
  - Elijah saw the hand and started moving quickly.

*1 Kings 18:41 And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. 42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, 43 And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. 44 And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down that the rain stop thee not. 45 And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. 46 And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.*

- \* In Matthew 14, Peter walked on water solely by voice recognition.
  - He did not wait to see Jesus in his entirety to get out of the boat, but he did make sure it was Jesus.

**Matthew 14:25** And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. **26** And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. **27** But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. **28** And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. **29** And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

Notes:



- Types of New Testament fasts;

- Total Fast (Full Fast).

- You only drink liquids and do not eat food.
- You establish the number of days you will be on it. Jesus fasted for 40 days (Luke 4:1).

***Luke 4:1** And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.*

- Paul fasted for 14 days (Acts 27:32).

***Acts 27:33** And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.*

- Cornelius fasted for 4 days (Acts 10:30).

***Acts 10:30** And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing.*

- One Day Fast (Partial Fast).

- You fast three consecutive meals in a full day period. Isaiah 58:5 describes a fast for a day that a man may afflict his soul.

*Isaiah 58:5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul?*

- Single Meal Fast.

- You fast one meal throughout the day. Acts 10: 9, 10 says Peter was praying even though hungry at the lunch hour (the sixth hour in bible days would be the noon hour). He missed one meal due to fasting.

*Acts 10:9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: 10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance.*

- Supernatural Fast.

- You do not drink liquids or eat food. If you are fasting longer than 3 days, God alone should initiate this fast. Moses was on a God initiated fast for 40 days (Exodus 34:28). He did not eat or drink for 40 days. Moses was so caught up in the presence of God that he was not thinking about food or drink.

*Exodus 34:28 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.*

- Paul fasted for 3 days without food or water (Acts 9:9).

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

- Queen Esther fasted for 3 days without food or water (Esther 4:16).

*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.*

■ Non Pleasant Bread Fast (Daniel Fast).

- You do not eat meat, bread, sweets or junk food. You drink only water or juices and eat fruits and vegetables. You determine the length of the fast.
- Daniel fasted for 10 days on vegetables and water only (Daniel 1:12).

*Daniel 1:12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse (vegetables) to eat, and water to drink.*

- Daniel fasted another time for 21 days and had no meat, wine, bread or sweets (Daniel 10:3).

*Daniel 10:3 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.*

- Facts about New Testament Fasting.

- Fasting is important, as is marriage.

- Marriage is important and God said not to let anything come between marital relations except fasting with mutual consent.
- We interrupt this marriage to fast for a specific time.

*1 Corinthians 7:5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.*

- Fasting is necessary in the believer's life.

- Fasting helps overcome your natural thinking, carnal living and appetite demands (being belly driven).

*1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

*Romans 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.<sup>7</sup> Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. <sup>8</sup> So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

- Fasting is just as necessary as prayer.

*Mark 9:29 And he said unto them, this kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.*

- Just like a bullet needs a primer and gunpowder to fire; you need prayer and fasting to excel.

*Matthew 6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

- Enter into your prayer closet and put your fasting clothes on.

Note: The flesh can hold your spirit man in check and restrain it from gaining the supremacy. Put on the new garment of fasting that is nonrestrictive to your Spirit man. It does not bind, bunch or pinch!

**Example:** If your shirt or pants are too tight, it is hard to move and breathe. Get those fasting clothes on and allow your spirit room to breathe. When you fast your spirit gains dominance.

- Fasting focuses your desire on the Kingdom of God and where your desire is, your heart will follow.

*Matthew 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where*

*thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

- Fasting causes your eye to become single towards God.

***Matthew 6:22** The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. **23** But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*

- Fasting gets your attention on God, increases your desire for Him, and helps you stay committed to Him.

***Proverbs 4:20** My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings.*

***Psalms 1:2** But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. **3** And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

***Proverbs 13:10b** But when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.*

## ■ Fasting is difficult.

- The apostle Paul compared fasting to being beaten, among other difficult things.

***2 Corinthians 11:24** Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. **25** Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned,*

*thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*

**2 Corinthians 6:4** *But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses. 5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings.*

**Psalms 109:24** *My knees give way from fasting; my body is thin and gaunt.*

- Fasting is suffering in the flesh of Jesus.

**1 Peter 4: 1** *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.*

**Romans 8:18** *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

- Fasting will produce results.

- Fasting helps you deal with your unbelief, especially the stubborn kind.

**Isaiah 58:5** *Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? 6 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? 7 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? 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 reward. 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; 10 And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: 11 And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.*

**Mark 9:29** *And he said unto them, This kind (stubborn unbelief) can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.*

- Ezra had three problems that he needed God's help with:
  - \* Direction for his life.
  - \* His children's welfare.
  - \* His finances.

**Ezra 8:21** *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.*



- Fasting enabled Ezra to see results in all three specific areas.

**Ezra 8:31** Then 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. **32** And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days. **33** Now on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them was Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites; **34** By number and by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time. **35** Also the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity, offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he goats for a sin offering: all this was a burnt offering unto the LORD.

- Fasting eliminates pride.

Dwight L. Moody; said, "I have more trouble with D. L. Moody than with any other man I know. Ben Franklin said, "He that falls in love with himself will have no rivals". Someone else anonymously said, "Pride is the only disease known to man that makes everyone else sick".

- Manifestations of pride:
  - \* Interrupts others.
- Does not give consideration to others' views because of his own opinions are the most important.

- Is not interested in, or impressed by others' accomplishments.

**Example:** My son Justin's exhaustive travels versus his cousin's almost non-existent travels.

- \* The humble person expresses genuine interest and congratulations for others, while the prideful focuses on my experience, my revelation, and everything about me!
  - \* The humble person never seeks his own glory.
  - \* Do not try to impress but be impressive.
  - \* Pride is self centered and self minded while humility is God centered and others minded.
- The Pride Test:
    - \* Do you have to be the center of attention?
    - \* How do you handle being ignored?
    - \* Does it upset you if someone else gets credit for your idea?
    - \* Are you a good listener?
    - \* Do you look for ways to make others shine?
  - There are two types of people in the world... the one who walks into the room and says "Here I am" and the other who walks into the room and says, "There you are". Which person are you?
  - Everyone has to confront pride.
    - \* Are you proud that you are humble? (Ha!)
    - \* God resists the proud so rid yourself of it so He does not resist you.
    - \* Pride always looks at others' faults.

Note: Everyone has different faults in their life that they cope with. Naturally, it is easier to see others' faults than it is your own, but one glance in the mirror and you walk away with the knowledge that you are not perfect. Only one person has ever walked on this earth void of any imperfections whatsoever and that was JESUS. In Luke 23:4 the bible states clearly that Jesus had no faults at all. As a result there is no direct example to follow concerning faults from the Lord Jesus, but there are plenty examples of others in the bible who had failings and overcame them. David's flaws stood out like a sore thumb and yet God overlooked them and used him mightily as a king. Elijah the prophet was afraid at times. In one moment he went from calling fire down from heaven, to running from an ungodly woman and hiding in a cave wanting to die. Two words frequently found in the bible are "abundantly pardon". Many times God overlooks your faults when He hears the cry of your heart as long as you are not finding fault in others.

Concerning others' failures, the Word of God explains the protocol for helping your fellow man. Matthew 18:15-17 says you must not isolate yourself from a brother or expose his faults in public.... but go to him in private to help. Christians should not be like paparazzi looking for the latest scandal to publicize around town (or church). The intent of your heart should be to gain a brother not to criticize and push him away. The "fault" that the bible talks about is one that is being repeated over and over again, not an occasional wrongdoing. If this person with the repeated offenses refuses to listen then take others with you to help him. If he still refuses, bring the matter before the church. The purpose of this is for him to be helped, not to be judged by the law. If this person will not listen to the church then he is to be treated like a heathen and a tax collector. I do not know about you, but I treat the tax collector with respect. I treat the heathen with respect too. Why? Because I owe the heathen an opportunity to hear the gospel, just like someone gave me the opportunity. I now treat the man as if he no longer owes me an apology. No matter how much I was in the right, I do not bind him with judgment over his shortcomings. I have to consider myself that I, too, could fall into sin...so I must seek to forgive, restore and overlook. Galatians 6:1 says to do so in the spirit of meekness not rightness.

**Example:** I am reminded of a picture of a plane that had crashed next to the runway and another plane was taxiing down the adjacent runway. It would be easy for the pilot of the plane taxiing to make derogatory comments about the pilot of the crashed plane, but what he must realize is that his plane is just as susceptible to a crash as the one that already did. The same mechanical or electrical problems could bring his plane down, so it might do him and his passengers good to just look the other way. I can hear the pilot on the intercom announcing to the passengers, as they are parallel to the crashed plane on the right: Ladies and gentlemen, this is the captain speaking. First, I'd like to thank you for choosing Mandarin Airlines. As we taxi out to the runway, please make yourself comfortable, and for those of you sitting on the right side of the plane ... PLEASE LOOK TO YOUR LEFT"

Summary: In Hebrews 8:7 you find that the law had faults also. If it had been perfect, then there would not have been a need for a new law (or covenant). When Moses came down off the mountain with the tablets in his hands, right away it revealed a fault that he had in his own life; anger. He smashed the Ten Commandments shortly after he had received them because he was mad at the Israelites. Moses rebuked the Israelites for their sins but he had a glaring one in his own life that eventually prevented him from entering into the Promised Land. Everyone has mistakes this side of heaven, but pride says, *"I am going to show you yours, not work on my own!"* You must not look for the splinter in another's eyes before pulling the wooden beam out of your own. The Old Testament was good for pointing out human failure and showing mankind's need for God. If you live according to the law by pointing the finger at others, then you will expect others to act perfectly while you let yourself slide.

Hebrews 8:12 says, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness". According to the New Testament the believer must be a "grace guy", "love guy", "help others guy" and "look past others' faults guy". That does not mean that you excuse your own faults but strive to be mature and blameless. Raise your own expectations of yourself but lower your expectations of others. You are not called to administer the law and judgment but to express love, grace and help to those in need (Jude 24).

**Note:** In regard to leadership, unacceptable behavior must be dealt with but remember that the main thing is helping others to be reconciled to God.

- Fasting helps you see your pride so you can repent and humble yourself (James 4:6-10).

*James 4:6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. 9 Be afflicted (fast), and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

- Fasting is a humbling experience for your flesh.
- To be “afflicted” in James 4:9 means to *fast*.

*James 4:9 Be afflicted (fast), and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.*

Note: Proverbs 6:16 declares that the number one thing that God hates is PRIDE. Yet you seldom hear a sermon or read a book on the subject of pride. If it is the thing that God hates the most then you should hate it too. Proverbs 13:10 says, “Only by pride comes contention” which means all wars, fights, power struggles and other squabbles are a direct result of pride. Proverbs 8:13 says to fear the Lord is to hate pride. As a Christian you should respectfully fear God, which is to humble yourself and give Him the place of highest value in your life. Humility breeds true love and honor towards God and others. Since love and honor is esteeming others better than yourself, being prideful produces just the opposite; self interest and self-exaltation.

In conclusion.....Fasting will help subdue your fleshly nature to reveal God's nature.

The flesh does not want change because any change threatens comfort levels. Your flesh likes things the way they are. However, the bottom line is that all Christians are called to walk in the Spirit. If the flesh dominates you then you lose your sensitivity to the Lord and eventually become resistant to Him. When that happens, the Lord (the potter) has nothing to work with anymore because the clay of your heart has hardened.

You need to become spirit sensitive and tenderhearted, so you are always pliable and ready for the potter's hands. When you fast, you surrender your body to God which helps prepare you to receive His direction. Jesus was led into the wilderness to fast. If Jesus thought it necessary, then how much more vital is fasting for you now? The Holy Spirit led Jesus to a place where He could separate himself and yield His body to God. This process took 40 days and nights of fasting and prayer. What if Jesus would have told the Father that He was not going to fast because He had too much to do and too many places to go? He would not have been made into the perfect vessel for the salvation of mankind.

Like Jesus, you too can keep the devil defeated when you habitually live a fasted life. Look to Him as your example of what it means to be a spirit led, victorious son of God who subdued the flesh and fulfilled the will of God for His life. Do not let your appetites, pride, stubbornness, fear or busyness prevent you from yielding your body fully to God. Fasting will help you subdue your flesh to experience the necessary process to become a world changer.

# Serviss MISSIONS



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