



## **FASTING EFFECTIVELY**

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**Sunday Sermon – 1/4/2026**

**Isaiah 58:3-14 (NLT)** 'We have fasted before you!' they say. 'Why aren't you impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don't even notice it!' "I will tell you why!" I respond. "It's because you are fasting to please yourselves. Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers. 4 What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. 5 You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like reeds bending in the wind. You dress in burlap and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the Lord?"

6 "No, this is the kind of fasting I want: free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. 7 Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help. 8 "Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind. 9 Then when you call, the Lord will answer. 'Yes, I am here,' he will quickly reply. Remove the heavy yoke of oppression. Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors!

10 Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon. 11 The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. 12 Some of you will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as a rebuilder of walls and a restorer of homes.

13 "Keep the Sabbath day holy. Don't pursue your own interests on that day, but enjoy the Sabbath and speak of it with delight as the Lord's holy day. Honor the Sabbath in everything you do on that day, and don't follow your own desires or talk idly. (Fasting enhances the rest that we have in Jesus Christ, "Hebrews chapter 4:1-6") 14 Then the Lord will be your delight. I will give you great honor and satisfy you with the inheritance I promised to your ancestor Jacob. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

*During this period of prayer and fasting, if approached correctly, we will develop a deeper connection with Him and receive all that He has in store for us as His representatives. Our journey will enable us to demonstrate more of His goodness here on earth.*

*Fasting will probably make you uncomfortable in some areas, especially if it is your first time or you haven't been fasting for a while. Be patient and don't give up!*

The scripture from Isaiah 58, specifically verses 3 through 8, highlights a correction from the Lord to His people regarding fasting. In this passage, Isaiah 58 emphasizes that fasting should not be viewed as a passive act. Rather, when individuals fast, they should expect to undertake even greater work in service for the Lord. As they commit to these greater acts of service while fasting, they can also expect the Lord to respond by working even greater on their behalf.



## What is Fasting

According to Dr. Myles Monroe, “Biblical fasting is a conscious, intentional decision to abstain from eating and other fleshly pleasures for a time to gain vital spiritual and physical benefits.”

Fasting is a powerful practice that helps align our intentions and motives with what truly pleases God. It's an intentional choice to temporarily set aside our earthly desires, in contrast to Adam and Eve's decision to follow their flesh.

- By fasting, we embrace the opportunity to strengthen our spirit, soul, and body while deepening our connection with God, showing our commitment to growth and self-discipline.
- Fasting should be a natural part of the life of a believer.
- Fasting is a way to seek God by denying physical Food and other pleasures in order to focus on the spiritual nourishment and physical resources that God promises us. *Focus on the spiritual nourishment first!*
- Prayer and fasting must always go together, or fasting alone will do you no spiritual good. But if you want the spiritual benefits, make sure to take the time you would have for eating and other pleasures and transfer it to prayer (talking to God), meditation (Allowing God to talk to us), and studying/hearing God's word!

There are numerous physical benefits to fasting, as medical professionals are increasingly discovering. Through fasting, many toxins can be flushed out of our system. Fasting can not only benefit the body but also support emotional stability and mental clarity.

Similarly, fasting from certain foods and other worldly and fleshly pleasures provides a spiritual cleansing by purifying the heart, soul, and mind.

Just because we are fasting, the absence of certain foods doesn't mean we should become gluttons by partaking of them. Fasting should be a process of minimal physical intake.

Fasting is not supposed to feel good physically; the Bible says that fasting is a humbling of yourself and an affliction of the soul. The Bible describes "afflicting your souls" with fasting primarily in Leviticus 16:29-31 and Leviticus 23:27, 32.

### Fasting is not a suggestion but a command

In the same way that we practice the habits of reading the Bible and prayer, we should also practice the habit of fasting.

The Bible gives the same level of significance to both fasting and prayer.

**Matthew 6:6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly...**



**Matthew 6:17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.**

In **Matthew Chapter 6**, it says “**When you fast...**” and “**When you pray...**” (not “if”), meaning that both fasting and Prayer are not options, but what God expects of His people.

Also, on a personal level, fasting and prayer should be done secretly and kept from those who don't need to know. Make this corporate fast a family event. Let's encourage our family and church to participate in this fast accurately and proficiently, so we can make the most of it. Also, notice that there is a reward for both if done correctly!

**Matthew 9:15 And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.**

The ascension of Christ is our entrance into the dispensation of fasting, and it will continue until He returns.

Fasting is not a curse of the law, and it is not “works.” Just as Grace didn’t free us from prayer, Grace does not free us from our responsibility to fast.

### **The Purpose of Fasting**

#### **1. Seeking Greater Fellowship with God**

Fasting provides a pathway to seek God’s presence with focused attention. When you engage in fasting, you refrain from “fleshly pleasures” and the distractions that typically draw your focus away from God. This allows you to dedicate that time to seeking God with undivided attention.

#### **2. Putting God First**

Fasting is designed to make us put God first. When we set aside other things that are important to us to seek God, we reaffirm who has priority in our lives.

Fasting helps you recognize the Holy Spirit's call to prioritize time with God over worldly distractions, showing that you value Him more than your work or busyness.

Your fasting shows God that He is first in your life. It is a purposeful commitment to Him.

#### **3. Creating an Environment for Prayer**

*Fasting does not go without prayer. Throughout the scriptures, wherever fasting is mentioned, prayer is present. Therefore, fasting adds to our prayers the environment in which God can work more on our behalf.*



It enables us to see the fulfilment of God's Word and purposes for us as individuals and as the body of Christ.

#### **4. Fasting is a form of worship**

The Prophetess Anna worshiped God night and day through Prayer and Fasting. **Luke 2:37and then was a widow (Anna) until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.**

When you fast, one of the things you are saying is that God, you are worthy of me abstaining from food, worldly and fleshly pleasures.

#### **5. Interceding for Others**

In the Scriptures, we often see people fasting to intercede for others, a nation, or God's purpose. Esther, Nehemiah, and Anna all fasted and prayed for others. Don't make this fast all about you; that's very selfish and will hinder the results that you get.

We often find ourselves focused on our personal wants and needs during prayer and fasting, seeking guidance, help, or fulfillment for ourselves. However, there are moments when we are encouraged to shift our perspective. Fasting with prayer, for instance, is a powerful practice that can elevate our prayers, drawing our attention away from self-centered concerns and interceding for others.

### **The Principles of Fasting**

#### **Principle #1 Fasting is not just missing a meal**

As we have seen in the purpose of fasting, you don't just miss a meal and say you have fasted. Fasting includes seeking the face of God and praying.

#### **Principle #2 Fasting is not dieting.**

If your intention of deciding to fast is to keep fit, you aren't fasting because God is secondary and your weight loss is primary.

#### **Principle #3 Fasting demands replacing meals with the reading of the word and prayer.**

It is popularly said that fasting without prayer is a hunger strike. Everything you are abstaining from while fasting should be replaced with spiritual activities—reading/studying the Word of God, spending time in meditation, and prayer.

#### **Principle #4 Fasting demands dedicated time for meditation.**

Because light is expected to break forth while you fast (**Isaiah 58:9**), you are expected to align yourself to



receive godly enlightenment through meditation.

Biblical meditation is not emptying your mind and keeping it silent. Instead, it fills up your mind with the Word of God as you ponder it.

**Praying and fasting allowed God to reward us openly.**

**Matthew 6:6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly...**

**Matthew 6:17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.**

Open rewards mean the manifestation of God's blessings for all to see and/or recognize!

Fasting, along with prayer, is one of the ways we delight ourselves in the Lord!

**Psalms 37:4-5 Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.**

**5 Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.** Fasting and prayer are ways we demonstrate our commitment to God and His will. When we engage in these practices, God promises to fulfill our needs and desires.