

In this supplementary lesson, we will consider the biblical concept of fasting as we endeavor to practice a lifestyle of prayer. This lesson examines three New Testament motivations for fasting as well as discussing three types of fasts commonly practiced by believers.

➤ **Normal Christianity**

- Question: How many of you think that _____ is a _____ part of Christianity?
- Question: How many of you think that _____ is a _____ part of Christianity?
- Observation 1: However, few people put _____ in the same category as giving and praying.
- Observation 2: Many people give and many people pray, but _____ people engage in consistent fasting.
- Consider: Jesus considered fasting a _____ part of the Christian lifestyle.

Matthew 6:1-18 (NKJV)

1 "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed (KJV: doest thine alms), do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

5 "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

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.

7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

8 Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

9 In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. 13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

16 "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

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.

- Every Christian should give and every Christian should pray. It then follows that every Christian should fast.
- Jesus assumed that you and I would fast – He did not say “if you fast” but rather “when you fast” (twice).

➤ **Fasting in the Bible: Old Testament**

- In the _____ people fasted for several reasons:
 1. As a sign of _____, often to avert God’s judgment (e.g., David asking God to spare his son’s life).
 2. As a sign of _____ (e.g., for Saul and his sons upon their death).
 3. As part of the _____ (during solemn assemblies on some of the Jewish holy days).

4. To seek God for a _____ favor or prayer request (e.g., Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah).

➤ **Fasting in the Bible: New Testament**

- Jesus taught that Old Testament fasting was _____ with the fasting that would be done by believers in the _____.

Mark 2:18-22 (NKJV)

18 The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"

19 And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom 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 will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.

21 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse.

22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins."

- The _____ portrays fasting in a different light with a different perspective.
- We do not fast to earn God's _____ or grace.
 - We do not fast to make ourselves more _____ before God or men (spiritual pride).
- Our motivation for fasting is to _____ the will of our flesh and to give _____ to the working of God's Spirit in our lives (submission).

- The New Testament shows fasting helping in the following areas:

1. _____

Acts 13:2-3 (NKJV)

2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

Acts 14:21-23 (NKJV)

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,

22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

2. _____

Matthew 17:14-21 (NKJV)

14 And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying,

15 "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.

16 So I brought him to Your disciples, but 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 bear with you? Bring him here to Me."

18 And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast him out?"

20 So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

21 However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

Mark 9:29 (NKJV)

29 So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

3. _____

Matthew 4:1-2 (NKJV)

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

Luke 2:36-37 (NKJV)

36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity;

37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

2 Corinthians 6:4-10 (NKJV)

4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,

5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;

6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,

7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true;

9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed;

10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 (NKJV)

23 Are they ministers of Christ?--I speak as a fool--I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.

24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—

28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

- Note: Some use the Corinthians passages to make the argument that Paul's fasting wasn't voluntary.

- However, his use of the phrase “in hunger and thirst” shows involuntary suffering by being without nourishment; a distinction is made by his use of the phrase “in fastings often” for times of voluntary consecration.

1 Corinthians 7:5 (NKJV)

5 Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer

Romans 8:12-13 (NKJV)

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors--not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

➤ **Three types of fasts**

1. Abstaining from _____

- No media: books, newspapers, internet, social media, etc.
- Give up a favorite type of food, etc.
- Set yourself to spending extra time in prayer.
- Basic form of fasting that can be done by people with serious health concerns, etc.

2. Abstaining from _____

- Also incorrectly called a “Daniel’s fast.”

Daniel 10:2-3 (NKJV)

2 In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks.

3 I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

- Limit your food intake (one meal a day, smaller portions, bland foods).
- Set yourself to spending extra time in prayer.
- Form of fasting that can be done by people with job constraints or health concerns, etc.

3. Abstaining from _____

- This is the Biblical definition of fasting – receiving no nourishment.
- It is wise to drink water while fasting (not too much) to avoid dehydration.
- If going on an extended fast then you may want to consider drinking fresh fruit or vegetable juice (in moderation).
- Set yourself to spending extra time in prayer.
- Form of fasting that is most intense and most rewarding to accomplish.

– Advice: Don't take the _____ out of fasting.

2 Samuel 24:24 (NKJV)

24 Then the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

– Observation 3: God honors the _____ sacrifices that we make, both large and small (see the story of the widow's two mites in Luke 21:1-4).

➤ **Never Forget: Prayer is Essential!**

- If you don't give yourself to prayer while you are fasting, then you are just dieting.
- Going without food is not spiritual; consecrating yourself to God through prayer and fasting is extremely spiritual.
- While fasting may help your appearance (for the most part) and your health, your motives for fasting must remain spiritual (pure):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____