

Doctrine of Fasting and Prayer

The Cure for Unbelief

1. The disciples asked the Lord why they could not heal a lunatic boy. Jesus said, "*Because of your unbelief ... Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting*" (Matthew 17:14-21).
2. Faith needs prayer for its development and full growth, and prayer needs fasting for the same reason.
3. Fasting has done wonders when used in combination with prayer and faith which is why fasting is a biblical doctrine and not merely a dietary suggestion for good health.
4. To fast means to abstain from normal food for a specific period of time in order to devote that time to God.
5. Fasting humbles the soul before God.
 - *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.*
6. Fasting chastens the soul.
 - *Psalms 69:10 When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach.*
7. Fasting crucifies the appetites and denies them so as to give the entire time to prayer.
 - *2 Samuel 12:16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. 17 And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. 18 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? 19 But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. 20 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. 21 Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? Thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. 22 And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? 23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*

- *Matthew 4:1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. 2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. 3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. 4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. 5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, 6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. 8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; 9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. 10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. 11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*

8. Fasting manifests earnestness before God to the exclusion of all else.

- *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.*

9. Fasting shows obedience; gives the digestive system a rest (Mt. 6:16-18; 9:15; Lk. 5:33); demonstrates the mastery of man over appetites; aids in victory over temptation; helps to attain power over demons; develops faith; crucifies unbelief; and aids in prayer (Mt. 4:1-11; 17:14-21).

10. All believers are supposed to fast, but no regulations or set rules are given as to how long or how often. That is determined by individual desire and needs (Mt. 9:14-15; 1Cor. 7:5; Acts 13:1-5).

11. There are specific occasions when it is wise to fast.

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| • when under chastening | 2 Samuel 12:16-23 |
| • when under judgment | 1 Kings 21:27 |
| • when in need | Ezra 8:21 |
| • when in danger | Esther 4 |
| • when worried | Daniel 6:18 |
| • when in trouble | Acts 27:9,33 |
| • when in a time of spiritual conflict | Matthew 4:1-11 |
| • when there is a desperate need | Matthew 15:22-28 |

Thirty-five Bible Fasts

| Person | Length of Fast | |
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| 1. Ahab | Uncertain | 1 King 21:27-29 |
| 2. Judah | Uncertain | 2 Chronicles 20:1-25 |
| 3. Judah | Uncertain | Ezra 8:21-23 |
| 4. Ezra | Uncertain | Ezra 10:6-17 |
| 5. Nineveh | Uncertain | Jonah 3 |
| 6. Nehemiah | Uncertain | Nehemiah 1:4 - 2:10 |
| 7. Jews | Uncertain | Esther 4:1-3; 9:1-3 |
| 8. David | Uncertain | Psalms 35:13; 69:10; 109:24 |
| 9. John's disciples | Uncertain | Matthew 9:14-15 |
| 10. Anna | Uncertain | Luke 2:37 |
| 11. Church at Antioch | Uncertain | Acts 13:1-5 |
| 12. Paul | Uncertain | Acts 27:9-11 |
| 13. Cornelius | Uncertain | Acts 10 |
| 14. Many churches | Uncertain | Acts 14:23 |
| 15. Paul | Uncertain | 2 Corinthians 6:5; 11:27 |
| 16. David | 1 day | 2 Samuel 3:35 |
| 17. Judah | 1 day | Nehemiah 9:1-4 |
| 18. Judah | 1 day | Jeremiah 36:6 |
| 19. Daniel | 1 day | Daniel 9:3, 20-27 |
| 20. Pharisee | 1 day | Luke 18:9-14 |
| 21. Israel | 1 day | Judges 20:26-35 |

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| 22. Israel | 1 day | 1 Samuel 7:6-14 |
| 23. David | 1 day | 2 Samuel 1:12 |
| 24. Darius | 1 night | Daniel 6:18-24 |
| 25. Esther and Mordecai | 3 days | Esther 4:13 -- Est. 9:3 |
| 26. Many people | 3 days | Matthew 15:32-39 |
| 27. Paul | 3 days | Acts 9:9, 17 |
| 28. David | 7 days | 2 Samuel 12:16-23 |
| 29. Israel | 7 days | 1 Samuel 31:13 |
| 30. Paul and 276 men | 14 days | Acts 27:33-34 |
| 31. Daniel | 21 days | Daniel 10:3-13 |
| 32. Moses | 40 days | Deuteronomy 9:9 10:10 |
| 33. Joshua | 40 days | Exodus 24:13-18; 32:15-17 |
| 34. Elijah | 40 days | 1 Kings 19:7-18 |
| 35. Jesus | 40 days | Matthew 4:1-11 |