

# FASTING

Edited and Adapted from Chris Hodges



## An Overview

True Christianity is about a genuine, successful, personal connection with Jesus. There are times when we deny ourselves in the natural in order to press in spiritually. Fasting **removes distractions** and **gives our spirit man strength** so that we can **make a purer connection** with the Lord.

**Personally**, fasting **clears our focus**, and puts in an appropriate position before God;

**Corporately**, fasting proves our sincerity, and **gives us audience** with the Lord in a way we did not have his attention before.

### Jesus fasted before He began His public ministry.

The details of this fast are recorded in Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, and Luke 1:1-13.

The characteristics of Jesus' fast include:

1. **Absolute physical dependency** upon the supernatural power of God for the ability to remain alive;
2. **Perfect subjugation of the flesh**, including the will and desires of the body in order to face the enemy;
3. **Victory in spiritual warfare** through the ministry of the spoken [confessed] Word;
4. **Angelic ministry** for refreshing and supply.

**Jesus' disciples** were criticized by the Pharisees because they didn't fast while Jesus was alive.

In Luke 5:34-35, Jesus answered their criticism, "Can you make the guests of the Bridegroom fast while He is with them? But the time will come when the Bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast." Jesus was predicting the time that He would be gone from His disciples after His death, resurrection, and ascension back into heaven. He said after that time, His followers would fast. Fasting is a part of the lifestyle of our

staff and leadership of Lighthouse Christian Church and encouraged for every member. We follow the example that Jesus set for us.

**In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, fasting was a common practice.**

It has not been until about the past 100 years that fasting has not been a part of the lifestyle of the church. Believers in the early church fasted as a normal part of their worship and prayer.

Most Christians have never heard or read a single teaching on fasting and will never do it in their life time. However, in order to be a New Testament Christian, fasting should be a part of our lifestyle just like prayer, reading our Bibles, and worship.

### *In Acts 13:2-3*

- ...what happened while the believers worshiped and fasted?  
*"The Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off."*
- God's Holy Spirit acted to give them direction and communicated a course of action to take that He could bless because He had ordained it!
- The Corporate fellowship were given exact instructions as to the will of the Lord, and the means of carrying out that will as they sought His face by fasting and prayer.
- Notice that God chose particular individuals in the context of a company of others.

## FOUR BIBLICAL REASONS TO FAST

### 1. FASTING DURING TRANSITIONS

#### **2 Samuel 1:12:**

*They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.*

Saul, the king of Israel, and his son Jonathan had just died. David, the one called to be the next king of Israel, had long been anointed as king, but had not been installed as king, yet. It was time for him to take the throne.

**David called a fast** during his time of transition. He led the people in humbling themselves before God to help them through this time. There were enemies rising up against them, and they needed God's protection.

The beginning of the year is a transitional time and that is why at Lighthouse we're fasting for 7 days in January. The first part of the year will set the tone for the rest of the year.

**Fasting is an opportunity to show God what is most important to us and establish the fact that He is first in our lives.**

God loves when we give Him the first of everything.

### 2. FASTING IN DESPERATION

#### **Esther 4:16:**

*"Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."*

Esther was a Hebrew girl brought into the Babylonian king's palace to be his queen during the time that God's people were exiled to Babylon from Israel. She found out that there was a plan by one of the king's officials to annihilate her race, the Jews. She knew that the only way to stop it was for her to go directly to the king. However, anyone who tried to approach the king without first being asked to do so would mean certain death. No one

was permitted to speak to the king unless they were invited to come into his presence.

So, she sent word out that she was going to go to the king, at the peril of her life. She knew she could die, and resolved in her heart: "If I perish, I perish." She had a lot of courage. And because she knew her life was on the line, she fasted—but not alone. **She also asked all of her people to fast with her** because they all desperately needed God to move, and give Esther the favor of the king.

When you are in a desperate situation and you need favor, fast. When we fast, we declare that we can't do what we have in our hearts to do unless God helps us. We're not capable.

**It's not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit!**

Healings, deliverances from demonic forces, restoration of marriages can only happen if the Holy Spirit shows up in a situation.

### 3. FASTING FOR THE FUTURE

#### **Nehemiah 1:3-4:**

*They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.*

The exiles were released after seventy years, just as had been prophesied. They were permitted to go back to Israel. Their land was in ruins. Ezra, the scribe, and Nehemiah led them back home. They began rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem.

Ezra's job was to bring back spiritual life to God's people. But the people had completely forgotten God's law and the scriptures. Ezra found the scrolls that contained God's word and read it aloud. The people were astounded at what was read to them. They tore their robes in shame because they had not lived according to God's expectations. Ezra **proclaimed a fast** and asked for God's protection as they prepared for their future. When you're preparing for the future, fast and pray for God's plan.

#### 4. FASTING IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

##### **Matthew 17:21,**

*“However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”*

**The disciples couldn't deliver the boy because they were not spiritually prepared.**

God's people fasted when they needed to defeat the enemy who wanted to keep them from receiving the promises that God had for them. When the devil has his way, there is disaster and calamity and every kind of evil.

But God says when we call on Him, He will answer us. He said He would rescue us if we seek Him and call on His name.

**As believers, we can pray and fast and alter the course of the plans of the devil.**

We call that *spiritual warfare*. God has given us many promises that are conditional – He says, “If you..., then I...” The devil has dominion, and chaos will reign in the world unless God's people pray and fast and humble themselves. We can turn the course of history. History belongs to those who fast and pray.

Daniel was in a desperate situation. In Daniel 9 is recorded his impassioned prayer of desperation to God. He fasted for twenty-one days. **He ate no pleasant food** – he denied himself any food that brought his flesh pleasure. On the last day of the fast, Daniel had a vision of an angel (some believe this vision was actually of Jesus) who gave Daniel a message. He told Daniel that on the first day of the fast he had actually been on his way to answer Daniel's prayer when he was confronted with the “Prince of Persia.” The “Prince of Persia” was a demonic stronghold or principality over that area of the world. Throughout the scriptures demons and demonic strongholds are referred to as princes or principalities.

##### **Ephesians 6:12:**

*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age,*

*against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

##### **Ephesians 2:2:**

*...in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience...*

The angel told Daniel that he had been fighting this principality for 21 days. There had been a struggle in the spirit realm. Paul said we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities. When we fast and pray in spiritual warfare, we wrestle with the enemy. Often it is a real struggle.

**Prayer can become more than communion with God – it's also confrontation with the devil.**

A Lifestyle of prayer and fasting

Prayer with fasting – before we even know what we will encounter – prepares our spirit and soul.

**Fasting is not a spiritual hunger strike.**

- Prayer and fasting isn't starving yourself until you get what you want from God.
- Fasting is not a way to manipulate God into action; God cannot be somehow deceived or forced to action.
- Prayer and fasting is more than having a prayer answered or a need met.

**Prayer and fasting is about becoming spiritually focused to align ourselves with God's will**

Why does fasting “work”? Because: we are triune beings. We are made up of a spirit, a soul, and a body. All other living beings, such as dogs and deer, have only two parts: a body and a soul. Human beings have one part that separates us from all other living beings - our spirit.

We are the only part of God's creation originally formed in His image. When we are saved, our spirit man is made alive and perfect. Our spirit man is the part of us that lives forever. When God looks at us, He sees us (our spirit) as perfect, through the blood of Jesus. However, our spirit is trapped

inside the other two parts – our soul and our body. The soul is our mind, will, and emotions.

### **Our soul and our body are constantly at war with our spirit.**

#### **What does Romans 7:23 tell us about this war?**

*“For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the **members of my body, waging war** against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.”*

The Bible refers to our carnal side, the soul and body, as our flesh. Our flesh wants to sin, but as Christians we are in a process called regeneration. In regeneration, our soul and body come into alignment with our spirit man, and we are transformed into the image of Jesus.

Over time if we study the word, listen to anointed messages, have fellowship with other believers, and seek God through prayer and fasting, our body and soul will begin to look like our spirit man and more like Christ.

The strongest part of our being will be whatever part we feed the most. The strongest part will rule. If we feed the body pornography or any other appetite that it craves, it will overcome the other two parts of our being. Even if the addiction makes us depressed, angry, or fearful in our soul or detached from God in our spirit, our body will call the shots. It wants things that enlarge it – it is willing to provide pain and pleasure to the soul as a means to “train” it to get what it wants. Training (both good and bad) can be defeated – but transformation is divine in origin and not easily reversed. Similarly, when the soul is the strongest, there is no concern for the body or spirit – so much so that the soul man could decide to literally kill the body.

### **When the spirit man is in charge, it’s GLORY!**

Fasting moves us more quickly to a spirit-led life because not only does it build up our spirit man, but it starves the other two at the same time. In fasting we weaken our flesh and strengthen our spirit. If we fast without praying, though, we are simply starving ourselves. There is no spiritual

value in that. We want to be sure we are building up our spirit man. Fasting does not have to be depriving oneself of just food. Fasting is not penance to get God to be impressed with us. That is religion. Fasting is simply denying our flesh so that our spirit man can feast on God.

## HOW TO FAST

### FOCUS ON SPIRITUAL THINGS: SELF-DENIAL

#### **Col 3:1-2**

*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

When you are fasting food, during the time that you would normally eat, read the Bible – feast on God’s word. Substitute your carnal appetite with a spiritual exercise. Pray and listen to worship music. Listen to a good teaching.

### **BUT: Fasting is not the same as “self-denial”**

Some books (and religions) teach that you can “fast” things other than food—TV, movies, games, a *cigar* or sex [Catholics]. None of this amount to a truly **Biblical** fast.

Many of them go to great lengths to teach you how to “fast” food while continuing to “nourish” your body:

*I know the prospect of going without food for an extended period of time may be of concern to some. But there are ways to **ensure that your body is getting the nutrients it needs** so you can remain safe and healthy during your fast.<sup>1</sup>*

### **Staying “healthy” is not the point.**

**Self-denial** while fasting is an important element to include. **Your flesh won’t like this at all**, because **we’re addicted** to the news, movies, food, FakeBook®, and the internet—

### **They’re like spiritual sugar—it may taste good, but it’s really bad for you in the long run!**

<sup>1</sup> Source: [Campus Crusade for Christ on Fasting](#)

Just because you don't "feel" like reading, praying, or worshipping, doesn't mean it's not "authentic." Jesus didn't "feel" like being crucified, but it was an authentic experience all the same!

## AVOIDING FOOD IS THE EXACT POINT

### THE FIRST SIN WAS COMMITTED BY TAKING A BITE OF SOMETHING.

Find the area where your flesh is most alive and **deprive** it in that area. Rather than obey God, we prefer to feed our appetite. We fall into sin at a crossroad where our spirit man is saying, "Don't do it!" but our craving at that moment wins the fight.

When you go without food, after the first day your body will begin to cleanse itself and get rid of toxins. You may have body aches and pains. Many have said that the hardest days of fasting food are the third through the fifth days. It's a "hump" after which fasting should get easier.

Many health gurus fast regularly, and believe that fasting is a **system for staying healthy** and ridding our bodies of toxins.

It's also obvious that when you fast, **you'll lose weight**, and many people need to lose a few.

### But that's not the point.

## WHEN, NOT IF

The point of fasting is none of the physical health benefits mentioned. I'm not selling you something that benefits you; as your Pastor, *I'm calling you to **obedience unto God***, who alone will judge you for your response to His commands!

### Mat 6:17

*"But you, **when you fast**, anoint your head and wash your face..."*

### Mat 6:18

*"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."*

## TYPES OF FASTS:

### A SUPERNATURAL FAST

This is the **MOST EXTREME FAST**; and extended periods of this type of fast must only be done at the **EXACT DIRECTION** of the Holy Spirit.

It is strongly advised that the believer gain **confirmation** of this direction from the Lord by **conferring with their Pastor**.

Because this fast requires **going without food or water for more than three days**, it is not recommended without extremely clear direction from God.

**This type of fast is physically impossible** because we can't live without water for more than a few days. This is intended to give us a picture of the true nature of fasting: utter dependence upon God as our life-source.

The only two people in the Bible who did this type of fast were **Jesus** (Luke 4:2) and **Moses** (Deut. 9:18) who each fasted for 40 days; and Moses actually fasted for 80 days in a row.

### A TOTAL FAST

This is **COMPLETELY** going without food and drinking **ONLY WATER**.

When one goes on a total food fast, one must take care to **drink twice the amount of water** than one would normally drink to avoid dehydration.

### A NON-TOTAL FAST

**One fasts solid foods, or limited meals.**

One drinks primarily juices, or eats limited amounts of meals.

I recommend this type of fast for those who have never done one before.

### THE DANIEL FAST

**This is a modified non-total fast.**

This is fasting anything "pleasant." It is essentially taking the "enjoyment" out of eating; it reduces the act to simple sustenance.

A typical plan might be to eat only the evening meal and/or fasting sweets.

**Don't fast if you have *specific medical* reasons that prohibit you from doing so. Consult your physician and be intelligent about fasting.**

A study on fasting is available by the late **Dr. Bill Bright**. You can find this study at the following website: [www.billbright.com/howtofast](http://www.billbright.com/howtofast).

And, if you want to learn how to trick God into thinking you're fasting when you're not, check out this site: <http://danielfast.wordpress.com/daniel-fast-food-list/>.

FIVE THINGS TO PRAY when you fast

### 1. DECLARE YOUR DEPENDENCE ON GOD

The key word is **reliance** (but *honesty* also comes to mind in light of the culturally confusing options).

We fast because we *need* God.

Fasting does not make us spiritually elite. We're not saying we're better because we fast. If fasting is done with a pure heart, the thought of fasting to prove our spirituality would be abhorrent. In fact, Isaiah rebuked a generation that observed fasting in regular fashion because their hearts were wrong (Isaiah 58.3-7).

### 2. ASK FOR FORGIVENESS

**Humility** and brokenness are the keys to getting God's attention. True humility says, "God, I'm in this situation, and I'm not even going to try to suggest an answer. Whatever you say, I'll accept." A broken and contrite spirit God will not despise. He is very attracted to anyone who cries out to Him for help.

### 3. CRY OUT FOR THE GREAT COMMISSION

This is what we live for. We have a short life here on earth to put a dent in the devil's kingdom and populate heaven.

### 4. CULTIVATE GOD'S PRESENCE IN YOUR LIFE

Again, we can't stress enough -the single most important commodity that we can have in life is His

presence. Ask for more anointing, more power, more love.

### 5. BRING YOUR NEEDS BEFORE GOD

Assignment:

- Read Isaiah 58:2-10.

*"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.'"*