

We tend to think of fasting as going without food. But we can fast from anything. If we love music and decide to miss a concert in order to spend time with God, that is fasting. It is helpful to think of the parallel of human friendship. When friends need to be together, they will cancel all other activities in order to make that possible.

There's nothing magical about fasting. It's just one way of telling God that your priority at that moment is to be alone with him, sorting out whatever is necessary, and you have cancelled the meal, party, concert, or whatever else you had planned to do in order to fulfill that priority.

—James I. Packer, author

## *Biblical Examples of Fasting*

The nation of Israel fasted:

*“A vast army is coming against you from Edom ...  
Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord,  
and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah  
came together to seek help from the Lord” –2 Chronicles 20:3*

King David fasted:

*“Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled  
myself with fasting” –David, Psalm 35:13*

The prophet Daniel fasted:

*“I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures ... that the desolation  
of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned to  
the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition,  
in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.” –Daniel 9:3*

Jesus fasted:

*“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by  
the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry”  
–Matthew 4:1-2*

The apostle Paul fasted:

*“Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church  
and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord”  
–Acts 14:23*

## *Mourning*

Fasting sometimes indicated mourning. For example, when Nehemiah learned that the wall of Jerusalem was still broken down, he wept. Then for several days he “mourned and fasted and prayed”. —Nehemiah 1:4

In the same way, when King Xerxes made an edict that all Jews in the country would be put to death, “there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing.” —Esther 4:3

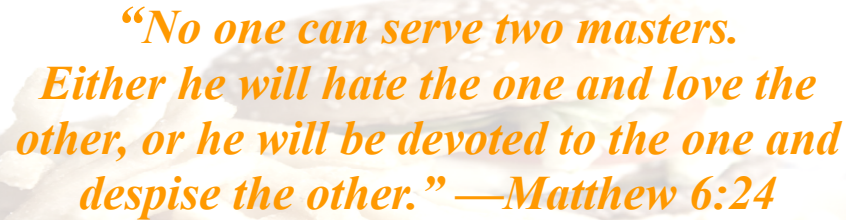
## *Humbling*

Fasting in the sense of mourning extends to include self-humbling. Ezra said, “I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey.” —Ezra 8:21

This self-humbling also includes confession, mourning over our sin and turning back to God. God said to the people of the prophet Joel’s day, “Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” —Joel 2:12

## *Fasting Involves Liberation*

Fasting is a discipline. One goal of fasting is liberation, the breaking of habits or even addictions that enslave us.



*“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.” —Matthew 6:24*

*“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing.”  
—John 6:63*

*Fasting to me is a blessing. It's an act of surrender and submission to the Lord and his Word. I receive more than I give. I surrender my will for his, my way for his. Fasting brings me closer to God and his Word. He renews my mind and thoughts. He gives me light when I'm in darkness. The great exchange goes on in a fast. I fast my will for his, my way for his, my plans for his. The benefits are great. Fasting helps diminish me and increase him. Fasting is about him not me. The Word is the plumb line to life in him. Holiness, simply put, is the same mindset as Jesus. Fasting helps me obtain the Father's will.*

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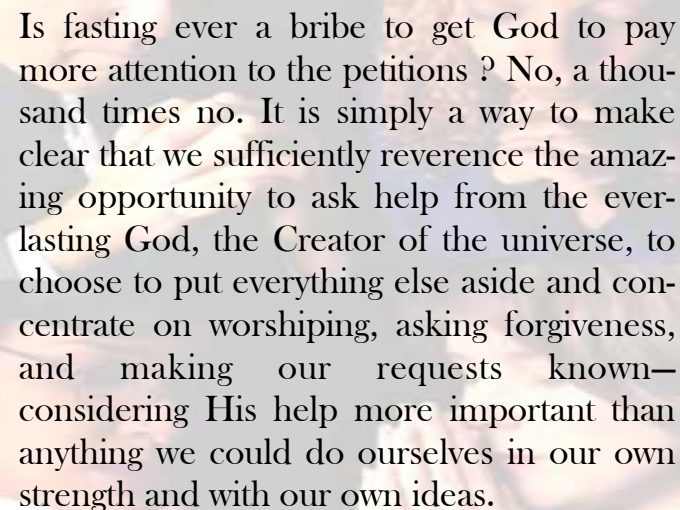
## *Fasting is Connected with Prayer*

Fasting is often connected with prayer.

*“The Israelites ... fasted that day until evening and ... the Israelites inquired of the Lord.” –Judges 20:26-27*

“Prayer is reaching out after the unseen; fasting is letting go of all that is seen and temporal. Fasting helps express, deepen, confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God.” –Andrew Murray, author

*“So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.” –Ezra 8:23*



Is fasting ever a bribe to get God to pay more attention to the petitions? No, a thousand times no. It is simply a way to make clear that we sufficiently reverence the amazing opportunity to ask help from the everlasting God, the Creator of the universe, to choose to put everything else aside and concentrate on worshiping, asking forgiveness, and making our requests known—considering His help more important than anything we could do ourselves in our own strength and with our own ideas.

—Edith Schaeffer, author

## *Fasting is God-Centered*

Fasting is to be focused on God; it is not something to get us attention or make us look more spiritual.

*“When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted?”  
—Zechariah 7:5*



“And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”  
—Matthew 6:16-18 (New Living Translation)

## *Fast Expectantly*

*Fasting is a way that we draw nearer to God. We give up something;, such as food, television, or caffeine. During the time that we would normally partake in the activity we are giving up we fast and we spend that time with God. For example, when we fast lunch, we spend our lunchtime praying and listening to God. The fasting experience is something that will forever change your life! In the beginning it may seem like the only thing you are getting is hungry, but stay with it. You will begin to feel and see His Glory in your life in ways you have not previously known.*

*Enter into a time of fasting with the respect that it deserves. You are drawing nearer to The Most High! He will change your life. Throughout the entire process, keep an attitude of expectation. Expect to hear God's voice in your life. Expect to have burdens removed. Expect to have strongholds destroyed. Expect for God to move in a unique way in your unique situation!*

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## *Fasting from Technology*

Most Americans, including children, spend at least nine hours a day watching TV, surfing the web, or talking on their cell phone. Perhaps God would lead you to fast from these things for a day. Shut down your computer, turn off your cell phone, unplug your iPod, hide your Blackberry, and click off the television. Who knows, you may hear from God in ways you never have before!

### *Suggestions for Fasting and Feasting:*

- *Fast from discontent; feast on thankfulness.*
- *Fast from worry; feast on trust.*
- *Fast from anger; feast on patience.*
- *Fast from self-concern; feast on compassion for others.*
- *Fast from unrelenting pressures; feast on unceasing prayers.*
- *Fast from bitterness; feast on forgiveness.*
- *Fast from discouragement, feast on hope.*
- *Fast from media hype, feast on the honesty of the Bible.*
- *Fast from idle gossip; feast on purposeful silence.*
- *Fast from problems that overwhelm; feast on prayer that undergirds.*

—Anonymous