



THE PRAYER CLOSET

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRAYER CLOSET MINISTRIES

JANUARY, 1999

FASTING

The subject of fasting creates a multitude of reactions. Some people react in unbelief. They do not believe that fasting is something for modern Christians. In their eyes, it is foolish for any believer to fast. Others react in indifference. It is something that a believer can do or not do; it really has no practical purpose or power. Theirs is a "take it or leave it" attitude. Some are shocked by the subject. The very thought of missing a meal or doing without food sends them into panic. This is unthinkable to them. And, there are those who believe it is only for "religious fanatics."

In recent years, the subject of fasting has been rediscovered. There had only been one major work wrote on this subject in over one hundred years until this rediscovery. Yet, this is a subject that is either ignored or dismissed by most Christians. In the modern church, fasting is looked at as a strange event. Why has fasting been ignored or dismissed by the modern church?

First, there is widespread ignorance concerning the biblical teaching about fasting. There has been very little preaching and teaching on this subject, if at all. The pulpits of this nation have been silent concerning fasting. *Second, the dominance of a "feel good" religion has been a hindrance to fasting.* Fasting calls for humility and self-denial. This cuts against the grain of the commitment of many church members. *Third, many church members have made convenience more important than commitment.* People desire to follow Christ and serve Him when it is convenient for them. They do not want to be bothered by the subject of fasting. It does not fit their desires nor their schedule. *Finally, there is a greater concern for the things of the world than the things of God.* Fasting causes a person to focus sharply on the things of God. Unfortunately, this is not the interest of many who profess the name of Jesus Christ.

This may sound harsh to you. It may sound as a grim evaluation of the modern church in America. Yet, the Word of God through the prophet Amos still ring true and clear, "**Woe to you who are at ease in Zion**" (Amos 6:1). A people who are proud and have a religion of convenience cannot expect the blessing of God. God does not bless pride; He blesses humility (1 Peter 5:5). Jesus Christ does not call His people to convenience but to self denial (Mark 8:34). Humility and self-denial are the heart of fasting.

Dr. Kevin Meador, 595 Stratton Road, Decatur, MS 39327 (601) 635-2180
EMAIL - ewillia%newton@k12.ms.us

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* is devoted to the subject of fasting. Both the biblical and practical issues concerning fasting will be examined. I want to challenge you to prayerfully consider the subject of fasting. If you are already fasting, use this issue to strengthen and motivate you in your fasting. If you have fasted but have not for a long period of time, use this issue to rekindle the desire to fast and seek God. If you have never fasted, please consider practice. It will provide a pathway to a deeper experience of the presence and power of God in your life.

What Is Fasting?

The most basic definition of fasting is that it is the act of abstaining from food for a spiritual purpose or for a spiritual goal. The word for “fasting” in the Old Testament means “to cover the mouth.” The word for fasting in the New Testament means literally “not to eat.” To fast is to abstain from feeding the body in order to focus on feeding the spirit by seeking God. It is turning away from the natural in order to receive the supernatural. Eating is the most natural thing that a person does. Fasting is interrupting this so that one can focus on God, His Word, and His will.

Fasting is pulling out of the rat-race of life in order to have a special time of focusing on God through prayer. The Bible connects prayer and fasting. Fasting is done in order to intensify prayer. In fasting, a person puts aside the desires of the flesh in order to wholeheartedly seek God in prayer. This provides a deeper experience of the presence and power of God. **During a fast, it is not that God hears better, but that you listen better.**

Should A Christian Fast?

Through the years, I have encountered individuals who believed that fasting is not for modern Christians. The question is: Should a Christian fast? At this point, we must turn to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. In **Matthew 6**, the Lord Jesus Christ refers to giving, fasting, and praying. Notice what Jesus says about each of these subjects:

v.2-*When you give*

v.5-*When you pray*

v.16-*When you fast*

The Lord Jesus Christ did not say “If you give,” or “If you pray,” or “If you fast.” He is not giving an option to His people. You cannot pick and choose what you want and leave off what you do not want. Our Lord Jesus Christ expects us to fast as much as He expects us to pray and to give. The church today emphasizes giving and praying. But, Jesus emphasizes giving, praying, and fasting.

Fasting is not just for a select few. It is not something just for “super-saints.” It is something that should be a part of every Christian’s life. Just as Christians need to pray and give, they also need to fast. Fasting is not obsolete, outdated, or something that “fanatics” do. It is a spiritual exercise that needs to characterize the lives of those who follow Christ.

In **Mark 2:18-20**, the Lord Jesus Christ is confronted by the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees. They were fasting and wanted to know why Christ's disciples were not fasting. Jesus uses a common event in that day to explain why His disciples were not fasting like they were. He uses the illustration of a wedding. Before the wedding ceremony, there was great feasting and rejoicing. Jesus compares Himself to a "bridegroom" and His disciples as the "friends of the bridegroom." They were rejoicing, eating, and drinking. Yet, there would come a day when the bridegroom would be gone. This refers to the time when the wedding ceremony was finished and the bridegroom left. The feasting and the celebrating would then be over. Christ states that His disciples would fast when the "bridegroom" was gone. He is referring to His death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven. He is clearly stating that the time of fasting is when He returns to the Father. The time for fasting is after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. This is the time in which we live. Fasting is not obsolete!

The words of Jesus Christ indicate that fasting was to be practiced by Christians after He returned to the Father. The early church practiced fasting. In fact, they fasted on a regular basis. In **Acts 13:1-3**, the church at Antioch fasted before the Lord. In **1 Corinthians 7:5**, the apostle Paul calls on husbands and wives to give themselves to a time of prayer and fasting. In **2 Corinthians 6:5**, Paul is discussing what he had done as an apostle. In this list, he mentions fasting. It was the common practice of Christians to fast two days a week, Wednesday and Friday. Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis (315 A.D.), wrote, "*Who does not know that the fast of the fourth and sixth days of the week are observed by Christians throughout the world?*"

In **Matthew 6**, the Lord Jesus Christ is dealing with the wrong way to fast. He is not teaching that fasting should be forsaken. He is declaring the right way to fast. By giving us instructions on what to do and what not to do when we fast, He simply assumes that we will fast. This is something that should be practiced by Christians. It is as important as prayer and giving.

What Fasting Is Not

Whenever fasting is taught or preached, there are always going to be wrong ideas about its nature and practice. These wrong ideas are often used to declare that fasting is not for Christians. You should not allow false ideas about fasting keep you from this. It is important that you understand what fasting is not.

First, fasting is not a way that you earn or merit favor from God. Fasting does bring a person into a right relationship with God nor does it earn His favor or forgiveness. The only way to be made right with God and forgiven is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no religious ritual that a person can practice that will earn him or her a right standing with God. People receive the favor and forgiveness of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (**Romans 3:24-28**).

Second, fasting should not be used as a substitute for repentance and godly living. Fasting is a powerful spiritual discipline. God honors and blesses true fasting. However, it is not a substitute for repenting of one's sins and striving to live a holy life. Fasting without the pursuit of holiness is an abomination to God. It does not substitute for the daily striving to live a godly holy life.

Finally, fasting is not an attempt to manipulate God to do our will. Fasting does not force God to do your will. It should not be used as a way to get God to do what you want. It is the opportunity to humble yourself before God in order to lay out your requests to Him and seek for His will in those matters. God is not a vending machine where if we put so much in, we will get so much back from Him. Fasting is not the manipulation of God.

Why Is Fasting So Powerful?

Fasting is a powerful spiritual discipline because of its connection to three things. These are three things that God loves and wants to see produced in His people. Because of its intimate connection with these three things, God blesses and honors fasting. First, fasting and humility are intimately connected. Humility is at the heart of fasting. Fasting creates the humility or brokenness that God desires to see in His people (**2 Chronicles 20:3, 12**). God wants this type of broken, humble dependence on Him. Fasting will create this in a person (**Ezra 8:21**).

Second, fasting is intimately connected to self-denial. In **Psalm 35:13**, David declares that he had humbled himself through fasting. The word for “humbled” carries the idea of dying or putting to death. He declares that he was putting his flesh to death through fasting. Fasting enables the believer to die to self and put self to death. This is the life that pleases God. God does not want a people who are indulgent and self-seeking. God warned His people that giving in to the body’s every craving would make them sluggish and apathetic when it came to spiritual matters (**Deuteronomy 8:10-11**). The same is true today. God desires a people who will put the spirit over the body, the things of God over the desires of the flesh. Fasting enables a believer to do this. It is intimately connected to denying and dying to one’s self.

Finally, fasting is intimately connected with prayer. As you study the Scriptures concerning fasting, you will often find prayer and fasting joined together. There is something about fasting that sharpens the edge of our prayers and gives passion to our praying. When Ezra was about to lead a small group of exiles back to Jerusalem, he proclaimed a fast to help them in their praying for a safe journey. They were going to face many dangers on a nine hundred mile trip without any military protection. This was no ordinary matter to be brought before God in prayer. They fasted to strengthen their praying to God. God heard them and answered their prayer (**Ezra 8:23**).

Fasting does not change God’s hearing but it does strengthen and change our praying. It gives an urgency to our praying. It causes the one fasting to be bold in his or her pleading. As Arthur Wallis wrote in *God’s Chosen Fast*, “**The man who prays with fasting is giving heaven notice that he is truly earnest. . . . Not only so he is expressing his earnestness in a divinely appointed way. He is using a means that God has chosen to make his voice heard on high (p.42).**” God is always pleased to hear the prayers of His people. Yet, He is also pleased when we choose to strengthen our prayers in the way that He has appointed. That way that He has appointed is fasting. This is why fasting is so powerful.

What Reasons Should Lead A Person To Fast?

There are numerous reasons why a believer should fast. Whenever you fast, you must have a spiritual purpose in mind. There has to be a spiritual purpose or goal fixed in your mind when you fast. If you do not have this, your fast will be of no value. It will also be a miserable, self-centered experience. The Bible reveals some purposes for fasting. These can be applied to your particular situation. Yet, these are the basic purposes revealed in the Scripture.

To humble yourself before God: This is a powerful way to humble yourself before God. It is a physical expression of how hopeless you are and how much you need God (**Ezra 8:21; 1 Kings 21:27-29; Psalm 35:13**);

To strengthen prayer: Fasting is one of the best friends that you can introduce to your prayer life. Fasting is God's appointed way of strengthening and intensifying your prayers. As Wesley Duewel writes, "Like every other God-ordained religious practice, fasting can be misused or abused . . . But fasting is still God's chosen way to deepen and strengthen prayer. You will be the poorer spiritually and your prayer life will never be what God wants it to be until you practice the privilege of fasting." (**Ezra 8:23**);

To seek God's guidance: Through fasting, a person can more clearly discern the will of God. The Bible presents two examples of this. The first example is in **Judges 20**. The eleven tribes of Israel were preparing for war against the tribe of Benjamin. The soldiers were gathered at Gibeah because of a shocking sin that had been committed by the men of that city (**Judges 19:22-30**). They sought the Lord before going into battle, and even though they outnumbered the Benjamites fifteen to one, they lost the battle. The next day they sought the Lord with prayers and tears and still lost the battle with thousands of casualties. On the third day, they not only sought guidance with prayers and tears but also with fasting until the evening (**20:26**). When they did this, the Lord made His will plain to them (**20:28**). It is only after they sought Him with fasting that the Lord gave the victory. Another example of this is **Acts 14:23**. Before Paul and Barnabas would appoint elders in the churches that they founded, they prayed with fasting in order to receive God's guidance. Fasting does not guarantee the certainty of ensuring guidance from God. However, when it is rightly practiced, it does make the person more receptive to God who loves to guide us;

To express grief to God: Fasting is a way to express the depth of our grief to God. Three of the first four references in the Bible to fasting connect it with an expression of grief. The grief experienced on these occasions was due to death: the reaction of the eleven tribes to the deaths of forty-thousand soldiers of Israel (**Judges 20:26**); the reaction of the men of Jabesh Gilead to the death of Saul (**1 Samuel 31:13**); and the reaction of David and his men to the death of Saul (**2 Samuel 1:11-12**). Fasting can show our grief over our sin. We are not required to pay for our sins because we cannot do this and because Christ had done this once for all (**1 Peter 3:18**). When a person confesses his or her sin to God, God is faithful and just to cleanse a person of sin and to forgive all unrighteousness (**1 John 1:9**). Fasting does not secure cleansing and forgiveness; this is done by confession and repentance. However, there are times when our grief over sin is so much that fasting should accompany our confession and repentance. At times like this, words do not seem to be enough. Fasting can be a voluntary, heartfelt part of confession. Fasting can also show our grief to God over the sins of others in your circle, your church, your community, or your country. When jealous King Saul attempted to murder the innocent David, the response of Saul's son, Jonathan, was to fast (**1 Samuel 20:34**). When you are grieved over the sin of someone you know and love, fasting is an appropriate response to show your grief to God. This will add power to your prayers for that person. Some may ask, "You can express your grief in prayer. And, God knows your heart. Why fast about it?" As stated earlier, sometimes words are not enough. There are times that the grief is so real and so deep that fasting is the only way to truly express its depth to God. God will be pleased to honor and bless this;

To seek deliverance or protection: One of the most common fasts in biblical times was a fast to seek God's deliverance from an enemy or a circumstance. Fasting, rather than fleshly, worldly attempts, should be our first line of defense against persecution. Our first response when persecuted is to strike

back with anger, gossip, counteraccusations, verbal attacks, and other worldly tactics. Yet, first and foremost, our appeal should be to God for protection and deliverance. Fasting to seek God's protection or deliverance can be done both corporately and individually (**2 Chronicles 20:3-4; Esther 4:16; Psalm 109:24**);

To express repentance and return to God: Fasting for this purpose is similar to fasting for the purpose of expressing grief. Yet, fasting can represent more than just grief over sin. It can be the outward expression of a real change that has taken place in the individual. Fasting can reveal that one is turning away from sin and is returning to God with a renewed commitment and fresh obedience to His Word (**1 Samuel 7:6; Joel 2:12; Jonah 3:5-8**);

To express concern for the work of God: Fasting can be done in order to express to God your concern for His work in your church, your area, or your country. A person could fast and pray to see a mighty move of God in a church, to see a church work through its problems, or to call on God to extend and make fruitful the ministry of the church. Examples of this are **Nehemiah 1:3-4** and **Daniel 9:1-3**;

To minister to the needs of others: In **Isaiah 58:6-7**, we have the most extensive passage in the Scripture dealing exclusively with fasting. In this chapter, God emphasizes fasting for the purpose of meeting the needs of others. The people addressed in this section had complained to the Lord that they had humbled themselves before the Lord and had fasted, yet God had not answered. The reason that He had not heard them was their hypocrisy. They were living in contrast to their praying and fasting (**58:3-4**). God is not going to bless fasting if a person disregards the needs of others. Spiritual disciplines like fasting do not mean anything if one is not striving to meet the needs of others. Fasting without ministering to the needs of others is an abomination to God. The kind of fasting that pleases God is the one that results in concern for others and not just for ourselves. Fast for one meal or one day and use that time to minister to someone. Take the time that you would spend eating in order to encourage or minister to someone. Fast for a couple of meals and use the money that you would have used in buying food to give to a needy person or a worthy ministry. The purpose in this type of fast is to take the time or the money you would have normally expended on the meal(s) and dedicated it to ministering to someone;

To overcome temptation and to yield yourself to God: Fasting can be a means to enabling a believer to overcome sin and dedicate himself or herself to the Father in a fresh commitment. The most famous example of fasting that is found in Scripture is probably the fast of Jesus in **Matthew 4:1-11**. Matthew records that Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights. This prolonged fast provided Him with the spiritual strength that He needed to face the onslaught of Satan's temptation, the strongest He would face until Gethsemane. When you anticipate temptation, fasting can give you the strength that you need to face the temptation. Fasting to overcome temptation is a Christlike response. Fasting can also give a believer the strength and help to deal with and root out a habitual sin. When a believer yields to a particular sin, it can get deeply rooted in his or her life. This habitual sin will not be easily rooted out. Fasting is a means of receiving more grace and power from God to deal with this sin (**Matthew 17:21; Isaiah 58:6; Acts 9:9**);

To express love and worship to God: Fasting can be an act of sheer devotion to God. In three verses, Luke describes an unforgettable woman by the name of Anna. This woman was only married seven years when she became a widow. After this, she devoted herself to prayer and fasting in the temple. She spent over a century of her life worshipping God through prayer and fasting (**Luke 2:37**). By fasting, you are telling God that you love Him more than food. You are declaring to Him that He is more

important to you than food. This honors God and is a form of intense worship. It also reveals that your stomach is not your god as is true of the enemies of the cross of Christ (**Philippians 3:19**). You can fast solely for the purpose of worshipping God and declaring to Him how much you love Him. You can do this through an extended fast. You can also skip meals and use that time to adore and worship Him. You can also use fasting to prepare for the Lord's Supper. Through repentance, humility, and fasting, you can focus supremely on the Lord Jesus Christ as you take the Lord's Supper.

How Should A Believer Fast?

In order to carry out a fast, there are certain steps that you need to take. The first step is to determine the purpose of your fast. You must begin with the question: "Why am I fasting?" Ask the Holy Spirit to give you help in determining the purpose of your fast. Fasting must always have a spiritual purpose. You must be seeking God for some spiritual purpose. God will not honor or bless a fast if it is self-centered. It must be something that will bring Him glory and will extend His work in the lives of people. You need to have this purpose firmly fixed in your mind in order to deal with the hunger pains. Every hunger pain should drive you to God. The hunger should cause you to focus on what you're seeking God about in the fast. Thoughts of food must prompt thoughts of God. Food should not be allowed to distract you but actually remind you of your purpose.

When you have established your purpose, you then need to determine the kind of fast you will undertake and how long it will last. The Bible reveals that God's people have fasted in a variety of ways. Although the Bible does not give labels to these fasts, we use the following terms to describe these:

(1) **Absolute**-In this fast, the person abstains from water and food for a period of time. The person does not take any water, juice, or food. When a person undertakes this kind of fast, extreme caution should be used. This type of fast should be entered into only after intense prayer. It should never last more than 2 to 3 days (**Ezra 10:6; Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9**);

(2) **Juice**-In this fast, a person does not eat any food but drinks only water and juices. This is the most common kind of fast observed by Christians. The believer does not eat any food, but is allowed water and fruit juices (**Matthew 4:2; Luke 4:2**);

(3) **Partial**-In this fast, the food that the believer eats is limited. This kind of fast is illustrated in **Daniel 1:12**. For ten days Daniel and his three other Jewish young men only had vegetables to eat and water to drink. This type of fast calls for abstaining from rich foods and delicacies. It calls for taking only small portions of fresh vegetables, fruit, water, and juices.

In the Bible, there is no prescribed time for the length of a fast. Jesus does not give any command regarding how often or how long we should fast. This is up to you and the leadership of the Holy Spirit. You must pray and determine the length of your fast. It is important to remember that you must start by building your "fasting muscles." One cannot attempt a forty-day fast if you have never fasted. You need to begin by starting with skipping a meal and then moving from there. The Bible records fasts of various length:

One day or part of a day fast-Judges 20:26; 1 Samuel 7:6; 2 Samuel 1:12, 3:35; Nehemiah 9:1; Jeremiah 36:6;

One night fast-Daniel 6:18-24;

Three day fasts-Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9;

Seven day fasts-1 Samuel 31:13; 2 Samuel 12:16-23;

A fourteen-day fast-Acts 27:33-34;

Forty-day fasts-Deuteronomy 9:9; 1 Kings 19:8; Matthew 4:2;

Fasts of unspecified length-Matthew 9:14; Luke 2:37; Acts 13:2; 14:2-3

The length of your fast can only be determined by prayer and following the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Be open to follow His leadership in this matter.

Once these things are determined, you need to make preparation for the fast. This preparation involves both physical and spiritual matters. You need to make physical preparation for the fast. Your body needs to be prepared to go through a fast. Fasting requires some reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision. Physical preparation makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so that you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer. The following are some steps that you need to take in order to prepare your body for this time of intense seeking after the Lord:

- (1) Do not rush into your fast;
- (2) Eat smaller meals before beginning a fast;
- (3) Avoid high-fat and sugary foods;
- (4) Eat raw fruit and vegetables for two days before starting a fast.

You must also prepare yourself spiritually. Fasting is an intense time of seeking the Lord. There must be spiritual preparation for this. The following are some steps that you can take to prepare yourself spiritually in order to fast:

- (1) Ask God to help you make a detailed list of your sins. Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness for these (**1 John 1:9**);
- (2) Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended and forgive all those who have hurt you (**Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4, 17:3, 4**). Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you;
- (3) Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 5:18**);
- (4) Plead with God to show you any areas of your life that you are trying to control. Confess this as sin to God and call on Him to enable you to surrender this to Him (**Romans 12:1,2**);
- (5) Meditate on the character of God (**Psalms 48:9-10; 103:1-8, 11-13**);
- (6) Firmly fix in your mind the spiritual purpose(s) for your fast.

By making these preparations, it will enable you to intensely seek God and His will for the reason that you are fasting.

What Should Be Done During A Fast?

During a fast, the most important thing that you can do is to pray. Fasting is an intense time of seeking God. Its purpose is to seek Him, hear from Him, and experience His presence and power in a fresh way. The way that you do this is through prayer. During your fast, you need to spend as much time as possible in prayer. Make every effort possible to spend as much time in His presence through prayer. Spend time adoring Him, confessing your sin to Him, and thanking Him. Plead with Him about the requests that you are fasting over.

You also need to read and meditate on the Word of God. This is the primary way that God will speak to you and deal with you. Ask God to lead you to a section of Scripture or a particular book of the Bible. When you determine this, you need to call on God to teach you what you need to see from the Scripture. Ask Him to show you what changes you need to make in your life. Read through this section of Scripture or the book as much as possible. Meditate on it, considering what God is saying to you through His Word during this fast.

During your fast, you should consider keeping a "fasting journal." In this journal, you need to record what you learn from the Scripture, the insights that God has given to you, and anything that God impresses on your heart. This is your journal. Write down what you're feeling and what is happening during the fast. This will enable you to see God at work in your life during the fast. It will also provide valuable lessons for the future when you fast again.

In connection with this, you might want to consider using the "Fasting Evaluation Sheet." This is a worksheet that I have developed to help me evaluate my fasts. The first area of the worksheet is "**Prayer Concerns During Fasting.**" In this area, you can list the needs or the people and their problem(s) that your fast concerns. Write down what your purpose is in this fast in this section. The second section is "**Evaluation Of Answer.**" In this section, you need to write down what the Lord impresses on your heart about this particular need or person. The answers could be one of the following:

Yes-God is going to answer this request or He has answered this request;

No-God is not going to answer this request. He has not answered and is not giving you any peace about this situation;

Wait, God Is At Work-It could be that the timing is not right for God's answer to this request. God may be calling on you to persevere in prayer and faith concerning this request;

Change Request-This answer is closely connected to "No." God may be calling you to change your request, to refine it and bring it more in line with His will. As you pray and fast, God may lead you to go in a different direction with the request. He may call on you to change it so that it is more in line with His will;

Unsure, Need More Leadership-You can use this when you have a request that you do not have clear leadership about from the Lord. This is a request that you need to continue to pray about, fast over again, and call on the Lord to clarify His leadership concerning this request.

The final section is "**Changes Made Concerning Prayer Concerns.**" This section gives you the opportunity to write down the changes that the Lord may lead you to make in your prayers concerning this situation. Often, when you are made more sensitive to the Lord's leadership through fasting, he may lead you to pray in a different direction. Write these changes down and seek Him with all your heart. This worksheet is included in this issue of *The Prayer Closet*. You can make copies of this sheet, put it on pages in your notebook, or adapt to your particular needs or practices.

A final thing that you may want to consider doing is asking God with whom you can share this experience of fasting. This is not something that you want to spread or boast about among people. This

would be to fall into the trap of the Pharisees (**Matthew 6:16**). Yet, you can select a few believers with whom you can share your fasting experience and what God taught you and did to and for you during the fast. The purpose for this is to encourage and to stir other believers up to good works. Pray that God will reveal someone to you that you can encourage and stir up through your experience of fasting.

During your time of fasting, you must remember and rely on the promise of Jesus Christ during your fast. In **Matthew 6:18**, Christ promises that the Father will hear and will respond when we fast with right motives and seek Him in humility and repentance. This is a sure promise of the Lord Jesus Christ and you must receive it by faith. **God will bless a biblical fast by any of His children!** Trust that God will hear you and respond to you when you fast. God will not turn away any humble, sincere seeker empty-handed.

How Should A Fast Be Ended?

A fast should be broken gradually. When a fast is over, it is not the time to go to your favorite fast-food restaurant and gorge yourself. This will be dangerous to your health and will take away from the benefits of your fast. When the designated time for fasting is finished, gradually work your way back to eating solid foods. Start back with light foods like soup, fruit, and vegetables. Try using several smaller meals or snacks before getting back to your regular eating habits.

You also need to celebrate. Thank God and rejoice that He has allowed you to have this time with Him. Celebrate what God has done for you during the fast. Rejoice over the insights that He has given to you and the things that He has shown to you. Worship and adore God because He has allowed you the privilege to intensely seek Him during a period of fasting.

What Should You Do If You Fail?

There are times when a believer fails to complete a fast. This may be due to numerous factors: attempting to fast too long when he or she is not ready, failing to prepare for the fast, or he or she must develop his or her "fasting muscles" and resolve. If you fail, do not give up on fasting. Work at preparing yourself. Start with several fasts of short periods of time and gradually increase the time of the fasts. Do not allow the devil to defeat you in this area due to this. God can and will help you to fast.

When I have taught on this subject, I will usually have a person come to me or write me and say that they fasted and nothing happened. The person then declares that he or she will not fast anymore because "it doesn't work." It must be remembered that fasting is done for the purpose of seeking the Lord. It is not attempt to manipulate the Lord. It is a time in which you humble yourself before the Lord with a sensitive spirit. It is a time when you lay out your requests to Him, sensitive to what He wants.

What If A Person Cannot Fast?

There are people who cannot fast due to health reasons. This person wonders, "If I can't fast, what can I do?" The primary method of fasting is abstaining from food. Yet, fasting can have a broader meaning. This is the approach that Richard Foster takes when he defines fasting as "the voluntary denial of a normal function for the sake of intensely spiritual activity. Marten-Lloyd Jones adds, "Fasting should be made to include abstinence from anything that is legitimate in and of itself for the sake of some spiritual purpose." For those who cannot abstain from food, this may be a way of intensely seeking the Lord. There are many normal things that a person does that can be denied in order to seek the Lord. If you are not able to abstain from food, you need to consider and pray about what you can abstain from in order to seek the Lord. Some of the things that you might consider are abstaining from involvement with people, watching television or listening to the radio, abstaining from sleep, or using the telephone, computer.

What Will You Do?

Will you begin to fast? Will you repent of your fear of fasting? Will you turn away from your indulgence? People will go without meals due to shopping, working, recreating, or some other worldly pursuit. Will you go without food for the purpose of worshipping and seeking the Lord? Will you deny yourself for the release of His power and purpose in your life?

If you have any questions or need additional information concerning FASTING, please write Dr. Kevin Meador at 595 Stratton Road, Decatur, MS 39327, email - ewillia%newton@k12.ms.us or phone him at (601) 635-2180.

The Beloved Unbeliever Network is a network of intercessors who pray for believers who have spouses that are not Christians. This network of intercessors pray daily for believers who are in this situation. These intercessors have been trained and are committed to praying for believers who find themselves in this type of marriage. If you would like to be added to this prayer list or if you know of someone who is in the situation and would like to place them on this prayer list, please contact Dr. Kevin Meador. Please provide the following information:

Name of the family members
Church affiliation
Any special requests

Any information that is submitted will be kept in strict confidence and the privacy of the individuals will be protected.



THE PRAYER CLOSET
Dr. Kevin Meador
595 Stratton Road
Decatur, MS 39327