

AWAKEN

A SPIRITUAL FRESH START

A 21-Day Prayer + Fasting Guide

What is the biblical and scriptural foundation for *fasting*?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline deeply rooted in Scripture, designed to draw believers closer to God through humility, dependence, and focused prayer. Throughout the Bible, fasting is often tied to moments of seeking God's guidance, expressing repentance, or preparing for significant spiritual work. In the Old Testament, leaders like Moses (Exodus 34:28) and Ezra (Ezra 8:21-23) fasted to seek divine direction and to humble themselves before God. In the New Testament, Jesus Himself fasted for 40 days before beginning His public ministry (Matthew 4:1-2), setting an example for believers to follow.

Biblical fasting is always accompanied by prayer and devotion, showing a desire to align with God's will and experience His presence. As emphasized in passages like Isaiah 58:1-12, fasting also has a social dimension, calling for justice, mercy, and love to reflect God's character in the world. Fasting is a practice of dependence, worship, and spiritual renewal that has been integral to the faith journey of God's people throughout history.

What is the purpose of *fasting*?

Fasting for the Christian serves several purposes, all rooted in deepening one's relationship with God and aligning with His will. Here are some reasons to fast:

1. Drawing Closer to God

Fasting helps Christians remove distractions and focus on God, creating space for intimacy and spiritual sensitivity.

- **Joel 2:12:** "Even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning."
- **James 4:8:** "Come near to God and he will come near to you."

2. Humility and Repentance

Fasting is often accompanied by repentance and serves as an act of humility before God.

- **Psalms 35:13:** "I humbled myself with fasting, and my prayers returned to me unanswered."
- **Ezra 8:21:** "There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions."

3. Seeking Guidance and Wisdom

Fasting is a way to seek clarity and direction from God during pivotal moments or decisions.

- **Acts 13:2-3:** "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'"
- **Acts 14:23:** "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."

4. Spiritual Breakthrough and Deliverance

Fasting can bring spiritual breakthrough, overcoming strongholds and seeking God's intervention.

- **Isaiah 58:6:** "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?"
- **Mark 9:29 (KJV):** "This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting."

5. Worship and Devotion

Fasting can be an act of worship, dedicating oneself wholly to God in reverence and devotion.

- **Luke 2:37:** "[Anna] never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying."
- **Matthew 4:2:** "After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry."

6. Preparing for Ministry

Fasting often precedes significant acts of ministry or mission, helping to align with God's purpose.

- **Matthew 4:1-2:** "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry."
- **Exodus 34:28:** "Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments."

7. Intercession

Fasting amplifies prayers of intercession for others, showing earnestness and urgency.

- **Daniel 9:3:** "So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes."
- **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 attendants will fast as you do."

What Biblical/Spiritual Fasting Is Not:

- **A Weight Loss Program**
 - Fasting is not a spiritualized diet or a method for physical fitness. Its purpose is spiritual, not physical.
- **Earning God's Favor**
 - Fasting does not make God love you more or guarantee answers to prayer. Grace is unmerited, and fasting doesn't "earn" blessings.
- **A Public Spectacle**
 - Jesus explicitly warned against fasting for show. It's a private act of devotion, not a performance or way to gain spiritual recognition or admiration from others.
 - **Matthew 6:16-18:** "Do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting."
- **Manipulating God**
 - Fasting is not a way to twist God's arm or force His hand. It's about aligning with His will, not bending Him to ours.
- **A Replacement for Obedience**
 - Fasting is not a substitute for living righteously. God desires obedience over ritual acts of worship.
 - **Isaiah 58:3-7:** God criticizes fasting without justice and compassion.
- **A One-Size-Fits-All Practice**
 - Fasting is deeply personal and may look different for everyone. It's not about conforming to a specific method or duration.
- **Punishing the Body**
 - Fasting is not about self-harm or asceticism. It's about redirecting focus from physical needs to spiritual priorities.
- **Restricted to Food**
 - Biblical fasting can extend to abstaining from other things that consume time or attention, such as social media, entertainment, or other distractions.
- **A Corporate Requirement**
 - While churches or groups may call for corporate fasts, fasting is not a legalistic obligation but a voluntary act of worship.
- **A Shortcut to Spiritual Maturity**
 - Fasting alone does not make someone spiritually mature. It must be accompanied by prayer, study of Scripture, and a relationship with God.

Summary

Fasting is a powerful spiritual discipline rooted in Scripture. It involves humility, repentance, intercession, devotion, and seeking God's will. Coupled with prayer, fasting helps us draw closer to God, break spiritual strongholds, and prepare for divine purposes. It is not about outward appearances, earning favor, or replacing obedience. ***The heart behind the fast is what matters most to God.***

***At Mesa Church, we believe fasting is a meaningful spiritual practice that draws us closer to God. However, it is important to approach fasting with wisdom and care. If you have any medical conditions, are pregnant, nursing, or have concerns about your ability to fast, we strongly encourage you to consult with your doctor before participating. Fasting should never compromise your health or well-being, nor is it a measure of your faith or spirituality. This is a personal act of worship, not an obligation or requirement. Whether you choose to fast from food or another area of life, our prayer is that you engage in a way that strengthens your relationship with God and reflects His grace.*