

AWAKEN

A SPIRITUAL FRESH START

A 21-Day Prayer + Fasting Guide and Devotional

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.*

Day 1: Drawing Near to God

- **Scripture Reading:** James 4:8 (NIV): "Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."
 - **Truth:** Fasting is an invitation to step away from distractions and draw closer to God's presence.
 - **Reflection Question:** What areas of your life distract you from intimacy with God?
 - **Action:** Set aside a specific time today for prayer and listening to God, free from distractions.
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Day 2: Fasting as Worship

- **Scripture Reading:** Luke 2:37 (NIV): "...and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying."
 - **Truth:** Fasting is an act of worship, centering your heart on God.
 - **Reflection Question:** How can you turn your fast into a time of worship today?
 - **Action:** Spend 10 minutes worshipping God through music, journaling, or thanksgiving.
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Day 3: Humility in Fasting

- **Scripture Reading:** Psalm 35:13 (NIV): "Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting."
 - **Truth:** Fasting is an act of humility before God, recognizing our dependence on Him.
 - **Reflection Question:** In what ways do you need to rely more on God?
 - **Action:** Write a prayer confessing your dependence on God in every area of life.
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Day 4: Seeking God's Guidance

- **Scripture Reading:** Acts 13:2-3 (NIV): "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.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off."
 - **Truth:** Fasting helps us discern God's direction and plans.
 - **Reflection Question:** What area of your life do you need God's clear guidance in?
 - **Action:** Ask God for wisdom about one specific decision today and write down any impressions or scriptures that come to mind.
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Day 5: Fasting with the Right Heart

- **Scripture Reading:** Matthew 6:16–18 (NIV): "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."
 - **Truth:** God values the heart behind the fast, not outward appearances.
 - **Reflection Question:** Is your fasting motivated by a desire to please God or impress others?
 - **Action:** Take a moment to confess any wrong motives and refocus your heart on God.
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Day 6: Freedom through Fasting

- **Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 58:6 (NIV): "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?"
 - **Truth:** True fasting brings freedom and aligns us with God's heart for justice.
 - **Reflection Question:** What areas of bondage or injustice in your life or others' lives need God's intervention?
 - **Action:** Pray for someone you know who needs freedom, and consider how you can help them practically.
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Day 7: Fasting for Renewal

- **Scripture Reading:** 2 Corinthians 4:16 (NIV): "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."
 - **Truth:** Fasting renews our inner spirit and draws us closer to God's sustaining power.
 - **Reflection Question:** How do you need God to renew you today?
 - **Action:** Spend time in prayer asking for inner renewal and strength for the coming week.
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Day 8: Fasting with Repentance

- **Scripture Reading:** Joel 2:12 (NIV): "Even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning."
 - **Truth:** Fasting is a time to turn from sin and seek God's mercy with a repentant heart.
 - **Reflection Question:** Are there any sins you need to confess and turn from?
 - **Action:** Confess your sins to God and ask for His forgiveness and cleansing.
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Day 9: Hunger for Righteousness

- **Scripture Reading:** Matthew 5:6 (NIV): "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."
 - **Truth:** Fasting increases our hunger for God's righteousness in our lives.
 - **Reflection Question:** How can you pursue righteousness more intentionally?
 - **Action:** Identify one area where you can actively pursue righteousness today.
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Day 10: Strength in Weakness

- **Scripture Reading:** 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NIV): "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."
 - **Truth:** Fasting reminds us of our weakness and helps us rely on God's strength.
 - **Reflection Question:** In what areas of your life do you need God's strength?
 - **Action:** Journal about a time when God's strength sustained you and thank Him for His faithfulness.
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Day 11: God's Provision

- **Scripture Reading:** Matthew 6:11 (NIV): "Give us today our daily bread."
 - **Truth:** Fasting helps us remember that God is our ultimate provider.
 - **Reflection Question:** Are you trusting God to provide for all your needs?
 - **Action:** Write down a list of your needs and present them to God in prayer, trusting in His provision.
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Day 12: Living Sacrifices

- **Scripture Reading:** Romans 12:1 (NIV): "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."
- **Truth:** Fasting is a way to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to God.
- **Reflection Question:** What does it mean for you to live as a sacrifice to God?
- **Action:** Dedicate today's fast as an act of worship and surrender to God's will.

Day 13: Faith Over Fear

- **Scripture Reading:** 2 Timothy 1:7 (NIV): "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline."
 - **Truth:** Fasting builds faith and diminishes fear by focusing on God's promises.
 - **Reflection Question:** What fears do you need to release to God today?
 - **Action:** Write down a fear and speak God's truth over it in prayer.
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Day 14: God's Presence

- **Scripture Reading:** Psalm 16:11 (NIV): "You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."
 - **Truth:** Fasting helps us experience the fullness of God's presence and joy.
 - **Reflection Question:** How can you cultivate awareness of God's presence today?
 - **Action:** Spend 10 minutes in silent meditation on God's presence.
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Day 15: Power of Prayer

- **Scripture Reading:** James 5:16 (NIV): "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."
 - **Truth:** Fasting amplifies the power of prayer by focusing our attention on God.
 - **Reflection Question:** Who in your life needs prayer today?
 - **Action:** Pray for someone's healing or breakthrough and let them know you are praying.
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Day 16: A Heart for Others

- **Scripture Reading:** Philippians 2:4 (NIV): "Not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."
 - **Truth:** Fasting opens our hearts to see and meet the needs of others.
 - **Reflection Question:** How can you prioritize someone else's needs today?
 - **Action:** Do something practical to serve or encourage another person.
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Day 17: Spiritual Breakthrough

- **Scripture Reading:** Mark 9:29 (NIV): "He replied, 'This kind can come out only by prayer.'"
 - **Truth:** Fasting is a tool to invite God's power for breakthrough in impossible situations.
 - **Reflection Question:** What impossible situation in your life needs God's intervention?
 - **Action:** Pray specifically for breakthrough in one area of your life or someone else's life.
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Day 18: Waiting on the Lord

- **Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 40:31 (NIV): "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."
 - **Truth:** Fasting brings God's peace as we release our anxieties to Him.
 - **Reflection Question:** What anxieties do you need to release to God today so that you can experience His peace?
 - **Action:** Write down your anxieties and present them to God in prayer. Then, thank Him for His peace that surpasses understanding.
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Day 19: Trusting God's Timing

- **Scripture Reading:** Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NIV): "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end."
 - **Truth:** Fasting helps us trust in God's perfect timing and plan for our lives.
 - **Reflection Question:** Is there an area where you are struggling to trust God's timing?
 - **Action:** Write a prayer surrendering your timeline to God and ask for patience and peace.
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Day 20: Rejoicing in God's Faithfulness

- **Scripture Reading:** Lamentations 3:22-23 (NIV): "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."
 - **Truth:** Fasting reminds us to celebrate and give thanks for God's unwavering faithfulness.
 - **Reflection Question:** How have you seen God's faithfulness in your life recently?
 - **Action:** Share a testimony of God's faithfulness with someone to encourage them.
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Day 21: Celebration and Dedication

- **Scripture Reading:** Nehemiah 8:10 (NIV): "Nehemiah said, 'Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.'"
- **Truth:** As the fast concludes, celebrate God's goodness and dedicate the spiritual growth achieved during the fast to Him.
- **Reflection Question:** What has God revealed to you during this fast, and how will you carry it forward?
- **Action:** Celebrate the end of the fast by sharing a meal with loved ones and thanking God for His work in your life over the past 21 days.