



FASTING IN SCRIPTURE

Fasting is intended to take our eyes off our physical needs/desires and fix our eyes on Jesus. Temporarily giving up things that we often depend on (i.e. food, caffeine, social media, etc) can help us to refocus on our Creator and what He has for us.

Whenever you fast, don't be gloomy like the hypocrites. For they make their faces unattractive so that their fasting is obvious to people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting isn't obvious to others but to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
Matthew 6:16-18

Read through the following passages together making observations about different purposes of fasting.

1 Fasting in Confession and Repentance

"Jonah set out on the first day of his walk in the city and proclaimed 'In forty days Nineveh will be demolished!' Then the people of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth--from the greatest of them to the least." Jonah 3:4-5 (See also Nehemiah 9:1-2)

2 Fasting During a Period of Mourning

"Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and all the men with him did the same. They mourned, wept, and fasted until the evening for those who died by the sword--for Saul, his son Jonathan, the Lord's people, and the house of Israel." 2 Samuel 1:11-12 (See also 1 Samuel 31:12-13)

3 Fasting to Seek the Lord's Favor

"Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 'Go and assemble all the Jews who can be found in Susa and fast for me. Don't eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my female servants will also fast in the same way. After that, I will go to the king even if it is against the law. If I perish, I perish.'
Esther 4:15-16 (See also Joel 1:13-15)

4 Fasting as a Part of Worship

"There was also a prophetess, Anna, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well along in years, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and was a widow for eighty-four years. She did not leave the temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayers."
Luke 2:36-37 (See also Acts 14:23)

5 Fasting to Demonstrate Reliance upon God

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry." Matthew 4:1-2

What stood out to you most about fasting? How would you like to incorporate this spiritual discipline into the rhythms of your life? For what reason are you most compelled to fast?