

Does the Bible Require All Christians to Fast?

What is fasting? Since there are so many misconceptions about it, I first want to clarify what fasting—biblical fasting—is not. Fasting is not merely going without food for a period of time. That is dieting—maybe even starving—but fasting it is not. Nor is fasting something done only by fanatics. I really want to drive that point home. Fasting is not to be done only by religious monks alone in a cave somewhere. The practice of fasting is not limited to ministers or to special occasions.

Stated simply, biblical fasting is refraining from food for a spiritual purpose. Fasting has always been a normal part of a relationship with God. As expressed by the impassioned plea of David in Psalm 42, fasting brings one into a deeper, more intimate and powerful relationship with the Lord.

When you eliminate food from your diet for a number of days, your spirit becomes uncluttered by the things of this world and amazingly sensitive to the things of God. As David stated, “Deep calls unto deep” (Ps. 42:7). David was fasting. His hunger and thirst for God were greater than his natural desire for food. As a result, he reached a place where he could cry out from the depths of his spirit to the depths of God, even in the midst of his trial. Once you’ve experienced even a glimpse of that kind of intimacy with our God—our Father, the holy Creator of the universe—and the countless rewards and blessings that follow, your whole perspective will change. You will soon realize that fasting is a secret source of power this is overlooked by many.

During the years that Jesus walked this earth, He devoted time to teaching His disciples the principles of the kingdom of God, principles that conflict with those of this world. In the Beatitudes, specifically in Matthew 6, Jesus provided the

pattern by which each of us is to live as a child of God. That pattern addressed three specific duties of a Christian: giving, praying, and fasting. Jesus said, "*When you give...*" and "*When you pray...*" and "*When you fast.*" He made it clear that fasting, like giving and praying, was a normal part of Christian life. As much attention should be given to fasting as is given to giving and to praying.

Solomon, when writing the books of wisdom for Israel, made the point that a cord, or rope, braided with three strands is not easily broken (Eccles. 4:12). Likewise, when giving, praying, and fasting are practiced together in the life of a believer, it creates a type of threefold cord that is not easily broken. In fact, as I'll show you in a moment, Jesus took it even further by saying, "Nothing will be impossible" (Matt. 17:20).

Could we be missing our greatest breakthroughs because we fail to fast? Remember the thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and hundredfold return Jesus spoke of (Mark 4:8, 20)? Look at it this way: when you pray, you can release that thirtyfold return, but when both prayer and giving are part of your life, I believe that releases the sixtyfold blessing. But when all three—giving, praying, and fasting—are part of your life, that hundredfold return can be released!

If that's the case, you have to wonder what blessings are not being released. What answers to prayer are not getting through? What bondages are not being broken because we fail to fast?

Matthew tells the story of a father who had a demon-possessed son. For years he watched helplessly as his son suffered severe convulsions. As he grew older, the attacks became so severe that the boy would often throw himself into an open fire or a trench of water. A suicidal spirit tormented him constantly; the situation became life-threatening.

Having exhausted every attempt to cure the boy—even talking

him to the disciples with no avail—the father’s plight seemed impossible. Then he heard that Jesus was near. Going to the Master, he cried, “Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him” (Matt. 17:15, KJV).

When the boy was brought to Jesus, the Bible says He “rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour” (v. 18, KJV). But what made the difference? After all, Matthew 10:1 records that Jesus had already given the disciples power to cast out evil spirits and to heal every disease. So why couldn’t the disciples cast out the demon and cure the boy?

That’s what they wanted to know, too, so later that night, when they were alone with Jesus, they asked Him. Jesus replied, “Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Matt. 17:20–21, KJV).

Now, I’ve read that passage many times, and I’ve even taught from it on occasion. But each time, I’ve focused on the statement “and nothing shall be impossible unto you.” I think a lot of people stop right there, but Jesus didn’t because He knew there was more—much more.

See, that funny little word howbeit is the connection—it’s the key that unlocks the power in the statement “nothing shall be impossible unto you.” Jesus told the disciples they needed faith, even faith as small as a tiny seed. But that wasn’t all. Long before this incident, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, where He spent forty days and forty nights, taking no food. “Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.” For Jesus, casting out that stubborn demon

wasn't impossible.

If Jesus could have accomplished all He came to do without fasting, why would He fast? The Son of God fasted because He knew there were supernatural things that could only be released that way. How much more should fasting be a common practice in our lives?

Fasting Is for Everyone

Perhaps you're thinking, "I still don't know how fasting can really be for me." According to the words of Jesus, it is the duty of every disciple and every believer to fast. When addressing the Pharisees as to why His disciples did not fast, Jesus replied, "Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days" (Luke 5:34–35).

Then they will fast. Jesus didn't expect His disciples to do something He hadn't done as well. Jesus fasted, and according to the words of Peter, Jesus is our example in all things (1 Pet. 2:21).

There's another vital point that I want you to see in Matthew 6: God delights in giving rewards. Not only that, but He says that when giving, praying and fasting are practiced in your life, He will "reward you openly."

A good example of such open reward can be found in Daniel. While in Babylonian captivity, his fasting—even partial fasting of certain foods—brought about the open reward of God, who blessed Daniel with wisdom beyond that of anyone else in that empire.

Later, in chapter 10, Daniel was grieved and burdened with the revelation he had received for Israel. He ate no choice breads or meats and drank no wine for three weeks. Then he describes the angel that was sent to him—which had been *delayed* by the

prince of Persia for twenty-one days—with the answers Daniel sought. His fast broke the power of the delayer and released the angels of God so that God's purpose could be revealed and served.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Do you desire to know God's will for your life, whom you should marry, or what you should do in a critical situation? I'll show you how fasting brings you to a place of being able to clearly hear God's will.

Fasting also causes God to target your children. You will be amazed at the testimonies we have heard about fasting. It also brings health and healing to your body, as well as financial prosperity and blessings of God.

Whether you desire to be closer to God or are in need to great breakthroughs in your life, remember that nothing shall be impossible to you. Fasting is truly a secret source of power!

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