

Why Fast?

✖ 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 devoted 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 (see Eccl. 4:12). Likewise, when giving, praying and fasting are practiced together by a believer, they combine to create 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? (See 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 while his son suffered with severe convulsions.

See more about fasting.

As the boy grew older, the attacks became so severe that he would often throw himself into an open fire or a trench of water. A suicidal spirit tormented him constantly, and his situation became life-threatening.

Having exhausted every attempt to cure the boy-even taking him to the disciples with no avail-the father almost gave up. Then he heard that Jesus was near.

Going to the Master, he cried, "'Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the

fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him'" (Matt. 17:15-16).

When the boy was brought to Jesus, He "rebuked the demon; and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour" (v. 18).

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 assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting'" (Matt. 17:20-21).

Each time I've read that passage, I've focused on the statement "and nothing will be impossible for you." I think a lot of people stop right there, but Jesus didn't because He knew there was more—much more.

See, that one little word "however" is the connection—it's the key that unlocks the power in the statement "nothing will be impossible for 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 40 days and 40 nights and ate nothing. "'However, this kind does not go out except 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, then why did He fast? The Son of God knew there were supernatural things that could only be released through fasting. How much more should fasting be a common practice in our lives.

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