

“Returning to God Through Fasting”

Isaiah 58:1-12

Introduction

Contrary to popular opinion, fasting does not revolve around one’s health and fitness goals, nor is fasting merely the dieting fad it has become of late. Biblical fasting is a meaningful, spiritual practice and an act of obedience to God. Fasting can be defined as God's unique method of invading earth's needs with the solutions of heaven. When we fast, we sacrifice the physical to gain the spiritual. We are saying to God that we need His power to intervene in our earthly circumstances. For God to honor our fasting, we must be seeking to please the Lord and not ourselves. If we want our fasting to honor God, we must prioritize personal righteousness and ministry to others. Prioritizing personal righteousness means uprooting sin while also seeking a solution from God. Prioritizing ministry to others causes us to allow God to use us as conduits to bless others without expecting anything in return.

Although we should not fast for our own gain, we reap numerous benefits from fasting. Taking the focus off our own problems and choosing to help others will lead to divine blessings in our lives. Fasting shows others how God is at work in our circumstances. We will witness repairs in our relationships as a result of God repairing our hearts. Even our communities can be restored through fasting because this vital spiritual discipline gets the people of God back in touch with Him. Fasting and prayer go hand in hand. We cannot and should not have one without the other. Fasting provides the opportunity for our prayers to be free from distractions and full of honest confessions. Fasting gives us the chance to push the clutter of life out of the way and focus our hearts and minds on the only One worthy of our complete devotion.

Getting Started

1. What does fasting bring to your mind? What kinds of things do people typically fast from?
2. Some people use fasting as a way to be healthier and lose weight. What other spiritual things do people twist into being a way to meet their physical needs or wants?

Let’s Get Personal

1. Share about a time you fasted and how that opened your spiritual eyes. How do you think fasting would change your spiritual life if you have never fasted?
2. Have you ever been fully engaged in sin but were still seeking a solution from God at the same time? How did you resolve this conflict? How did God lead you, convict you, or invite you into fellowship with Him?
3. In what areas of your life do you need the repair and restoration that fasting and prayer bring?

Take the Next Step

1. In light of this message, how will you approach fasting and prayer differently?
2. How can you begin to prioritize ministering to others?
3. Want to go deeper? Take time to look at the following passages: Isaiah 58:1-12; Zechariah 7:5-6; Matthew 17:14-21; Nehemiah 1:1-11; Esther 4:8-16; 1 Kings 17:8-16; Genesis 24:32-49; Ezra 8:21-23; Joel 2:12-25; Acts 13:1-5; Luke 2:34-38; Luke 4:1-13; Matthew 6:16-18; Matthew 9:14-15.

Renew Your Mind

*“And the LORD will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire
in scorched places, and give strength to your bones;
and you will be like a watered garden,
and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.”*

Isaiah 58:11
