

“Prayer and Fasting Teaching”

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Spiritual Disciplines-

1. What is a Spiritual Discipline?

- a. Spiritual Disciplines are not the desired **END** of spiritual life – but rather they are a **MEANS** to an end. They are... the intentional development of authentic Spiritual life and intimacy with God.
2. Definition of Spiritual Discipline?
 - a. A deliberately self-imposed **HABIT** that nurtures spiritual **HEALTH** and fosters spiritual growth leading to **MATURITY**.
3. 4 Classic Inward Spiritual Discipline
 - a. **MEDITATION and CONTEMPLATION**
"In book of Psalms it has the word 'Selah' which means to pause and meditate on what you just read."
 - b. **PRAYER**
 - c. **FASTING**
 - d. **STUDY**
**Mark 12:30 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."*
4. Basic Concept of Spiritual Discipline
 - a. There are times I don't feel like doing what I know to be **NECESSARY** for my spiritual health.
 - b. Disciplines provide **METHODOLOGY** and **STRUCTURE** and order to carry me through the times I would otherwise ignore my spiritual health.
5. Cautions
 - a. Spiritual disciplines are not the same as **SPIRITUAL MATURITY**.
 - b. Though they are intended to enable and foster spiritual growth, actual spiritual maturity is in the purview of the **SPIRIT**

Prayer-

Most Christians aren't aware that there are several types of prayer discussed in God's Word, and if you use one type when you should be using another, it won't work. You would be applying the wrong spiritual tool to your needs or request. God intended for each of the six forms of prayer mentioned in the Bible to have different functions, as described below.

1. The Prayer of PRAISE AND WORSHIP

In this prayer, you are not asking God to do something for you or to give you something. You are not even asking for direction and dedicating your life to whatever it is God has called you to do. Rather, you just want to praise the Lord, to thank Him for His many blessings and mercy. You want to tell Him how much you love Him.

A good example of this type of prayer appears in Luke 2:20, which describes the reaction of the shepherds who had seen baby Jesus: "Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told them."

In Luke 18:43, the blind man who was healed was described as "glorifying God." The verse also says all the people who witnessed the miracle "gave praise to God." They prayed prayers of thanksgiving.

2. The Prayer of INTERCESSION

Intercession means you are interceding—acting in prayer—on behalf of someone else. The person may be incapable of praying for himself. Perhaps he is on drugs or mentally confused by demonic doctrines. Perhaps the person is so sick he can't muster the energy to stay awake, let alone pray.

Intercession involves praying for others. It may involve praying in a general way for such things as the church or the government, or offering up more specific prayers based on your knowledge of a person's need.

In Ephesians 1:15-18, Paul wrote: "Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

Here Paul makes it plain that he prayed regularly for the church at Ephesus and for the individuals there to receive these blessings. He does not set himself in agreement with anyone, so this seems to be a good example of intercessory prayer.

Likewise, in his greeting to the Philippians, he wrote, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy" (Phil. 1:3-4). The fact that Paul said he made requests for them suggests that this also was an example of intercessory prayer.

3. The Prayer of **BINDING & LOOSING**

This prayer is found in Matthew 18:18-19. Jesus says: "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven."

There are several important nuggets in Jesus' statements here, the first being that we have authority here on this earth by virtue of our covenant rights through Jesus. The second thing we notice is the direction of the action. Things do not begin in heaven and come to Earth, but rather the action starts here on Earth. Notice that it says, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

God has provided each type of prayer for a specific purpose. Though you may use more than one at any given time, it is important to be clear about which type you are using and why, and to be aware of its limitations. If you follow the examples in the Bible, you'll be sure to use them properly.

4. The Prayer of **FAITH**

The prayer of faith, also known as petition prayer, is the prayer that most people think of when they use the term "prayer." Petition prayer is between you and God. It is you asking God for a particular outcome.

The key verse for the prayer of faith is Mark 11:24, in which Jesus says, "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."

When you pray in faith, God immediately gives you what you prayed for—in the spirit realm. But in the natural world, due to a number of factors, it may take time for the answer to manifest itself.

God answers prayers, and He will answer your specific prayer in line with His Word, but it is your faith that brings that answer out of the spiritual world and into the physical world. How many times in Scripture does Jesus say to someone, "According to your faith"?

5. The Prayer of **AGREEMENT**

In Matthew 18:19, Jesus introduced the prayer of agreement when He said, "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven" (NKJV).

6. The Prayer of **CONSECRATION & DEDICATION**

In Luke 22:41-42, we see outlined the prayer of consecration and dedication: "And He [Jesus] was withdrawn from them [Peter, James and John] about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.'"

He was praying, in effect, "If there is any other way to do this, let's do it that way." But the key for Jesus, and for us, is, "Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."

You pray that God's will would be done when you don't know His will or don't know if an alternative path that appears is equally "correct" or godly. In the absence of direct instructions, the prayer of consecration and dedication says you will allow God to set your direction or make your decisions.

Fasting-

The need for fasting:

1. *"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men 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."* (Matt. 6:16-18)

How would you define fasting as a spiritual discipline?

1. It is a discipline that by **INTENTIONALLY** denying and **CONTROLLING** my physical desires and sensitivity, it increases my spiritual strength and sensitivity.
2. Biblical fasting is always done for **SPIRITUAL** purposes, and involves the abstinence of something **VALUABLE** to take hold of something of far **GREATER** value.

Why would you incorporate fasting as a discipline into your life?

1. As regular preparation to **BREAK** the pattern of conformance to this world's order.
2. In preparation for engaging our world that encourages physical pleasures and worldly emphasis.
3. Fasting builds our will to say **NO**.
4. Fasting is a means to **COUNTER** the worldly norm.

Biblical Fasting is often closely linked to...

1. **REPENTANCE**
 - a. David and the children of Israel
 - b. Jonah and the city of Nineveh (Jonah)
2. **PASSIONATE PRAYER**
 - a. King Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20)
 - b. Queen Esther (Esther)
3. **COMES FROM HUMBLE HEART**
 - a. Isaiah 58:3-7
 - b. Pharisees and Sadducees did it out of pride.

Notes on Fasting

1. Fasting should be limited to a set time, especially when fasting from food. Extended periods of time without eating can be harmful to the body. Fasting is not intended to punish the flesh, but to redirect attention to God.
2. Fasting should not be considered a "**DIETING METHOD**" either.
3. The purpose of a biblical fast is not to **LOSE WEIGHT**, but rather to gain deeper **FELLOWSHIP** with God. Anyone can fast, but some may not be able to fast from food (diabetics, for example).
4. Everyone can temporarily give up **SOMETHING** in order to **draw closer to God**.
5. By taking our eyes off the things of this world, we can more successfully turn our attention to Christ. Fasting is not a way to get God to do what we want.
6. Fasting changes **US** not God. Fasting is not a way to appear more **SPIRITUAL** than others.
7. Fasting is to be done in a spirit of **HUMILITY** and a **JOYFUL** attitude

The Bible describes 4 major types of fasting:

#1 A **REGULAR** Fast –

Traditionally, a regular fast means refraining from eating all food. Most people still drink water or juice during a regular fast. When Jesus fasted in the desert, the Bible says, "After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry." This verse does not mention Jesus being thirsty.

#2 A **Partial** Fast –

This type of fast generally refers to omitting a specific meal from your diet or refraining from certain types of foods. Daniel 10:2-3 says, "At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over." In Daniel 1:12, they restricted their diet to vegetables and water: "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink."

#3 A **FULL** Fast –

These fasts are complete - no food and no drink. Acts 9:9 describes when Paul went on a full fast for three days following his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus: "For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything." Esther also called for this type of fast in Esther 4:15-16: "Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: '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 maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.'" It is recommended that this type of fast be done with extreme caution and not for extended periods of time.

#4 A **Sexual** Fast –

1 Corinthians 7:3-6 says, "The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."

Although not mentioned in the Bible, Christians today commit to fasting from other activities as well. Some give up entertainment such as TV or movies to concentrate on prayer. Others fast from sleep or another activity for a specified period of time.

Scripture References for Fasting:

Matthew 6:16-18, Matthew 9:14-15, Luke 18:9-14

Relation to Prayer and Reading of the Word:

1 Samuel 1:6-8, 17-18, Nehemiah 1:4, Daniel 9:3, 20, Joel 2:12, Luke 2:37, Acts 10:30, Acts 13:2

Corporate Fasting:

1 Samuel 7:5-6, Ezra 8:21-23, Nehemiah 9:1-3, Joel 2:15-16, Jonah 3:5-10, Acts 27:33-37

Remember that it is the attitude of a heart sincerely seeking Him to which God responds with a blessing (Isaiah 58, Jeremiah 14:12, 1 Corinthians 8:8). May God greatly bless you as you fast!

How to Prepare for a fast:

What to expect when you fast your body detoxifies, eliminating toxins from your system. This can cause mild discomfort such as headaches and irritability during withdrawal from caffeine and sugars. And naturally, you will have hunger pains. Limit your activity and exercise moderately. Take time to rest. Fasting brings about miraculous results. You are following Jesus' example when you fast. Spend time listening to praise and worship. Pray as often as you can throughout the day. Get away from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mind set on seeking God's face. Start to drink several glasses of filtered water each day before you start the fast.

How to Begin Spiritually:

Start with a clear goal. Be specific. Why are you fasting? Do you need direction, healing, restoration of marriage or family issues? Are you facing financial difficulties? Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Pray daily and read the Bible. Preparing spiritually by confessing your sins to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of weakness. Forgive all who have offended you and ask forgiveness from those you may have offended (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3-4). Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ and reject the worldly desires that try to hinder you (Romans 12:1-2). Deciding the type of fasting you choose is up to you. You could go on a full fast in which you only drink liquids, or you may desire to fast like Daniel, who abstained from sweets and meats, and the only liquid he drank was water. Remember to replace that time with prayer and Bible study.

Deciding How Long:

You may fast as long as you like. Most can easily fast from one to three days, but you may feel the grace to go longer, even as much as 21 to 40 days. Use wisdom and pray for guidance.

“Beginners are advised to start slow and seek advice from your doctor if you have any medical conditions.”

How to End a Fast:

Don't overeat when the time comes to end your fast. Begin eating solid food gradually; eat small portions or snacks.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER BEFORE FAST:

1. **WHY ARE YOU FASTING?** _____
“Do you need direction, healing, restoration of marriage or family issues? Are you facing financial difficulties? Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance.”
2. **WHAT WILL YOU FAST?** _____
“What is the one thing that you can't say no to, can't live without? Full fast, Liquids only, cell phone, Facebook, shopping, tv, internet...”
3. **WHAT ARE YOU PRAYING FOR?** _____
“Be specific on request; person to be saved, breakthrough, finances...”
4. **WHERE WILL YOU PRAY** _____
“build a war room to pray, in car, at work, bathroom, bedroom...”
5. **WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN?** _____
“Deeper fellowship with God, breakthrough in situation, peace, direction, baptized in Holy Spirit...”