

The Value of Vigilant Focus

Fasting is not...

an opportunity for a personal, mystical cleanse

a way to win the approval of God

a zealous display of religiosity

Fasting is...

a temporary renunciation of something that is in itself good, like food, in order to intensify our expression of need for something greater; namely, God and his work in our lives.

an exceptional measure, designed to awaken and solidify our desire for God and our holy discontent in a fallen world. It is for those not satisfied with the status quo. For those who want more of God's grace. For those who feel truly desperate for God.

It is a deep expression of self-control.

It is an opportunity to depend more fully on God and find strength and perseverance in him alone.

It intensifies your focus as you seek guidance and communion with God.

It is an opportunity to express sorrow, repentance, and acknowledge failure before a merciful God.

It is simply a heartfelt exclamation point at the end of the sentence: I love you, God. I need and depend on you more than anything, even food.

There are no rules. There is only spiritual hunger being spoken and stoked with physical hunger.

Reasons and instances of biblical fasting

Fasting is an act of preparation for a new season of serving.

Matthew 4:1-2 (Jesus), Acts 13:3 (Paul & Barnabas)

Fasting declares a seriousness of the request.

Ezra 8:21 “Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods.”

2 Samuel 12:15-17 “And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick. 16 David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. 17 And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them.”

Fasting reveals a heaviness of heart.

2 Samuel 1:12 “And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son and for the people of the Lord and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.”

Fasting expresses a heart toward repentance and grief over sin.

Joel 2:12-13 “Yet even now, declares the Lord, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; 13 and rend your hearts and not your garments.’ Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.”

What did Jesus say about fasting?

Matthew 6:16-18 “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Mark 2:18-20 “Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, “Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” 19 And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.”

Is there something I can learn about Jesus if I step out in faith and fast? Read Jesus' experience with fasting in Matthew 4 and Luke 4.

Is fasting hard? Will it be detrimental to my health?

We don't like to feel uncomfortable.

Your flesh wants nothing to do with denying your body.

The Biblical intent is food. 90% of you should fast from food.

However, 10% of you have a real, medical, legitimate reason that will prevent you from fasting from food this year.

Be creative.

Trust that God is very aware of this season of your life. Ask Him to reveal to you what else you might put aside so that you can more fully rest and depend on His comfort and sustainability.

If you have never fasted start small!

Fasting

Promotes Detoxification

Improves Insulin Sensitivity

Rests Digestive System

Boosts Immunity

Corrects High Blood Pressure

May help to overcome addictions

Promotes Weight Loss

Resolves Inflammatory Response

Promotes Healthy Diet (reducing the craving of processed foods)

Clears the Skin and Whitens the Eyes

Your hunger is meant to be a gift. Fasting is not simply something that must be endured.

The failure to fast with a particular purpose in mind all the way through it, is the biggest stumbling block for fasting to those people who know the biblical teaching about fasting.

Lastly, Fasting is a declaration of the Already / Not Yet

The King has come. He has died for our sins. He is risen from the dead. He is gone away into heaven.

We already have the down payment in our hearts of his presence and his Spirit,

BUT, we long and we hunger for the consummation of the day of his return, his coming and reigning.

Second Mile gives you the opportunity to understand the biblical teaching concerning fasting. We aren't expecting you to do something you have never been taught to understand.

But once you do understand, the biggest opportunity for failure is to miss the biblical purpose when you engage in the discipline.

Question: What is your plan? Share your plan of fasting with a couple of others who will commit to pray for you through out the week. Are you ready for fasting to change your engagement with God? Are you ready for the Holy Spirit to move beyond your expectations?

Question: Will you humble yourself and become vulnerable with God, yourself, and the community of Second Mile?

Be open for the conversation.

Share your love of Jesus with boldness, consideration, and grace.