

## **Prayer and Fasting (Part 3)**

### How Prayer and Fasting Work Together

“Fasting is a response to a sacred moment, not an instrument designed to get desired results.”

“Fasting along with our prayer requests is not some kind of magic bullet to ensure the answer we want. Fasting doesn’t reinforce the crumbling walls of our prayers like a flying buttress, nor is it a manipulative device. We fast because a condition arises ... that leads us to desire something deeply. We fast because our plea is so intense that in the midst of our sacred desire eating seems sacrilegious.” - Scot McKnight, *Fasting*

### **Fasting and Confession/Repentance**

- **Day of Atonement** - “It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves. On the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath.” (Lev. 23:32)
- **The Absence of the Ark** - “So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the Lord and fasted on that day and said there, ‘We have sinned against the Lord.’ And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah.” (1 Sam. 7:6)
- **Ezra Realizes the People’s Sin** - “Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib, where he spent the night, neither eating bread nor drinking water, for he was mourning over the faithlessness of the exiles.” (Ezra 10:6)
- **The Message through Joel** - “‘Yet even now,’ declares the Lord, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; 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.” (Joel 2:12-13)

### **Fasting and Grief**

- **Jonathan Grieves Saul’s Treatment of David** - “And Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father had disgraced him.” (1 Sam. 20:34)
- **Israel Grieves the Death of Saul and Jonathan** - “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.” (2 Sam. 1:12)

## **Fasting and Pleading with the Lord**

- **Moses Intercedes for Israel** - “Then I lay prostrate before the Lord as before, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure that the Lord bore against you, so that he was ready to destroy you. But the Lord listened to me that time also.” (Deut. 7:18-19)
- **David Prays for His Child** - “David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground.” (2 Sam. 12:16)

## **Fasting and Seeking the Lord**

- **In Response to Terrible Sin** - “Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel and wept. They sat there before the Lord and fasted that day until evening, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. And the people of Israel inquired of the Lord (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days)” (Judges 20:26-27)
- **The Church at Antioch** - “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.” (Acts 13:2-3)
- “The emphasis of these passages in the Bible is not that fasting clears the mind and opens the windows for God’s light to enter. Instead, the emphasis is on the yearning of God’s people to know God’s will. They are focused on the sacred moment more than on the use of fasting as an instrument to get what they want.”  
- Scot McKnight, *Fasting*

## **Fasting and Strengthening our Faith**

- **Anna Longed to See the Lord** - “She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.” (Luke 2:37b-38)
- **Paul Disciplined His Body** - “But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” (1 Cor. 9:14)
- “Because it is sometimes necessary to check the delight of the flesh in respect to licit pleasures in order to keep it from yielding to illicit joys.” - Augustine
- “[W]henever men are to pray to God concerning any great matter, it would be expedient to appoint fasting along with prayer. Their sole purpose in this kind of fasting is to render themselves more eager and unencumbered for prayer . . . with a full stomach our mind is not so lifted up to God.” - John Calvin