

Becoming: Cultivating a Hunger for God through Fasting and Solitude

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1. Supercharging the Spiritual Disciplines!

Core Idea: Fasting and Solitude supercharge **Bible intake** and **prayer** by sharpening your senses and focusing your heart on God.

The Internal and External Battles:

- Fasting: Internal war against hunger and the craving for instant satisfaction.
- Solitude: External battle against life's chaos, noise, and information overload.

We do not practice these to **earn God's favor** (Grace has already given it).

Purpose: They flow from a heart that genuinely longs for **God's will** to reign in our lives.

The Common Thread (Senses):

- Fasting awakens **physical hunger** to remind us of our soul's dependence on Christ.
- Solitude silences the noise, tuning our ears to the **Spirit's whisper** and **God's Word**.

Without fellowship with God, fasting is just dieting, and solitude is just a lonely walk—their power lies in **spiritual purpose**.

2. Fasting: Sharpening Your Hunger for God

Definition: A foundational spiritual rhythm woven into the history of God's people.

Biblical Purposes for Fasting (Donald Whitney)

- To Strengthen Prayer (Ezra 8:23; Nehemiah 1:4)
- To Seek God's Guidance (Judges 20:26; Acts 14:23)
- To Express Grief (1 Samuel 31:13; 1 Samuel 20:34)
- To Seek Deliverance or Protection (2 Chronicles 20:3-4; Ezra 8:21-23; Esther 4:16)
- To Express Repentance and the Return to God (1 Samuel 7:6; Joel 2:12; Jonah 3:5-8)

- To Humble Oneself before God (1 Kings 21:27-29; Psalm 35:13)
- To Express Concern for the Work of God (Nehemiah 1:3-4; Daniel 9:3)
- To Minister to the Needs of Others (Isaiah 58)
- To Overcome Temptation and Dedicate Yourself to God (Matthew 4:1-11)
- To Express Love and Worship to God (Luke 2:37; Philippians 3:19)

Results Speak for Themselves (Biblical Examples):

- **Nation's Survival:** Queen Esther commanded a fast for deliverance.
Esther 4:16: "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and **hold a fast** on my behalf; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day."
- **National Repentance:** The entire city of Nineveh responded to Jonah's message with corporate fasting. (Jonah 3:5-10)
- **Mission Took Flight:** The early Church fasted and prayed before sending out Paul and Barnabas. (Acts 13:3)

The Example of Christ:

- His forty days in the wilderness was a moment of intense spiritual preparation.
Matthew 4:1–2 (NET): "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After he fasted forty days and forty nights he was famished."
- Jesus **expected** His followers to fast.
Matthew 6:17–18 (NET): "When you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others when you are fasting, but only to your Father who is in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you."

Modern Reality and Challenge:

- Fasting has become **optional** for many Christians ("If you fast..." vs. Jesus's "WHEN you fast...").
- We are often overflowing with comfort, which **dulls** our spiritual senses.

The Heart of the Discipline:

- "Christian fasting is at its root a **hunger for God.**" (John Piper)
- It is the powerful way we remind ourselves of our total and lasting **dependence on God alone.**

3. Silence and Solitude: Attuning Your Ear to God's Voice

Definition: The **voluntary surrender to silence and separation** in order to deepen communion with God.

Goal: To **re-center yourself** on the ultimate reality: the presence of God.

The Challenge of Modern Noise:

- We often carry and meditate on the weight of the whole world.
- The goal is to **remove enough distractions** to slow down, reflect, and genuinely hear your own thoughts for the Holy Spirit to lead them to God's truth.
Psalms 46:10 (ESV): "Be still, and know that I am God..."

Biblical Examples of Solitude:

- **David: Solitude and Preparation**
 - His early life as a shepherd provided time for deep reflection on God and himself (resulting in the Psalms).
 - His inner life, cultivated in solitude, prepared him for leadership and **softened his heart** for repentance (Nathaniel's confrontation).
- **Jesus Himself Modeled the Practice**
 - He intentionally pulled away from crowds and disciples to be filled by the Father.
- **Matthew 14:23 (NET):** "And after he sent the crowds away, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone."
- **Mark 1:35 (NET):** "Then Jesus got up early in the morning when it was still very dark, departed, and went out to a deserted place, and there he spent time in prayer."
- **Luke 4:42 (NET):** "The next morning Jesus departed and went to a deserted place. Yet the crowds were seeking him, and they came to him and tried to keep him from leaving them."

The Challenging Truth:

- You must cultivate your own discipline, which often means **saying NO** to good things and sometimes disappointing people. **Your spiritual health is worth protecting.**

Purposeful Engagement in Solitude:

- **Deepen Bible Intake:** Read and **meditate** on Scripture without interruption.
 - **Pray and Listen:** Pray for guidance, and then **allow the Lord to speak** in the silence.
 - **Reflect on God's Power:** Actively reflect on the **sufficiency and power of God**.
 - **Practice Internal Control:** Cultivate the habit of listening.
James 1:19 (NET): "Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters! Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger."
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