

PRAY FIRST

The Transformative Power Of A Life Built On Prayer

LESSON 6 – PRAYER AND FASTING

*And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, ¹⁵“Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.” ¹⁷Then Jesus answered and said, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.” ¹⁸And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. ¹⁹Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁰So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. ²¹However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”” **Matthew 17:14-21 (NKJV)***

What comes to your mind when you hear the word **fasting**? Perhaps you view it as a hard-core spiritual discipline for the “elite” pastors, missionaries, and spiritual leaders of the world. Or maybe you view fasting as an outdated practice that is no longer relevant for believers today. You might even believe fasting is primarily a weight-loss tool or health practice!

At its core however, fasting is a spiritual practice for anyone seeking more of God. Fasting can take your **prayers** to another level. The act of fasting—choosing for a set period to abstain from food, sugar, social media, music, or anything else that consumes energy and takes your attention away from God –can help you fully experience your freedom in Christ.

In contrast to the message in our society to *consume*, fasting is a practice in which you seek to **deny** what your flesh craves for a time. When you suppress those cravings and force your body to yield to your spirit, you create space for drawing closer to God. When your will is aligned with his own, you have full access to his unlimited power through the Holy Spirit, including the power to overcome any areas that are holding you back in your faith.

The importance of fasting in connection to prayer

- A. In the above scriptures, Jesus disciples were **unable** to bring healing to a demon-possessed boy. So, the father brought the child to Jesus and asked him for healing.
- B. Jesus identified *two reasons* why the disciples could not drive the demon out of the boy – they were **“unbelieving and perverse.”**

*“You unbelieving and perverse generation,” **Matthew 17:17a (NIV)***

1. **Unbelieving:** *not connected to **God**.* In other words, their faith was weak.
2. **Perverse:** *too connected to the **world**.* The disciples were being influenced by the world.

C. Jesus provides the **solution** to the problem.

“However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.” Matthew 17:21 (NKJV)

1. **Prayer** connects us to God.
2. **Fasting** disconnects us from the world.

Three principles for prayer and fasting

- A. Set your **objective**.
 1. Decide **why** you are fasting. Have a focus in mind before you begin a fast. Set specific goals and objectives that line up with God’s priorities.
 2. Know **what** you are believing God to provide when you come to him in prayer and fasting. Share this objective with others and make your request public.
- B. Decide what **type** of fast you will do.
 1. **Complete fast**: A fast in which you are simply drinking liquids. (Be sure to always get medical supervision and just use good sense before you begin a complete fast.)
 2. **Selective fast**: A fast in which you remove certain food types or food groups from your diet. (One example is the Daniel Fast, in which you do not eat meat, sweets, or bread.)
 3. **Partial fast**: A fast in which you pick certain meals in the day to skip, such as breakfast or lunch. Replace the time you would have spent eating by spending time with God.
 4. **Soul fast**: A fast in which you choose not to engage in certain things that feed your mind, will, or emotions, such as abstaining from social media. You get away from “life as usual” and instead choose to fix your mind on the things of the Lord.
- C. **Expect** results
 1. **Healing**: When you fast and pray. God will bring healing to the broken things in your life – your body, relationships, mind, emotions, and other areas.
 2. **Holiness**: When you fast and pray. God will show you areas that have been grieving him so you can change those things and grow closer to him.
 3. **Help**: When you fast and pray. God’s favor and blessing will be on your life.