

An exposition explores fasting as a central and living discipline, anchored in biblical witness and shaped by lived experience. Beginning with a personal testimony of an extended fast that turned inward ambition into humility, the talk traces fasting through Scripture: Levitical atonement, prophetic calls to return (Joel), Jesus' forty-day fast, and the early church's use of fasting alongside worship and decision-making (Acts). The argument emphasizes that Jesus frames fasting as an expected rhythm—"when you fast"—placing it beside prayer and giving as formative spiritual practices that shape attachment and obedience.

Fasting is presented not as a way to earn God's favor but as a devotional posture that exposes dependence and cultivates longing for God. Proper fasting resists performative religiosity by keeping the discipline private and humble so that God, not human applause, is the audience. Fasting without prayer is reduced to mere self-denial; combined with prayer, it becomes a means of focused listening, discernment, and intimacy with God. The discipline redirects appetite into spiritual hunger, revealing the comforts and distractions that occupy the heart and allowing repentance and reorientation to follow.

Attention is given to contemporary relevance: in an age of constant access and distraction, fasting serves to rebuild spiritual self-control and distinguish appetite from need. Practical application moves beyond food to include any recurring comfort or compulsion—phones, schedules, or habits—that displace dependence on God. The call concludes with a concrete challenge to set something aside and create intentional space for prayer, and an invitation to participate in an upcoming week of corporate prayer and fasting. Throughout, fasting is framed as a humble, prayerful means to a deeper relationship with God rather than a badge of achievement.

Key Takeaways

1. Fasting is a biblical expectation

Fasting appears throughout Scripture as a regular posture of repentance, dependence, and seeking God—Jesus assumes it for his followers, and the early church practiced it when seeking direction. Framing fasting as expected reshapes it from an optional extra to a formative means of formation for those committed to spiritual growth. This claim reframes fasting as a corporate and personal rhythm rather than an elite or occasional performance. [56:29]

2. Fasting demands humility, not showmanship

Authentic fasting removes public display and cultivates a hidden dependence that God honors; when fasting becomes performance, its spiritual purpose is lost. The discipline aims to strip pride and expose weakness so God's grace can meet and transform the heart. Humility turns fasting into worship rather than self-promotion. [63:10]

3. Prayer must accompany every fast

Without prayer, fasting is mere deprivation; paired with prayer it focuses attention, creates space for God's voice, and converts physical longing into spiritual listening. Scripture consistently pairs fasting with petition and worship, showing that fasting amplifies prayer's depth and receptivity. Prayer transforms fasting from endurance into fellowship. [69:06]

4. Fasting reorders desire toward God

Removing habitual comforts clarifies underlying attachments and redirects longings toward divine satisfaction rather than transient relief. As appetite is disciplined, choices and affections shift, enabling a renewed hunger for holiness and spiritual priorities. This reordering is gradual but intentional, reshaping how joy and contentment are sought. [73:47]

5. Fast to expose and redirect dependence

Fasting functions diagnostically—revealing where life is ruled by comfort, anxiety, or compulsion—and therapeutically—reorienting dependence toward God. The practice helps rebuild spiritual self-control and distinguishes appetite from genuine need, enabling wiser, soul-deep decisions. It calls for targeted, honest fasting from whatever consistently displaces God. [77:46]

Here is a Bible study guide based on the sermon about fasting:

Bible Reading

* Matthew 6:16-18

* Joel 2:12

* Acts 13:2

Observation questions

Jesus says, "When you fast," not "If you fast." What does this phrasing suggest about the expectation of fasting for Jesus' followers? [56:53]

The sermon mentions that in Jewish tradition, fasting was deeply connected to repentance, humility, and dependence on God. What specific Old Testament examples are given to illustrate this connection? [57:42]

According to the sermon, what is the difference between fasting done for God and fasting done for people? [01:04:06]

The sermon states that fasting without prayer is just dieting. What biblical examples are given to show that fasting and prayer are consistently paired? [01:09:39]

Interpretation questions

The sermon highlights that Jesus placed fasting alongside prayer and giving as core spiritual disciplines. Why might Jesus have considered fasting to be as essential as prayer and generosity for spiritual formation? [01:00:32]

The sermon suggests that fasting is meant to be private before God, not public. What are the potential spiritual dangers of performing spiritual disciplines, like fasting, for the approval of others? [01:04:44]

The sermon explains that fasting redirects hunger and desire toward God. How does removing physical comforts or habitual distractions help to reveal our deeper spiritual needs and attachments? [01:14:37]

The sermon notes that in an age of constant access and distraction, fasting helps rebuild spiritual self-control. How does this practice help distinguish between genuine need and mere appetite? [01:21:02]

Application questions

The sermon emphasizes that fasting is a biblical expectation, not an optional extra. Considering this, what might it look like for you to incorporate fasting as a regular rhythm in your spiritual life, rather than an occasional performance? [56:29]

The teaching stressed that authentic fasting requires humility, not showmanship. How can you ensure that your fasting is a private act of dependence on God, rather than a way to gain recognition or admiration from others? [01:03:10]

The sermon clearly states that prayer must accompany every fast, otherwise it becomes mere deprivation. What steps can you take to ensure that your fasting is always coupled with focused prayer and listening to God? [01:09:06]

Fasting is presented as a way to reorder our desires toward God. What habitual comforts or compulsions in your life might be displacing your dependence on God, and how could intentionally setting one aside create space for God? [01:13:47]

The sermon challenges us to consider where in our lives we need to fast to draw nearer to God, suggesting it's not just about food but also about other distractions. What specific area of your life, beyond food, could you consider setting aside to intentionally seek God more deeply this week? [01:21:58]

The message encourages us to remember that Christ alone truly satisfies, and that fasting helps remove what dulls our taste for Him. In what ways can you intentionally pursue Christ as the ultimate satisfaction in your life, especially when faced with the constant distractions of modern culture? [01:21:47]