

# Come back to God with Fasting

**Scripture:** Joel 2:12; Mat 6:16-18

*Prayer is the one hand with which we grasp the invisible; fasting, the other which we let loose and cast away the visible.* Andrew Murry

Fasting is voluntarily giving up food, and lawful pleasures for spiritual reasons. There are 3 kinds of fasting in the Bible.

- a. Absolute Fast/ dry Fast: Esther 4:15, 16; Acts 9:9 Paul
- b. Normal Fast/ Water Fast: Jesus; 40 days, Mat 4:2
- c. Partial Fast/ Daniel Fast: Dan 10:2, 3

Fasting may be defined as abstaining from any lawful things for a period for spiritual reasons.

Ex. Mat :40, 41; watching – giving up sleep for prayer.

From sex; 1 Cor 7:5

## Mat 6:16-18

This section is a continuation from Mat 5:20;

*For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

Luke 18:12; the Pharisee prays. That he fast 2 times a week.

*Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"*

<sup>19</sup> Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. <sup>20</sup> But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. Mark 2:18-20;

In Mat 6:16; Jesus teaches, when you fast. And Mark 2:20, He says, they will fast. In other words, Jesus expects his disciples to fast for the right reasons. Not to show off to people but to expose themselves to God alone.

## **Benefits of fasting:**

### **1. FASTING HELPS US TO MASTER OURSELVES: 1 Cor 6:12**

*You say, "I am allowed to do anything"—but not everything is good for you. And even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything. (NLT)*

Fasting is saying "no" to self in order to say "yes" to God.

The sin of Sodom – Ezek 16:49, 50

*The sin of your sister Sodom was this: She lived with her daughters in the lap of luxury—proud, gluttonous, and lazy. They ignored the oppressed and the poor. They put on airs and lived obscene lives. And you know what happened: I did away with them. (MSG)*

*Even one of their own men, a prophet from Crete, has said about them, "The people of Crete are all liars, cruel animals, and lazy gluttons."*<sup>1</sup>Tit 1:12 (NLT)

*For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ.*

*They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth.* Phil 3:18, 19 (NLT)

A self-indulging religion is a cross denying religion. Never become belly God worshipper by living for appetite. Mark 2:1-20

Mark 2:18-20; the bride who waits for the bridegroom will fast. (Cast away)

*I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.* 1 Cor 9:27; (NLT)

Let us train our flesh to be our slave. Our flesh is a terrible master.

Remember eating and drinking can become a trap by which we can miss Christ Second coming. *"Watch out! Don't let your hearts be dulled by carousing and drunkenness, and by the worries of this life. Don't let that day catch you unaware, <sup>35</sup> like a trap. For that day will come upon everyone living on the earth. <sup>36</sup> Keep alert at all times. And pray that you might be strong enough to escape these coming horrors and stand before the Son of Man."* Luke 21:34-36

## 2. FASTING DEVELOPS DEPENDENCE ON GOD: Mat 4:4

*Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*

*Our closeness with God gives us the right perspective about God.*

*For I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen<sup>[a]</sup> to accompany us and protect us from enemies along the way. After all, we had told the king, "Our God's hand of protection is on all who worship him, but his fierce anger rages against those who abandon him."<sup>23</sup> **So we fasted** and earnestly prayed that our God would take care of us, and he heard our prayer.* Ezra 8:22-23

Robert Mulholland, **"one of the main purpose of fasting is to wean us from our dependence upon God's gifts and enable us to become dependent upon God alone"**

God is not looking for men and women who are noted for their strength, but for their total dependence on Him.

## 3. FASTING HUMBLER US: Psalm 35:13; 69:10

*Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth  
and humbled myself with fasting.*

*When my prayers returned to me unanswered,*

<sup>10</sup> *When I weep and fast,*

*I must endure scorn;*

In both the Psalm, David humbles himself in behalf of others. Ezra humbled himself in fasting

due to mixed marriage among God's people.

*Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the room of Jehohanan son of Eliashib. While he was there, he ate no food and drank no water, because he continued to mourn over the unfaithfulness of the exiles.* Ezra 10:6

Why should we humble?

If we are humble we will not stumble.

*You adulterous people, [a] don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

<sup>5</sup> *Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us [b]?* <sup>6</sup> *But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:*

*"God opposes the proud  
but shows favor to the humble."* [c]

<sup>7</sup> *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* <sup>8</sup> *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* <sup>9</sup> *Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.* <sup>10</sup> *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.* James 4:4-10

#### **4. FASTING EMPOWERS US FOR MINISTRY:** Acts 13:1-3

*Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.* <sup>2</sup> *As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."* <sup>3</sup> *Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.* (NKJV)

Ministering to the Lord precedes ministering to the people. Out of the ministry to the Lord, the Holy Spirit brings forth the direction and power needed for effective ministry to men.

Vs. 3

Vs. 4 the two of them sent on their way by the Holy Spirit.

*So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."* Mark 9:29(NKJV)

*I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.* 2 Cor 11:27;

All night prayers(watching) and fasting was an often thing in the life of Paul.

Luke 4:1, 2, 14; Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit during fasting even before he ventured out into public ministry.

*I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."* Luke 24:49

#### **5. FASTING DEMONSTRATES A TRUE SORROW FOR SIN.** Psalm 51

2 Sam 12:15-20; David's prayer was not answered but he was transformed and then he could write Psalm 51; Psalm 38 etc.

*The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.*

<sup>6</sup> *When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal*

robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. <sup>7</sup> This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh:

*“By the decree of the king and his nobles:*

*Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. <sup>8</sup> But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.”*

*<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened. Jonah 3:5-10;*

*On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and putting dust on their heads. <sup>2</sup> Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the sins of their ancestors. <sup>3</sup> They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the LORD their God. Neh 9:1-3*

*That is why the LORD says,*

*“Turn to me now, while there is time.*

*Give me your hearts.*

*Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Joel 2:12 (NLT)*