

D-LIFE BOOT CAMP

Training for a lifestyle
of discipleship.



Keeping it Real

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Pastor Dale L. Crawley Sr.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

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Fasting

Do We Need to Fast?

Fasting might sound sensational or a public interest for excitement today. But in Jesus' culture, it was weird for a religious person not to fast.

The disciples of John the Baptist, an important prophet who prepared the way for Jesus' ministry, often fasted. So did the Pharisees, a group of religious leaders who opposed Jesus' teachings and conspired to kill Him!

During Jesus' earthly ministry, His followers didn't fast. But Jesus assumed they would fast after he returned to the Father (Luke 5:33-35). In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives His followers instructions on how to fast, specifically telling them not to make a show of fasting like others in their culture (Matthew 6:16-18). Jesus may not have commanded his followers to fast, but He expected them to.

Prayer and Fasting in the Bible

Fasting is mentioned throughout the Bible, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. However, when Christians discuss fasting, two key passages often come up: one from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah and one from Jesus himself. But neither of these passages gives us specifics on how to abstain from food. **Rather, both focus on the heart of the person fasting.** By definition Biblical fasting, is "not eating" with a spiritual goal in mind.

In Isaiah 58, God sees the nation of Israel abstaining from food for a day in order to seek help from God: justice for Israel and judgment on those who have oppressed Israel. However, the help does not come, and the people complain.

God turns the tables on Israel, pointing out how the Israelites are oppressing their own people. Employers withhold pay from the workers, and the people act violently toward each other. Through Isaiah, God tells the people that He doesn't want them to go a day without food; He wants them to abstain from the ways they've oppressed one another. (Isaiah 58:9-10) The Israelites were merely putting on a show of fasting for God without truly following Him.

Likewise, when Jesus instructs His followers on how to fast, he tells them not to do so for show. (Matthew

6:16-18) Christians shouldn't fast in order to look pious or righteous. Fasting is a practice of humbling yourself before God. If you're turning a fast into a spiritual ego boost, you've missed the point entirely.

Why Fast? What Does Biblical Fasting Accomplish?

Biblical fasting is not a hunger strike between you and God. It can be easy to think of fasting as a way to add an extra oomph to your prayers. But biblical fasting isn't so much about how God responds to your prayers it's more about how you bring your prayers to Him.

“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5, NIV; see 2 Samuel 22:28). **Fasting is a means of humbling ourselves before God.** In the Old Testament, fasting was often accompanied by other signs of humility and brokenness, such as weeping, mourning, and lamenting, as well as wearing sackcloth and sitting in ashes.

Several benefits gained from fasting:

- Fasting is a biblical way to truly **humble yourself in the sight of God**. King David said, “I humbled myself with fasting” (Psalm 35:13, New King James Version; see Ezra 8:21).
- Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your true spiritual condition, resulting in **brokenness, repentance and a transformed life**.
- Your confidence and faith in God will be strengthened. You will feel **mentally, spiritually and physically refreshed**.

It's important to understand that fasting is not a way to get a better response to prayer. Rather, true fasting is a means of fostering a better (humbler) approach to prayer.

How to Do a Biblical Fast

There are 2 types of fasts commonly practiced by Christians today:

1. A partial fast. This is described in the book of Daniel. For three weeks, Daniel, who was a prophet during a time when Israel lived in exile, abstained only from “delicacies” like meat and wine (Daniel 10:3).

2. A complete fast: Abstaining from all forms of food. The Bible is full of examples of people who have abstained from food to seek God:

- Jesus fasted before He began His public ministry (Luke 4:1,2).
- Nehemiah fasted to help him confess his sins to God and turn away from them and to ask God for favor in the sight of the king of Persia to get permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:4).
- David fasted to ask God to intervene because of injustice (Psalm 35:13). In 2 Samuel 12:17, 23, he fasted to ask for a miraculous healing — a request God did not grant.
- Mordecai and the Jews fasted upon hearing news of Haman's wicked plot for their extermination (Esther 4:3).
- The early church fasted while worshiping and committing their ministry to the Lord. They also sought the Lord through fasting for guidance when they appointed leaders (Acts 13:2; 14:23).

During your fast, set aside specific and significant time to worship and seek God in prayer. Plan ahead so your time can be unhurried and conducive to enjoying the Lord. Many people begin this time by repenting of any sins the Holy Spirit brings to mind and asking for God's forgiveness. This is essential to ensure that sin is not hindering your communication with God.

Then plan time to make your requests known to God and to seek His will. Take breaks to study Scripture passages you have chosen. Don't rush your time with God. Take time to listen. Keep a notebook and pen nearby to record the ideas, insights, directions, and instructions He impresses on your mind. When you turn down the "noise of Western civilization" by fasting, you can more easily hear God.

Finally, fasting is a way God's people have humbled themselves before Him for more than three thousand years! Jesus, David, and many other followers of our God have gone without food for a little while to worship and pray to the one who supplies all our needs.