

THE TRAIN OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES





FASTING

AND

PRAYER AND
PROCLAMATION

WORD OF GOD



FASTING







In giving us the privilege of fasting as well as praying, God has added a powerful weapon to our spiritual armory. In her folly and ignorance the Church has largely looked upon it as obsolete. She has thrown it down in some dark corner to rust, and there it has lain forgotten for centuries. An hour of impending crisis for the Church and the world demands its recovery.

Reference: God's Chosen Fast, Christian Literature Crusade, 1968, p. 43.

2 Timothy 2:5

And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.



JESUS PLAYED ACCORDING TO
THE RULES: HE FASTED

Matthew 3:13 – 17 NKJV

s ¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ And John *tried to* prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?”

¹⁵ But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit *it to be so* now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him.

¹⁶ When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and ^[b]He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, “**This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.**”

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And when **He had fasted forty days and forty nights**, afterward He was hungry. ³ Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

⁴ But He answered and said, “**It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’**”

"In Shansi I found Chinese Christians who were accustomed to spend time in fasting and prayer. They recognized that this fasting, which so many dislike, which requires faith in God, since it makes one feel weak and poorly, is really a Divinely appointed means of grace. Perhaps the greatest hindrance to our work is our own imagined strength; and in fasting we learn what poor, weak creatures we are-dependent on a meal of meat for the little strength which we are so apt to lean upon.""

- Hudson Taylor, Missionary to China, 1800's

JESUS PLAYED ACCORDING TO
THE RULES: HE FASTED

Matthew 4:17

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Matthew 4:23 - 25

²³ And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. ²⁴ Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. ²⁵ Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and *from* Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

JESUS PLAYED ACCORDING TO
THE RULES: HE FASTED

Matthew 17:14-21 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁶ So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.”

¹⁷ Then 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.”¹⁸ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?”

²⁰ So 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. ²¹ **However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.**”

JESUS' DISCIPLES (US) ALSO FAST

Matthew 9:14-15

14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?”

¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and **then they will fast.**

Matthew 6:16-18

16 “Moreover, **when** you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret **will reward you openly.**

1. To prepare for ministry (receive anointing for ministry).

- a. Jesus spent forty days and nights in the wilderness fasting and praying before He began God's work on this earth. (Matthew 4:1-17; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-14).
- b. Paul fasted 3 days without water and food directly after his conversion. He needed time alone to prepare for what His Father had called Him to do

2. For health and healing (receive health, healing, miracles)

- a. "David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground" (2 Samuel 12:16)

3. For deliverance from demonic oppression (receive deliverance and healing)

- a. Jesus heals the boy oppressed by a demon when his disciples cannot (this one comes out with prayer & fasting)

4. To seek God's wisdom (receive direction and guidance).

- a. Prophets and teachers in Antioch were ministering to the Lord and fasting before and after the Holy Spirit set apart Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2-3)
- b. Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted for the elders of the churches before committing them to the Lord for His service (Acts 14:23).

5. To show grief (receive comfort and perspective).

- a. Nehemiah mourned, fasted, and prayed when he learned Jerusalem's walls had been broken down, leaving the Israelites vulnerable and disgraced (Nehemiah 1:1-4).

6. To seek deliverance or protection (receive deliverance and protection).

- a. Esther fasts before going to the King to save the Jews from annihilation
- b. Ezra declared a corporate fast and prayed for a safe journey for the Israelites as they made the nine-hundred-mile trek to Jerusalem from Babylon (Ezra 8:21-23).
- c. Paul fasts 14 days while on the ship to Tarsus in order to preserve it from shipwreck. (Acts 27)

7. To repent (receive forgiveness).

- a. After Jonah pronounced judgment against the city of Nineveh, the king covered himself with sackcloth and sat in the dust. He then ordered the people, children and animals to fast and pray.

8. To gain victory (win the battle, breakthrough).

- a. After losing forty thousand men in battle in two days, the Israelites cried out to God for help. Judges 20:26 says all the people went up to Bethel and “sat weeping before the Lord.” They also “fasted that day until evening.” The next day the Lord gave them victory over the Benjamites.

9. To express spiritual hunger (revival, move of God, revelation)

- a. Daniel’s fast for revelation and understanding in the Book of Daniel.
- b. Cornelius was fasting and praying when an angel instructed him to go to Peter (Acts 10:30)

10. To worship God (greater intimacy).

- a. Anna the Prophetess “She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.”

“You and I have no more right to omit fasting because we feel no special emotional prompting than we have a right to omit prayer, Bible reading, or assembling with God’s children for lack of some special emotional prompting. Fasting is just as biblical and normal a part of a spiritual walk of obedience with God as are these others.”

Wesley Duewel

“The absence of fasting is the measure of our contentment with the absence of Christ. If we don’t feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because we have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because we have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Our soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.”

John Piper