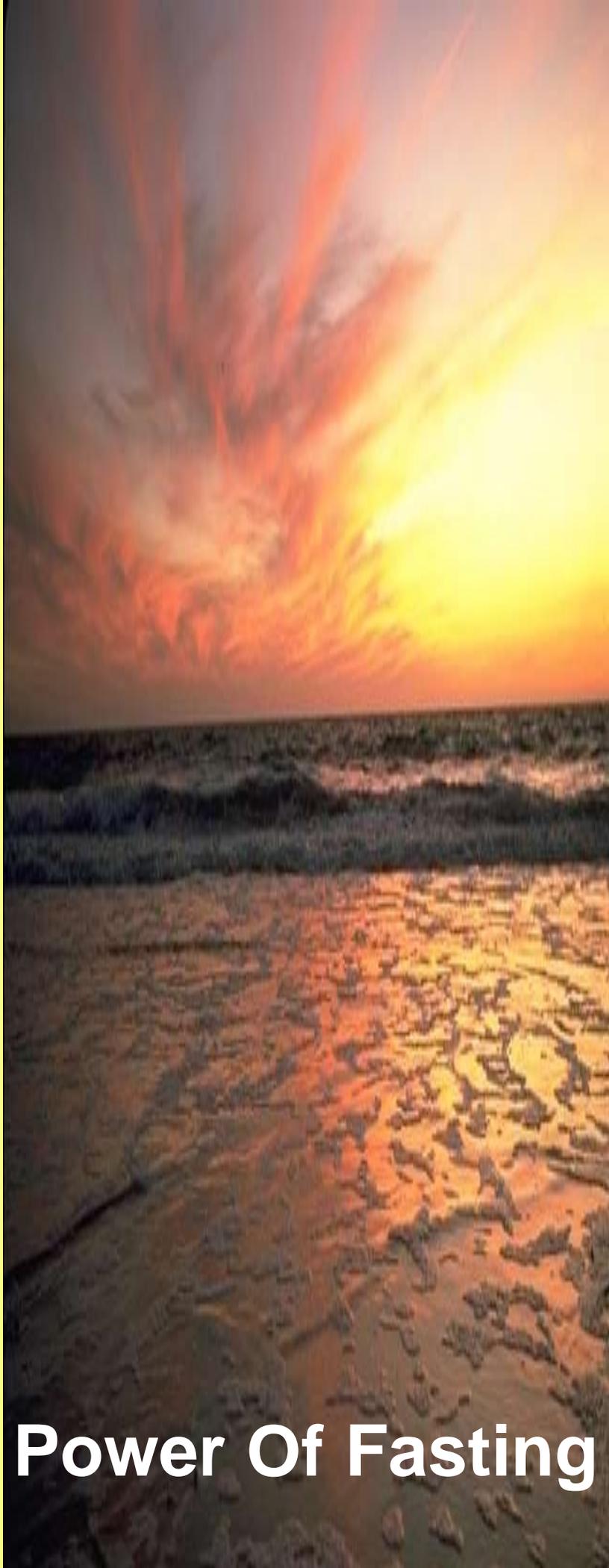


Scriptural References:

Exodus 34:28
Leviticus 16:31
Deuteronomy 9:9-10
1 Samuel 7:6
1 Samuel 31:13
2 Samuel 1:12
1 Kings 21:9,12,27
1 Chronicles 10:12
Ezra 8:21-23
Nehemiah 1:4
Nehemiah 9:1
Esther 4:3,16
Isaiah 58
Daniel 6:18
Daniel 9:3
Daniel 10:2
Joel 1:14
Joel 2:12,15
Jonah 3:5
Matthew 4:1-11
Matthew 6:16-18
Matthew 9:14-15
Matthew 17:20-21
Mark 9:29
Luke 2:37
Luke 4:2
Acts 9:9,17-19
Acts 13:2-3
Acts 14:23
Acts 27:33-34
1 Corinthians 7:5

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Power Of Fasting

What is fasting? How powerful is it? Does the Bible command us to fast? If so, what does the Bible teach about this subject? What are the different kinds of fasting and why do we need to fast?

What is 'fasting'? Fasting is a form of abstinence and spiritual self-discipline or self-sacrifice. It means to go without food and/or water for a specific period of time. In the Old Testament, the words 'deny yourselves' are used, which means to go without food and water. For example, on the Day of Atonement. Fasting is part of our spiritual walk with God, and our spiritual act of worship, where we show God that we are totally dependent on Him, and need His help to lead and guide us every step of the way in our Christian lives. It is a special time devoted to worshipping God, with a clear objective. Fasting is a private matter, between ourselves and God.

There are different kinds of fasting:

Partial fast - abstaining from certain kinds of foods. For example, eating no solid foods (such as meat) for a period of time, as Daniel did for three weeks when he mourned and ate no choice food, no meat or wine, and used no lotions at all. He fasted for the fulfillment of God's promises, and received mighty revelations from Almighty God. (*Daniel 10:2-3*). A partial fast may include drinking only water or juice.

Absolute or complete fast - abstaining completely from food and drink for a period of time. For example, Paul fasted for three days, without food and water (*Acts 9:9*).

Supernatural fast - Jesus Christ fasted forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, without food and water. He quoted scripture to overcome Satan. (*Matthew 4:1-11*). Moses also fasted forty days and forty nights, where he ate no bread and drank no water, and was given the two stone tablets with the ten commandments (*Deuteronomy 9:9-10*).

A permanent form of abstinence is abstinence from fornication (sexual immorality is condemned and forbidden in the Bible); and the corrupt and evil ways of this world, including world media and "entertainment," that promotes a lifestyle that is contrary to the word of God. As God's children we are filled with the Holy Spirit, remain spiritually pure and undefiled; and train ourselves to live godly and holy lives. God commands us to avoid even the appearance of evil. We learn to submit our lives to, and revere God, and keep our bodies self-controlled by abstaining from the physical "pleasures" of this world (*1 Corinthians 6:18-20; 1 Thessalonians 5:22*).

How do we fast? As with God's appointed Holy Days, fasting is from sunset to sunset (*Leviticus 23:32*). We must be in a right relationship with God, and our hearts must be right with Him. We humble ourselves before God and approach Him with clean hands, pure heart, steadfast spirit, and renewed mind. While we are fasting, we spend extra quality time in prayer and bible study. Christ gives us specific instructions on how to fast. We are not to fast for show, as the hypocrites do. We fast in secret, and God will reward us openly. (*Matthew 6:16-18*).

The kind of fasting that pleases God is mentioned in *Isaiah 58*:

1. Rending one's heart, not one's garments.
2. No more injustice.
3. No more bondage, burden and oppression.
4. Set the oppressed free and break every yoke.
5. Share your food with the hungry.
6. Provide the homeless with shelter.
7. Clothe the naked.
8. Don't turn away from your own flesh and blood.
9. Take away from your midst the yoke of oppression.
10. Stop finger pointing in scorn toward the oppressed or the godly.
11. Take away every form of false and wicked speaking.

Why do we fast? The primary reason why we fast is for spiritual and religious reasons. Jesus said 'when' you fast, not 'if' you fast, meaning that it is commanded of us (*Matthew 6:16-17; Luke 5:33-35*).

We fast in order to spend extra quality time in fellowship with God. We show complete faithfulness, passion, devotion, dedication and commitment, through prayer and fasting. We demonstrate to God that we are seriously determined to persevere with Him, and willing to sacrifice to see His will accomplished in our lives. God demands evidence to show our faith, and earnestness and sincerity of our hearts. (*Hebrews 11:6*)

Fasting helps us become spiritually stronger; and builds patience, perseverance, strength, endurance and stamina in our Christian lives. Fasting especially demonstrates to God that He takes pre-eminence in our lives, and that He is of greatest importance to us. It demonstrates that God is first love and number one priority in our lives; and that we love Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength;

and have surrendered our lives to Him completely. It helps us to focus our eyes, hearts and minds completely on God (not on physical things), and draw closer to Him. Fasting may also speed the answer to our prayers.

The Name of Jesus, Blood of Jesus and Word of God, in combination with prayer, fasting, praise and worship, and putting on the whole armor of God, are the most powerful spiritual weapons in a Christian's life, thereby giving us victory in spiritual warfare. That is, victory over Satan; the world; and the flesh.

Fasting helps us to live by the Spirit, so that we do not gratify the desires of the flesh; thereby, helping us to resist the temptation to sin. It also helps us to press on forward in our spiritual goals, which are: building, developing and strengthening our relationship with God. As we grow spiritually and mature in the faith, the bond in the relationship will become stronger. Through fasting, we become more humble and obedient to God, and submissive to His will for our lives. It cuts out the world, so that we can tune into God. This pleases God.

How do you live according to God's word, when there are demonic hindrances in your life? We also fast to seek God's protection from demonic attacks, and victory in breaking down demonic strongholds. Fasting gives us victory over Satan and demonic forces. Jesus said that some demons come out only by prayer and fasting (meaning there are different kinds of demons). (*Read tract: 'You Can Be Set Free!'*). *Matthew 17:20-21 - And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.*

We also fast for spiritual breakthroughs. For example, when we have a special request or something is earnestly desired from God, and the answer has not come through prayer alone (*1 Samuel 1:6-7*). We fast when we desire God's victory in a particular situation that is seemingly hopeless and impossible. (*Esther 4:10-17*). Also, many of God's trials come quicker to us when we fast, and we have a better opportunity to pass them. Of course, there are also many other reasons why we fast.

When do we fast? Fasting is not just once a year, on the Day of Atonement. It is to be done regularly, and for specific reasons (not as a ritual or religious duty), always operating under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit.

In the Bible, people fasted for different reasons and in various ways:

Old Testament:

- 1) Hannah fasted for a son (*1 Samuel 1*).
- 2) Receiving healing (*1 Samuel 1:5-11; 18-20*).
- 3) In death and mourning, where the valiant men of Jabesh Gilead took down the bodies of Saul and his sons and burned them. Then took their bones and buried them and fasted for seven days (*1 Samuel 31:13*).
- 4) Humbling oneself before God and seeking His protection (*Ezra 8:21-23*).
- 5) In confession of sins in prayer, with mourning (*Nehemiah 1:4*).
- 6) With great mourning, weeping and wailing (*Esther 4:3*).
- 7) Fasting three days without food and drink, for victory (*Esther 4:10-17*).
- 8) In repentance and confession of sins, with sackcloth and ashes (*Daniel 9:3-5,20*).
- 9) God commanded a holy fast and repentance (*Joel 1:14*).
- 10) The entire city of Nineveh, including the animals, fasted without food and drink, upon hearing the judgment God pronounced upon the city, through Jonah (*Jonah 3*).

New Testament:

- 1) Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights in the wilderness. He received divine anointing and preparation for His earthly ministry, while resisting the temptations of the devil (*Matthew 4:2; Luke 4:14*).
- 2) Anna, the prophetess, served and worshiped God in the temple, with fasting and prayer, day and night (*Luke 2:37*).
- 3) Paul fasted for three days and three nights, without food and water (*Acts 9:9*).
- 4) Ordination for ministry. The Holy Spirit said to the prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch, while worshipping the Lord and fasting, to set apart Saul and Barnabas for the work to which they were called (*Acts 13:1-3*).
- 5) In the appointing of elders in the church by Paul and Barnabas, with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord (*Acts 14:23*).
- 6) Paul, as a servant of God, commended himself in fasting (*2 Corinthians 6:4-5*).

Preparations for fasting: Firstly, we seek God, in prayer, and ask Him to give us the wisdom to know what kind of fast we are to undertake, including the frequency and duration. Also, it is a good idea to seek a physician for advice, especially if you are physically ill and/or concerned with beginning any kind of fast.