




The Heart of Fasting: Jesus' Teaching in the Gospels



Explore Jesus' teaching on fasting in the Gospels,
discovering the true heart behind fasting and how
to seek God genuinely.

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Introduction

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that has been practiced for centuries, yet Jesus offers a fresh and profound perspective in His teachings. In the gospel of *Matthew 6:16–18*, Jesus challenges common practices around fasting, directing our hearts toward sincerity and intimacy with God rather than outward appearances.

Many people fast for a variety of reasons: seeking spiritual breakthrough, showing repentance, or demonstrating devotion. However, Jesus emphasizes that fasting should be an act of worship rather than a public display. He warns against doing it for recognition, reminding us that God who sees in secret will reward openly.

Throughout this study plan, we will journey through the Gospels to understand the context and meaning of Jesus' teaching on fasting. We will uncover the **true heart behind fasting**—a posture of humility, dependence, and sincere seeking of God—rather than simply an external ritual.

Each day you will reflect on a passage from the Gospels, supported by relevant scriptures, and be encouraged to apply Jesus' principles to your own spiritual walk. Expect to be challenged and inspired as you deepen your understanding of fasting as more than just abstaining from food but as a catalyst for drawing closer to God.



Prepare your heart for transformation and a fresh encounter with God's presence as you engage with His Word, embracing the holiness and intimacy that fasting cultivates. **Let us learn to fast with a heart that seeks God first and foremost.** 🙏





Day 1: Understanding Jesus' Teaching on Fasting



Day 1:  Understanding Jesus' Teaching on Fasting

Your Verse

Matthew 6:16–18 – “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do...”

Supporting Scriptures

- *Isaiah 58:6 – “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen...”*
- *Joel 2:12 – “Return to me with all your heart, with fasting...”*



Day 1:  Understanding Jesus' Teaching on Fasting

Devotional: The True Meaning of Fasting with Jesus

What does fasting mean to you? Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6 calls believers to examine their motives when fasting. He contrasts the showy, attention-seeking behavior of the hypocrites with the humble, private devotion that pleases God. The essence is a heart posture — fasting is not about impressing others but about deepening your relationship with the Father.

Fasting is a physical expression that helps us refocus on spiritual priorities, aligning our desires with God's will. Isaiah 58 reminds us that fasting God chooses involves acts of justice and compassion, not just abstaining from food. Meanwhile, Joel calls us to return wholeheartedly with fasting and weeping—indicating a repentance and dependence on God.

Reflect on how fasting can serve as a bridge connecting your body and spirit, helping you seek God genuinely. Ask yourself if your fasting is meant for others' approval or for God's glory. When done with sincerity, fasting unlocks spiritual breakthroughs and draws you closer to God's presence.



Day 1:  Understanding Jesus' Teaching on Fasting

Reflect and Apply

1. Why does Jesus warn against showing off when fasting?

2. How can fasting reveal your true motives to God?

3. What changes when fasting is done in secret versus publicly?



Day 1:  Understanding Jesus' Teaching on Fasting

Journaling Prompts

1. Write about a personal experience where fasting helped you seek God.

2. List ways your heart can be more humble and sincere during fasting.

3. Describe obstacles you face when trying to fast with the right attitude.



Day 1:  Understanding Jesus' Teaching on Fasting

Prayer for Today

Father, help me to fast with a pure heart seeking only Your presence. Help me to avoid the temptation of pride or showing off. Teach me to value Your approval above all else and to keep my eyes fixed on You. May my fasting be a true expression of my love and dependence on You. *Guide me to draw closer to You through this discipline.* In Jesus' name, Amen. 🙏❤️✨





Day 2: Fasting as a Spiritual Hunger



Day 2: 🍞 Fasting as a Spiritual Hunger

Your Verse

Matthew 4:1-4 – Jesus fasts and says, “Man shall not live on bread alone...”

Supporting Scriptures

- *Deuteronomy 8:3 – “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word...”*
- *Psalms 42:1 – “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.”*



Day 2: 🍞 Fasting as a Spiritual Hunger

Devotional: Fasting Sparks Spiritual Hunger for God

After His baptism, Jesus fasted 40 days in the wilderness, demonstrating that spiritual sustenance is more critical than physical food. When tempted, He quotes Deuteronomy to remind us that **true life comes from God's Word**, not merely physical nourishment.

Fasting awakens a spiritual hunger that points to our need for God's presence. Just as the deer longs for water, fasting intensifies our desire for intimacy with God. This hunger, cultivated through fasting, helps us reset priorities and trust in God's provision for every aspect of life.

What are you hungering for today? When physical food is set aside, our souls are invited to feast on the living Word. Fasting is a journey to encounter God more deeply, allowing Him to satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts.



Day 2: 📖 Fasting as a Spiritual Hunger

Reflect and Apply

1. In what ways do you rely on physical things instead of God's Word?

2. How can fasting help you develop a greater hunger for God's presence?

3. What spiritual needs has God been prompting you to bring before Him?



Day 2: 🍞 Fasting as a Spiritual Hunger

Journaling Prompts

1. Describe your current spiritual hunger and how you desire God.

2. Write a prayer asking God to satisfy your soul's deepest needs.

3. Reflect on times when God's Word was more nourishing than food.



Day 2: 📖 Fasting as a Spiritual Hunger

Prayer for Today

Lord, thank You for the living Word that sustains me. Teach me to hunger and thirst for You above all else. Help me to value spiritual nourishment through Your presence more than physical things. As I fast, open my eyes to the deep thirst of my soul and fill me with Your peace and strength. In Jesus' name, Amen. 🙏📖💧





Day 3: 📖 Fasting with Humility and Secrecy



Day 3: 🕊️ Fasting with Humility and Secrecy

Your Verse

Matthew 6:16 – “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do...”

Supporting Scriptures

- *Luke 18:9-14 – The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector.*
- *Psalms 51:17 – “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart.”*



Day 3: 🕊️ Fasting with Humility and Secrecy

Devotional: Humility: The Secret of Acceptable Fasting

Jesus criticizes the hypocrites who make fasting a public display, seeking admiration from others. Instead, He calls us to fast in secret — a reflection of genuine humility before God.

The parable in Luke 18 highlights the contrast between prideful self-righteousness and humble repentance. True fasting comes from a broken spirit and a contrite heart, as the psalmist declares. It's not about the external act but the inner transformation.

Fasting privately guards our motivation and cultivates reverence. It gently exposes pride and invites God's refining grace. As you fast, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any self-centered attitudes and to help you worship in spirit and truth.



Day 3: 🕊️ Fasting with Humility and Secrecy

Reflect and Apply

1. What prideful attitudes might hinder your fasting?

2. How does fasting in secret protect your heart's purity?

3. In what ways can a broken and contrite heart transform your spiritual life?



Day 3: 🕊️ Fasting with Humility and Secrecy

Journaling Prompts

1. Write about a time pride interfered with your relationship with God.

2. List ways you can practice humility during fasting and worship.

3. Journal your prayers asking God to create a contrite heart in you.



Day 3: 🕊️ Fasting with Humility and Secrecy

Prayer for Today

Lord Jesus, help me to fast with humility and sincerity. Remove any pride or desire for recognition from my heart. Teach me to seek Your approval above all. May my fasting be hidden before men but richly rewarded by You. Create in me a broken and contrite heart that longs for Your presence. Amen. 🙌 🙏





Day 4: 🔍 Fasting Leads to Spiritual Clarity



Day 4: 🔍 Fasting Leads to Spiritual Clarity

Your Verse

Mark 9:29 – Jesus said, “This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting.”

Supporting Scriptures

- *Ezra 8:23 – “We fasted and petitioned our God about this...”*
- *Acts 13:2-3 – Early church fasting accompanied important decisions.*



Devotional: Prayer and Fasting Bring Spiritual Breakthrough

Fasting is often linked with prayer because it heightens our spiritual sensitivity and clarity. In Mark 9, Jesus explains that some challenges require the combined power of prayer and fasting to overcome.

Ezra's fast before a dangerous journey and the early church's fasting before sending leaders both show that God uses fasting to guide and empower His people in critical moments. It creates a heightened dependence on God's wisdom and direction.

Fasting can help discern God's voice, reduce distractions, and strengthen faith. When facing difficult decisions or spiritual battles, fasting reminds us we cannot rely on our strength alone but must seek God wholeheartedly.



Day 4: 🔍 Fasting Leads to Spiritual Clarity

Reflect and Apply

1. Are you currently facing challenges that need prayer and fasting?

2. How does fasting increase your sensitivity to God's guidance?

3. What areas in your life require deeper dependence on God?



Day 4: 🔍 Fasting Leads to Spiritual Clarity

Journaling Prompts

1. Identify a situation where you will commit to pray and fast for clarity.

2. Write about how fasting has helped you hear God more clearly.

3. Journal your hopes and fears as you seek God's guidance.



Day 4: 🔍 Fasting Leads to Spiritual Clarity

Prayer for Today

Heavenly Father, I come before You in prayer and fasting, seeking Your wisdom and guidance. Reveal Your will clearly to me and strengthen my faith to follow it. Help me to trust Your timing and power in every challenge I face. Draw me closer as I depend more on You each day. In Jesus' name, Amen. 🙏





Day 5: ❤️ Fasting as an Expression of Love and Repentance



Day 5: ❤️ Fasting as an Expression of Love and Repentance

Your Verse

Luke 5:33-35 – Jesus explains fasting during His ministry.

Supporting Scriptures

- *Joel 2:13 – “Rend your heart and not your garments.”*
- *Psalms 69:10 – “When I weep and fast, I must endure scorn.”*



Day 5: ❤️ Fasting as an Expression of Love and Repentance

Devotional: Love and Repentance Fuel True Fasting

When Jesus was questioned why His disciples did not fast like others, He explained that fasting fits certain seasons — especially during times of repentance and longing for God's kingdom.

True fasting often accompanies heartfelt sorrow for sin and earnest desire for God. Joel reminds us that God desires inner transformation more than external rituals — to rend our hearts, not just garments.

David's experience shows that fasting sometimes leads to misunderstanding or opposition but remains a powerful expression of devotion and repentance.

Consider fasting as a way to express love for God by humbling yourself before Him and turning from sin. It is a sacred act that brings you into deeper communion with His mercy and grace.



Reflect and Apply

1. How can fasting become an act of love towards God?

2. What areas of your life need repentance right now?

3. How do you respond when others misunderstand your fasting?



Journaling Prompts

1. Write a confession to God expressing your desire to turn from sin.

2. Describe ways you can show love and devotion through fasting.

3. Reflect on how fasting has affected your relationship with others.



Day 5: ❤️ Fasting as an Expression of Love and Repentance

Prayer for Today

Merciful God, I come humbly before You, seeking Your forgiveness and grace. Help me to fast with a heart full of love and repentance. Cleanse me from all unrighteousness and renew my spirit. May my fasting draw me closer to You and deepen my devotion. In Jesus' name, Amen. 💖 🙏 📖





Day 6: 🌿 Fasting Invites God's Power and Presence



Day 6: 🌿 Fasting Invites God's Power and Presence

Your Verse

Matthew 17:21 – “This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting.”

Supporting Scriptures

- *Acts 14:23 – Early believers fasted while appointing leaders.*
- *2 Chronicles 20:3 – Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast seeking God.*



Day 6: 🌿 Fasting Invites God's Power and Presence

Devotional: Fasting Unlocks God's Power and Presence

Fasting is more than sacrifice; it is an invitation for God's power and presence to work mightily in and through us. Jesus underscores this in Matthew 17, linking fasting with spiritual authority over difficult challenges.

The early church used fasting as part of major decisions and courageous steps of faith. King Jehoshaphat led his people in fasting before facing overwhelming odds, trusting God's deliverance.

Fasting opens a pathway for God's Holy Spirit to move with greater freedom and power. It expresses dependence and submission, creating space for God's miraculous intervention.

As you fast, invite God's presence deeply into your life today, trusting that He will strengthen, guide, and empower you beyond natural ability.



Day 6: 🌿 Fasting Invites God's Power and Presence

Reflect and Apply

1. How have you experienced God's power during fasting?

2. What areas of your life need God's supernatural intervention?

3. How does fasting cultivate dependence on the Holy Spirit?



Journaling Prompts

1. Journal a time God showed up powerfully in your life during fasting.

2. List challenges you want to invite God's power to overcome.

3. Write a prayer asking God to fill you with His presence today.



Day 6: 🌿 Fasting Invites God's Power and Presence

Prayer for Today

Almighty God, I invite Your powerful presence into my life. As I fast, pour out Your Spirit and empower me to face every challenge. Help me to rely fully on You, trusting Your strength and wisdom. Let Your kingdom come through me as You work mightily in my heart. In Jesus' name, Amen. 💪 🔥 🙏





Day 7: ✨ Living a Lifestyle of Fasting and Seeking God



Your Verse

Matthew 6:18 – “Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Supporting Scriptures

- *Psalms 63:1 – “O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you...”*
- *Philippians 3:10 – Paul’s desire to know Christ deeply.*



Devotional: Fasting as a Lifelong Journey of Seeking God

Jesus promises that God honors those who fast in secret with rewards beyond recognition. This day reminds us that fasting isn't just a one-time event but part of a lifelong attitude of seeking God.

David's psalm shows a soul earnestly thirsting for God's presence continually. Paul's passion reflects a deeper knowledge and intimacy with Christ—this is the ultimate prize of fasting and spiritual disciplines.

Choosing to fast regularly, even beyond food, fosters a lifestyle where God is the center. It trains us to depend on Him daily, experiencing His faithfulness and love intimately.

May your fasting become a doorway to living every day in communion with God, confident that He sees and will reward your heart of faithfulness.



Reflect and Apply

1. How can fasting become a regular part of your spiritual life?

2. What does it mean to seek God earnestly and continually?

3. What rewards or changes have you experienced through heartfelt fasting?



Journaling Prompts

1. Write how you will incorporate fasting into your daily walk with God.

2. Reflect on ways to deepen your desire to know Christ personally.

3. Journal a prayer asking God to sustain you in this lifelong journey.



Day 7: ✨ Living a Lifestyle of Fasting and Seeking God

Prayer for Today

Father God, I desire to seek You earnestly all my days. Teach me to fast with a sincere heart and to depend on You continually. May my life reflect a heart fully devoted to knowing and living in Your presence. Thank You for Your promise to reward faithfulness. Strengthen me for this ongoing journey. In Jesus' name, Amen. 🌿 🕯️ 🙏





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