

Prayer & Fasting | Pastor Steve Wells | 11.03.2019
Replay message at: <http://www.northpointeFL.org/messages>

Memory Verse: Matthew 6:17-18

¹⁷ But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. ¹⁸ Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you."

Sometimes it can be difficult to know what to do when faced with a big decision. It can be hard to silence the things in our life that distract us. We should turn to prayer and fasting for guidance and clarity during times of major decisions. Fasting and prayer will put you in a place where you can hear and see God more clearly. Watch this short video and read the passages that tell us: What fasting is, Why we should fast, and How we should fast.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lo-BIglon4>

What Is Fasting?

Isaiah 58:1-9

58 "Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast. Shout aloud! Don't be timid. Tell my people Israel of their sins! ² Yet they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to learn all about me. They act like a righteous nation that would never abandon the laws of its God. They ask me to take action on their behalf, pretending they want to be near me. ³ 'We have fasted before you!' they say. 'Why aren't you impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don't even notice it!' 'I will tell you why!' I respond. 'It's because you are fasting to please yourselves. Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers. ⁴ What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. ⁵ You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like reeds bending in the wind. You dress in burlap and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the LORD? ⁶ 'No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free and remove the chains that bind people. ⁷ Share your food with the hungry and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help. ⁸ 'Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind. ⁹ Then when you call, the LORD will answer. 'Yes, I am here,' he will quickly reply. 'Remove the heavy yoke of oppression. Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors!'"

Why Do We Fast?

Acts 14:23 (NLT)

²³ Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."

Acts 9:1-9 (NLT)

9 Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. ² He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains. ³ As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?" ⁵ "Who are you, lord?" Saul asked. And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting!" ⁶ Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." ⁷ The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! ⁸ Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. ⁹ He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink."

Matthew 4:1-11 (NLT)

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. ² For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry. ³ During that time the devil came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" ⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, ⁶ and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, 'He will order his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.'" ⁷ Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the LORD your God.'" ⁸ Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ "I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me." ¹⁰ "Get out of here, Satan," Jesus told him. "For the Scriptures say, 'You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.'" ¹¹ Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus."

Joel 1:14 (NLT)

¹⁴Announce a time of fasting; call the people together for a solemn meeting. Bring the leaders and all the people of the land into the Temple of the LORD your God, and cry out to him there.”

How Should We Fast?**Matthew 6:16 -18(NLT)**

¹⁶“And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. ¹⁷But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. ¹⁸Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”

Luke 2:37 (NLT)

³⁷Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer.”

Personal Reflection

- Do you currently utilize fasting as a tool in your life? Why or why not?
- Do you have a hard time focusing while praying? What makes it hard for you to focus?
- What could/will you choose to fast from when you are faced with a major decision?
- What do you know now, that you did not know before about fasting?