

1. Seeking God's Direction

Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments.

-Exodus 34:28

Moses fasted with the Lord for forty days, leaning on God for direction, wisdom, and guidance in writing the Ten Commandments.

This is known as one of the "supernatural absolute" fasts in the Bible where Moses went 40 days without eating or drinking.

It's labeled "supernatural" or sometimes "miraculous" since that is quite dangerous normally and he was sustained miraculously only by God during that time.

God not only sustained Moses during his fast, but also gave him wisdom and direction.

2. Fasting For Humility

...I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions....So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.

-Ezra 8:21-23

Here, fasting was a means to humility.

It was a way to humble themselves before the Lord as they sought Him in prayer for protection.

They fasted humbly, prayed fiercely, and God answered.

3. Fasting for Freedom

***"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?"***

– Isaiah 58:6

The purpose of fasting is so much deeper than simply giving up food for a while.

It's not just an outward practice, but an inner transformation.

It's about addressing the deep, ugly sins of your life, untying the cords of that yoke, and *breaking free*.

4. Return To God With Repentance

***"Even now," declares the Lord,
"return to me with all your heart,
with fasting and weeping and mourning."***

Joel 2:12

Return to me.

What a powerful phrase coming from our Almighty God.

This was a call to repentance, for the people to return to God's mercy and steadfast love.

And one of the ways to show their truly repentant heart was through fasting.

Even here in the Old Testament, God was not asking for the act of fasting alone. Fasting was a way to show that they desired to return to God with *all of their heart*.

5. Fast For Intimacy With God, Not Praise From Man

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

-Matthew 6:16-18

As Christians, our intentions matter. Our faith takes life to a level unseen. It is possible to do everything right on the outside, but without the proper heart, it doesn't serve its purpose.

Fasting is one of those things.

If you are fasting to be seen by others as a "good Christian," **you're doing it wrong.**

If you're fasting with a heart that can only focus on the things you lack (food, in this case) and not a hunger that drives you into the arms of your Savior to satisfy your needs, **you're doing it wrong.**

Don't fast for attention, recognition, or the sake of not-so-silent suffering through the 40 days of Lent.

Fast to draw nearer to God and rely on Him on deeper levels than you have before.

6. Grow in Spiritual Strength

After fasting forty days and forty nights, he [Jesus] was hungry.

Matthew 4:2

Jesus fasted for forty days.

Forty days.

It's hard for me to fathom what His body would have felt like during that time.

I'm imagining His human form felt quite weak.

Yet, He stood strong against the relentless temptation Satan kept shoving in His face.

He wasn't relying on a protein-filled breakfast or a good night of sleep for his mental sharpness to stand up to the devil.

He relied completely on God's strength (and God's Word) during His fast.

Fasting can strengthen us spiritually when we choose to stand on God's Word in our own human frailty.

7. New Wine Into New Wineskins

Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast. "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

Matthew 9:14-17

The entire purpose of the disciples' and the Pharisees' fasting was to show a longing for the day God would show up and [show favor to Israel again](#).

But Jesus was right there with them! There was no need for fasting at that moment.

But immediately afterward, Jesus said, "the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast."

He wasn't putting an end to all fasting.

He specifically said the time to fast would be coming again!

But now, our fasting isn't filled with mourning as it was for the Pharisees. Instead, it's filled with longing because we know Jesus came and will come again!

8. Seeking The Holy Spirit's Guidance

So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 13:3

It would seem that the church here fasted for guidance from the Holy Spirit. They didn't know what to do next, but they ached for God's direction.

And this particular instance of fasting happened *after* Christ's coming.

This fasting was not about legalism.

This was a deep hunger in these people searching for guidance of the church's next steps.

9. Praying and Fasting

..and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

-Luke 2:37

So many of the Bible verses that talk about fasting also mention prayer. The two seem to go hand-in-hand.

Jesus prayed and fasted. So did the disciples, followers of John the Baptist, and so many others.

This spiritual discipline of fasting and praying was important in the Old Testament, impactful in the New Testament, and is still a powerful way to approach God on a deeper level.