

Why Fast?

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[0 : 00] Hallelujah! And thank you for tuning into this message by David Entry at Carish Church. As we journey in this season of great awakening,! May God pour fresh life into you through His Word! and align you more deeply with His purpose.

Matthew chapter 6. I want to read from verse 16 to 18. Jesus said, Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast.

Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appeareth not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which sees in secret, shall reward thee openly.

Here ends the reading of God's Word. Please let's pray. Father, thank you for bringing us together to share fellowship and to hear your Word and to experience your power and your goodness.

We pray, as your Word is taught, give us understanding. I submit myself under your power. Holy Spirit, use me as your vessel to teach your Word in accordance with sound doctrine, healthy ways, and in line with what you want us to hear this morning.

[1 : 30] I pray that as I teach on fasting, give us deeper understanding and clearer insight into fasting, and let the strength it takes to engage in the spiritual practice of fasting be granted through the teaching of your Word.

We give you praise. Holy Spirit, let my speaking be your speaking, and let your name be glorified.

We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Why fast?

Why fast? Why do I put myself through all that regal, that physical discomfort? Why should I do that? Is it necessary?

Is fasting necessary at all? When you look at the text we just read, Jesus said, Matthew 6, verse 16, He says that, moreover, when you fast, or when thou fastest.

When thou fastest. Now, when you look at the verse 3, Jesus said, when thou doest alms.

[2 : 37] Let's look at the New King James Version. When you do charitable deeds. Okay. So, Jesus said, when, verse 5, when you pray.

So, verse 3 says, when you do charitable deeds, or when you give. Verse 5 says, when you pray. Verse 16 says, when you fast.

Okay. So, it's not if you pray. It's not if you do your charitable deeds. It's not if you fast. It is expected of you, of us to pray.

It's expected of us to give. It's expected of us to fast. True spirituality, so long as Christianity is concerned, includes fasting.

It includes giving. It includes praying. You cannot be spiritual without praying. Prayer is just the norm of the believer.

[3 : 49] And Jesus, he says, when you. So, not if you went. That means, as you're expected to pray. And the same thing he said about fasting, in the verse 16.

Fasting, in Christianity, involves voluntary abstaining, voluntarily abstaining from food, and sometimes drink, for a set period to focus on prayer, repentance, and seeking God.

So, it's not just not eating, but it's voluntary, abstaining from food, and drink, for a period, not throughout your life, only for a period, to focus on prayer, to focus on repentance, to focus on seeking God.

So, three things we'll be focusing on as we pray. What are we going to be focusing on? Prayer.

What are we going to be focusing on? Repentance.

And what are we going to be focusing on? Seeking God. Prayer, repentance, seeking God. Shall we all say that together? Prayer. Shall we say it one more? Time.

[5 : 01] Prayer, repentance. And so, we are setting this time aside, these 21 days, setting these days aside, for solely to pray, solely to repent, and solely to seek God.

Now, we are doing that through fasting, and fasting is putting aside, or setting aside, that period for abstaining from food, and drink.

When you read the scriptures, fasting appears throughout scriptures. Jesus himself fasted for 40 days, and the early church, in Acts chapter 13, also fasted.

In Acts chapter 14, they fasted. Actually, Acts chapter 14, verse 23. In Acts chapter 14, verse 26, it says, when they are appointed elders, they prayed with fasting.

So, fasting is not Old Testament. It's not just Old Testament. It's also in the New Testament. Fasting is only under the Old Covenant. It's also under the New Covenant.

[6 : 05] Okay? Jesus fasted. the early church fasted. It is presented as a voluntary spiritual discipline, rather than a commanded ritual for all believers.

So, fasting is not a commanded ritual, but it's a voluntary exercise, voluntary spiritual discipline, and it's very important to understand that.

Also, we have to understand that the goal of fasting is not simply to go without food, but to direct attention, affection, and dependence towards God. Hello?

So, the goal of fasting is not just to abstain from food, but we are directing attention, affection, and dependence towards God. Fasting is most valuable when it is done sincerely before God rather than for the approval of others.

So, you are doing it sincerely before God, not because others, we are all fasting, so you want to appear to be fasting, in the morning, you eat two bowls of indomie. So, it's important.

[7 : 15] Now, I want us to look at the benefits, some of the benefits of fasting. Number one, spiritual benefits, okay? When we look at the spiritual benefits, we look at the theological benefits, and we also look at the physical benefits, right?

So, A, spiritual benefits. Number one of spiritual benefits, it deepens dependence on God, or it has a way of deepening your prayer life.

When you read scriptures very carefully, throughout scripture, you see, fasting is always paired with prayer. Many Christians find out that fasting helps them become more attentive, focused, and earnest in prayer.

So, for example, Moses, Moses, before God, you know, he was depending on God for the law, in Exodus 34. He actually was looking up to God.

So, dependence on God. Another example is Daniel. When Daniel was seeking to understand, in Daniel chapter 9, Bible says that, I desire to seek understanding, and I give myself to fasting.

[8 : 16] So, it's more dependence on God. Esther wanted intervention, Esther, the book of Esther chapter 4, for the Jews. So, she engaged in fasting as an expression of depending on God.

God, if you don't do it, it will be done. We are counting on you. And the early church, our Bible says that, in Acts chapter 13, verse 2, as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, they were actually looking up to God.

Then God spoke. Okay. So, fasting helps us to depend on God. That is why fasting always goes with prayer. Fasting always goes.

If you don't add prayer, really, it kind of doesn't seem to be a spiritual exercise. Okay. It's just starvation. Bible never says that, fasting alone.

Bible usually talks about fasting and prayer. Fasting and prayer. God doesn't answer fasting. He answers prayers. All right. So, the easiest way of demonstrating dependence on God is in prayer.

[9 : 22] Anyone who depends on God gives himself to prayer. Okay. So, fasting, number one, the benefit, it helps us to deepen our dependence on God.

Number two, it also helps us to deepen prayer and intimacy with God. How many of you have experienced times of fasting you feel closer to God? It helps you to spend more time with God. It helps you to be more God-focused. So, it deepens prayer and intimacy with God. So, number one is, it deepens dependence on God.

Number two, deepens prayer and intimacy with God. You pursue God more. God loves it when we look up to him. God, God loves it when we depend on him.

And God loves it when we get closer to him. God loves it when we are hungry for him. So, once, you see, your hunger for food will push you to be hungry for God.

[10:26] So, hunger serves as a, you see, sometimes when you're fasting and you feel the hunger, it reminds you to just pray. Many people who have engaged in fasting have reported greater focus, clarity, and a sense of God's presence when replacing meal with prayer and scripture.

Anytime you replace meal with prayer and scripture when you are fasting, you will really feel the presence of God closer and a greater clarity and greater focus on God.

Number three, fasting builds self-control. Last week, we saw how Paul reasoned with Felix concerning righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come.

Self-control is necessary. It's one of the fruits of the spirit. Self-control. Many people's problem is self-control. Many of us in our spiritual journey have problem.

It could be that this morning or yesterday we were just praying, God, help me do it. This thing is really getting in the way of my work with God. There are things which always seek to get in the way of your work with God.

[11:40] When we pray, it helps us gain upper hand over those things. Self-control. So, fasting builds self-control and humility.

Fasting has a way of subduing fleshly appetites, fostering discipline, reveal spiritual conditions and lead to repentance and brokenness.

When you are fasting, it helps to reveal your spiritual condition and that will help us to repent. That's why we set this time aside to seek God and to repent.

Okay, so, it does that. And when you study the scripture very carefully, fasting can be an outward expression of an inward repentance and a way of humbling ourselves before God.

In the scripture, in Psalm 35, verse 13, the psalmist says, I humble my soul with fasting. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth.

[12:45] I humbled my soul. How did I humble my soul? How did I humble my soul? Shall we all read that sentence from I humble? Let's go. I humble my soul with fasting.

One more time. I humble my soul with fasting. So, fasting in scripture is seen as humbling oneself before God. It's voluntary. It's different from humiliation.

Humiliation. Humiliation, external forces act on you by humbling yourself before God. Daniel said, I humbled myself with fasting. In Psalm 69, verse 10, it says that, when I wept and chastened my soul with fasting.

Other translation we use, I humbled my soul with fasting. Chastise my soul. Bring my soul under subjection. So, I subdued my soul.

That's where my appetites are. That's where my feelings are. Sometimes, during the time of fasting, your soul is so humbled, you are able to actually forgive the way you should. So, English Standard Version said that, when I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, subdue my body, bring my body under subjection.

[14:02] In Ezra, chapter 8, verse 21, it says that, then I proclaim a fast there at the river of Hava, that we might humble ourselves before our God.

Why did I proclaim the fast? That we might humble ourselves before God. We are about to step into a season of humbling ourselves before God. Humbling ourselves before God.

That's the Christian fasting. Other fastings, I don't know what it means, but Christian fasting, we are humbling ourselves before God. One of the most wicked kings in the history of Israel is King Ahab. He was the one who went and married Jezebel. Most of you have heard that name, Jezebel, Jezebel. And King Ahab was very stubborn, notorious, and wicked. And King Ahab fasted, because fasting is a way of seeking God and humbling yourself.

So in 1 Kings chapter 21, verse 27, it says that, so it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth on his body and fasted and lay his sackcloth and went about mourning, because God said, I'm going to deal with you.

[15:19] Judgment is coming, punishment is coming. Bible says that he tore his clothes, a sign of regret, a sign of humbling yourself, you know, or distress. I'm distressed. Ah, I can't live a normal life.

I can't be normal. This is a type of distress. Tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and went about mourning. Look at the next verse. Verse 28 says that, and the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbae, saying, look at verse 29, see how Ahab has done what?

Humble to the Lord. That's, fasting means to humble. See how Ahab assembled himself before me. Because he assembled himself before me, I will not bring this calamity on him.

This wicked king, he deserved punishment. God has sent Elijah to tell him that judgment is coming, and when he heard the word, he humbled himself before the Lord, tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, went about mourning, and God said, hey, prophet, see, see the way this guy assembled himself.

Because of the state he has put himself in, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son, I will bring it, because that's what the judgment is coming.

[16:26] But because of his state of humility, because of his fasting, I've suspended it. He will not live to see it. His son will feel it. I don't know what my father might have done, my mother might have done, but, you know, there's a way that judgment that is meant for parents can extend to their children.

it is what it is. That's how life is. I don't believe it. I don't believe it. Why is it that when you register as a GP, they ask your district, is it in your brother's line, is it in your father's line, was your father diabetic, was your mother diabetic, hypertension, there are some things.

It stays in the blood. If it's true in medicine, then it's true in spiritual terms too. In Exodus chapter 20, I think there's three or verse four, it says that, visiting the iniquities of the fathers to the third and the fourth generation.

Yeah. A father can do something, a mother can do something, and some of us were born into a battle we didn't start. Your wrist, your eyeballs, your hair texture, your hair color, your biology has everything to do with your parents.

So, God said, you have done it, but it's still a way of punishing you is by punishing your children.

So, he said, but because of fasting, I've suspended it.

[17:52] I've deferred the judgment. So, if the most wicked king in Israel had impending judgment, calamity, suspended, how much more a good person like you, sitting in church and being in Christ?

Fasting can suspend certain things, especially when, that would lead me to the next one, when you humble yourself. So, Ahab humble himself. My sister, my brother, let's take advantage and humble ourselves.

It's voluntary. No one should be forced to fast. No one should be forced to fast. Else, it's not biblical fasting. It might be medical purposes, because doctors will say, near by mouth.

So, if you go and they realize you have eating, they say, no, we have to cancel the surgery and do it another time. That one, you are forced, you have to. They say, if you don't fast, we won't do the surgery.

But God is not like that. It's voluntary. It's not commanded that you have to fast, but it's taught that you have to learn how to humble yourself for spiritual purposes.

[19:03] Amen? And so, God suspended the judgment coming because he fasted. Number four, it breaks spiritual strongholds.

It breaks spiritual strongholds. Strongholds. What's a stronghold? A stronghold is anything that holds you strong.

Can I be frank with you, please? I know sometimes we try to use science to try and explain. Science doesn't really explain spiritual things. Sometimes you can tell in a family, everybody's marriage is suspended.

It's a stronghold. Sometimes you can tell in a family, every child in your auntie, so you have started your grandma or her children, every first child or second child must have some kind of deformity. and you can see the thing is, it happened to your sister and you are born again. You can stop that strongholds, you know. Yeah.

[20:12] Some of us, our marital situation is not Mary Kay issue. But you've tried everything, beautiful edges, beautiful stuff, you've gone to the gym, you are growing your beard, and you don't know.

Every time a woman comes into your life, you feel maybe this is a potential, for some reason, the thing doesn't work. Or iniquity is discovered. You find out, no, it don't work.

It will come. Listen, and you are growing at a very fast rate. This fasting must draw a line.

Yes. When your dad turned a certain age, or your mom turned a certain age, this malady, this negativity popped up.

He became diabetic. She was declared this, this, this, that, or that. Different things that happen.

Please, an apple never falls far from a tree.

[21 : 18] I think it's always good to look at the trail. There are some times you can see. Every male in your family ends up in prison. And you've had a boy too.

Your baby is a boy. That, mom, you need to believe God. Break that stronghold. Break that stronghold.

It's not everything that happens to your family members that is permitted to happen to you if you can rise up and take the bull by the horn. Yeah. Everybody in your family goes to divorce. Minus you.

But you don't go around just wishing. Do something. Enforce the victory of the cross. Take steps. And I'm telling you, fasting breaks strongholds.

In Mark chapter 9, verse 29, Jesus says that this one, and some of us are dealing with this kind, this kind can come out but, come out by nothing prayer and fasting.

[22 : 23] Nothing can deal with this matter. But prayer and fasting. So, fasting destroys spiritual, or breaks spiritual strongholds.

Number five, renewed spiritual vision and sensitivity. Renewed spiritual vision and sensitivity. Let me put it in a different way.

it helps you to be able to receive a bit easily from the Holy Spirit. Practically. You know, there are decisions you have to make.

You know, life is made up of decisions. Some decisions are minor, other decisions are major. You are not sure, let's say you are a student, you've got two offers, good courses, we are not sure which one to do.

You are confused about it. You can talk to, you've spoken to all the aspects and still you are not sure. Sometimes in the time of fasting, you can get clarity. Things can be clear. Two guys have come to you, they are both good.

[23 : 26] You are not sure which one to say yes to. Because, you know, that's a major decision. May more than one guy come to you. Oh, you say amen. Okay, okay, you only want one.

Okay, okay. May that one person show up. All right, but let's be more serious about this. Sometimes, it's good to fast.

Something I just dropped in my spirit. It's not on my script, but permit me to drop it in. Sometimes, maybe even the name choices for your children. You are pregnant, you are looking at name books. It's good to look through name books, but potentially in the time of fasting, I'm talking about the husband, because your wife is the pregnant one. She shouldn't be doing fasting.

But maybe in the time of fasting, ask God, what name should I give to this child? What name should I choose? Which school should I choose?

[24 : 25] What I'm trying to say is that maybe you want to start a business. You are not sure whether you should do hair business or shoe business. because you have got some good suppliers from China.

You are not sure because your investment can go into one for now. You are not sure. Two jobs offers have come. Which one should I When you are fasting, it helps you to be clear on the voice of the Holy Spirit or the visions or promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Many major decisions we've made concerning this church has been made through fasting and prayer or during the time of fasting and prayer. Amen.

You are believing God for the fruit of the womb and when you fast, you'll be shocked how you begin to suddenly realize oh, I could have done this.

You might not hear a voice, my son, my son, my daughter, my daughter, like God speaks only American. No. You might not hear it but you watch this, watch this, but you have clarity.

[25 : 41] You have clarity in your inner man and you have peace about a decision to make. So fasting helps us get clarity from what God, our renewed vision and sensitivity to the spirit.

Someone getting something. Let me quickly jump into theological benefits. You might not be very much interested by that at least. When we talk about theological benefits, that means so long as scripture is concerned, aligning yourself with scripture, you know, it's just beneficial.

Even Jesus' birth and his death and his resurrection was according to scripture. So our fasting is also according to scripture. In Romans chapter 1, the Bible talks about Jesus Christ who was born as the scriptures are predicted.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 3 and 4, it talks about I deliver to you first for what I received, that Christ died for our sins. How? Verse 4.

He was buried and rose again on the third day according to scripture. So that's what we mean by theologically in line with what scripture teaches. Theological benefits, number one, you participate in biblical tradition.

[26 : 57] Biblical, it's just been, it's something that goes on in the Bible. So why don't you also add yourself to what people in the Bible were doing? Does that make sense? Fasting is practiced throughout the Bible.

As I said earlier, Jesus Christ fasted, the early church, the apostles fasted, Moses also, many in the Old Testament including David, Moses, Daniel, the prophet Jonah, many fasted in the scriptures. Number two, fasting also helps refocus on the ultimate hope. So number one is participates in biblical tradition, number two refocuses on the ultimate hope.

What does that mean? Christian theology teaches that earthly things, while they are good, are not the believers' ultimate source of life and satisfaction.

Fasting points towards God as the true source of fulfillment. So it helps move your focus from earthly things to the ultimate hope is God, and for that matter, actually, it also helps the believer to focus on more important things, the second coming of Christ.

[28 : 08] fasting helps you to move away from just running your life based on purely materialistic things, physical things, and helps you to learn dependence on God.

Number three, fasting is actually an act of devotion, and an act of worship. As they minister to the Lord and fasted, it's an act of devotion.

So it's like in scripture, when you look at scripture, you can see, fasting was an act of devotion, act of worship, as they ministered to the Lord and fasted. So fasting is an act of worship, it's an act of devotion.

In scriptures, fasting is not just primarily about self-improvement or about some breakthroughs, but about offering yourself to God.

It can become an act of worship when done with the right heart. So when you do it with the right heart, your fasting is actually an act of worship and devotion. Amen?

[29 : 12] And then number four, fourth point is it teaches stewardship of desires. Stewardship of desires.

In other ways, how you handle your desire, I will explain it. Theologically, fasting reminds believers that desires should be ordered under God's will rather than the rulings of my life.

Okay, so my life, I want a wife. Let's say I'm not married and I want a wife. I want a wife. When you fast, it's also, even though you can use the fasting to break strong goals, it gets to a place where fasting is more yielding to the will of God.

You know, moving away from just what I want. It helps you to align yourself with what God wants. Because fasting breaks the power of the flesh or it subdues the power of the flesh.

Except a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it abides alone. So there are times when something must die or something must be terminated for something godly to be germinated.

[30 : 26] it. And fasting helps to terminate what I will, I want. It's just me. It's just me. Sometimes, physically speaking, sometimes when you are so hungry, you are just tired, you can't be bothered about a lot of things.

And in that state when you are praying, you find it easy to say, God, you know, let your will be done. Praise God. Hallelujah.

Now, quickly, let's go on to the physical benefits, some physical benefits of fasting. Fasting, I think many of us will like this. Before I say that, scientific research on various forms of fasting supports several potential health effects, though results vary by individuals during or health status.

Right. Now, one of the physical benefits of fasting is weight loss and metabolic health. I know you like it, but you don't want people to see you are happy about it.

Weight loss, or let me put it this way, rest from digestive system. Rest for the digestive system. It rests, it gets to rest. There's something I think, I think, in horticulture called regurgitation.

[31 : 56] Animal, ruminants, they regurgitate. Some of us, our intestines has a way of, even when you're asleep, you know, so rest for the digestive system, and that will invariably lead to some weight loss.

you don't fast because you want to lose weight. Then that's just weight losing exercise. Fasting is primarily spiritual, but for some reason, it comes with some fringe benefits.

Yeah. The other time I was looking at my belly, I said, you, June is coming. You will go down. You, you will go down. You will go down.

But, rest for the digestive system, which giving the body a breath of constant digestion, allows for cellular repair and can reduce inflammation.

It's actually recognized by medical science. Number two, which applies to all of us, is similar to what I said earlier on in spiritual benefits.

[33 : 11] Bodily discipline and self-control. Fasting trains the body to submit to the will rather than the appetite. So, this is beautiful.

You will like this. When we talk about bodily discipline and self-control, what happens is that during fasting, you build the virtue of temperance, that extends to other areas of your life.

So, you see, the way you are struggling with some addiction and other things, once you build that, and I referred to something like that last Sunday, once you build self-control in one area, it begins to extend to other areas.

So, you are dealing with an addiction, join the fasting. When the self-control is built up, you realize that you can deal with it, you can overcome it. and then what happens is that maybe nicotine addiction, maybe alcohol addiction, maybe gambling addiction, maybe gossip addiction, maybe sleeping addiction, some people have an addiction to sleeping, oversleeping, sleeping, sleeping, sleeping, maybe addiction to meat, food, chocolate, Coke addiction, addiction, food.

Listen, I'm not saying they will go, but what I'm saying is that when we engage in the fasting, the discipline of fasting, it helps the body to respond to the will, not just the appetite.

[34 : 42] For most of the time, our body responds, we live under the influence of our appetite, not the influence of our will. So, there are times you don't want to do it, but appetite says you don't have a choice.

Come on, go on. Fasting helps you to be able to bring the body under subjection. The body lines up to the demands of the will, not just the demands of the appetite.

It is amen there. Today is like lectures, it's good, because what is ahead is serious. Number three, heightened alertness.

Number three, physical benefits of fasting, physically, heightened alertness. Many Christians report that fasting produces mental clarity and sharp focus, which aids in prayer and scripture reading. Mental clarity and sharp focus. So, heightened alertness. When you are fasting, something helps your faculties, or you can put it this way, brain and cognitive benefits.

[35 : 49] Fasting comes with some cognitive and brain benefits, potential improvement in focus, memory, et cetera. And then the last one, physical benefit, is number four.

Fasting helps in breaking unhealthy patterns. Unhealthy patterns. So, fasting from food can interrupt cycles of overconsumption and help reset unhealthy habits.

I should say it again. Okay, I will say it again. Fasting from food can interrupt cycles of overconsumption and help reset unhealthy habits.

Physical benefits. Praise the Lord. This is just to add this as I round up. Caution. Oh, footnote.

These effects vary between individuals. Everybody's body mass is different. All right. But one of the benefits actually is that it can reduce the risk of diabetes.

[37 : 07] Fasting can reduce the risk of diabetes and certain health challenges. So, I think it's a good exercise. But as I said, not everybody's body will react the same.

All right. Because based on your age, based on your genes, based on your existing health condition, you know, and based on your regularity, it might not be the same.

So, anytime I fast, I don't struggle to lose weight. But some of you, your story is different. You can do five days raw fasting and nothing has changed.

But it's human to human. All right. And please don't beat yourself because you are not seeing so much. But definitely there will be benefits. And then the second thing I want to draw to your attention is fasting should not be viewed as a guaranteed health treatment.

treatment. Don't view it as a guaranteed health treatment. Okay. So, please, caution. Don't view it as health treatment.

[38 : 19] And then, finally, important caution is people who are pregnant, diabetic, underweight, having eating disorders, or taking certain medications, or have significant medical conditions, should consult a healthcare professional before undertaking a food fast.

Don't spiritualize everything. God, God, no, no, no, please. You have a body. Your body is not spiritual, it's physical. I am not a health aspect, and I'm not giving health talk here. I'm just teaching. Okay, we are a church, and we are about to embark on a fasting. However, if you fall under some of these conditions, pregnant women, don't worry, we'll fast for you. Stop comparing yourself to others, because maybe you need energy. Our bodies are different. So let me repeat it. People who are pregnant, people who are diabetic, people who are under weight. I need to say overweight, please. Don't add yourself to it. People who are under weight, people who have eaten disorders.

[39 : 50] people who take certain medications, or who have significant medical conditions, should consult a health professional before you undertake this.

Does that make sense? Did you receive something? Very interesting preaching today. Thank you. Thank you for listening to this message by David Entry. We trust you've been encouraged, strengthened, and enlightened by the word. Stay connected by following David Entry on social media, including Instagram and LinkedIn.

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