

Why Do We Fast?

The practice of fasting and prayer is recorded in both the Old and New Testaments.

Jesus modeled it

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

Matthew 4:1-2

To build spiritual strength

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written,

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Matthew 4:1-4

Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."

Esther 4:16

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.

Luke 4:14

To seek God's direction

So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 34:28

And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 14:23

To seek the direction of the Holy Spirit

Why Do We Fast?

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 13:2-3

For intimacy with God not for the esteem of man (with right motives)

But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Matthew 6:17-18

Return to God with repentance

"Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning."

Joel 2:12

"Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong."

Daniel 9:3-5

As a sign of humility

I proclaim a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children.

Ezra 8:21-23

To set the oppressed free

Isaiah 58

That God may relent

And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them...Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.

Jonah 3:5, 9