

“How to Scripturally Fast”
Matthew 6:16-18

Introduction: “Not only is fasting a power method of cleansing and healing the physical body, but it is also a tool for cleansing the soul. Fasting is a key to genuine and deep spirituality. Throughout the ages, those who sought to know God and desired to enter into deeper spiritual realms and giftings employed fasting as a powerful and essential tool. Found throughout the Bible, fasting was considered a key part of entering into and maintaining a powerful and spiritually dynamic walk with God.” Don Colbert

1. The Reassurance to Fast v. 16- *“Moreover when ye fast...”*
 - a. “Jesus did not say ‘if’ you fast, but ‘when’ you fast.” Don Colbert
 - b. Sometimes, God requires more from us “than a simple prayer”.
 - c. “Fasting can empower your prayers and break the strongest bondage and oppression.” Don Colbert
 - d. “He assumes that fasting will be a normal part of spiritual life once He, the Bridegroom, is gone.” Don Colbert
 - e. Mark 2:18-20- *“And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.”*
 - f. Some Jewish leaders fasted twice in a week.
 - g. Luke 18:11-12- *“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.”*
2. The Repulsive Fast v. 16- *“...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.”*
 - a. “Legalistic fasting earned the Pharisee in Luke no brownie points with God.” Don Colbert
 - b. “Jesus too was far more concerned with the motives behind fasting than with how long or how often we fast. Motive is everything when it comes to spiritual fasting.” Don Colbert
3. The Routine in Fasting v. 17- *“But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face”*
4. The Reasonable Fast v. 18- *“That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret...”*
 - a. “...we see that attitude and motive are as important as fasting itself.” Don Colbert
 - b. “Such humble fasting has created a force that has won wars, stayed judgment and saved cities and countries.” Don Colbert

5. The Reward in Fasting v. 18- *"...and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."*
 - a. Matthew 5:6- *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."*
 - b. Luke 6:21- *"Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh."*

1. The Example of Fasting (Jesus, Moses, and Elijah went on a 40 day fast. Who was it at the Mount of Transfiguration? Matthew 17:2-3)
 - a. Moses Exodus 34:28- *"And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments."*
 - (1) Exodus 24:18- *"And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights."*
 - (2) Deuteronomy 9:18- *"And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger."*
 - b. Israelites Judges 20:26- *"Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD."*
 - c. Samuel I Samuel 7:5-6- *"And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD. And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh."*
 - d. David II Samuel 12:16- *"David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth."*
 - e. Elijah I Kings 19:7-8- *"And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God."*
 - f. Ninevites Jonah 3:5-8- *"So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands."*

- g. Nehemiah Nehemiah 1:4- *“And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven”*
 - h. Daniel Daniel 9:3- *“And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes”*
 - i. Anna Luke 2:36-37- *“And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.”*
 - j. Jesus Matthew 4:1-2- *“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.”*
 - k. Paul II Corinthians 11:27- *“In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”*
 - l. Daniel (Partial Fast) Daniel 1:12- *“Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.”*
 - m. John the Baptist (Partial Fast) Matthew 3:4- *“...and his meat was locusts and wild honey.”*
2. The Effects of Fasting
- a. Chastening
 - (1) Psalm 69:10- *“When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach.”*
 - (2) Psalm 109:24- *“My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness.”*
 - (a) “Fasting feeds your spirit man while starving your natural man.” Don Colbert
 - (b) “It can soften you heart and cleanse your body to make you more receptive to God’s plans.” Don Colbert
 - (c) “Fasting can begin to break any spiritual stronghold so that peace and civility can return.” Don Colbert
 - (d) “Bondages come in all shapes, colors, types and sizes. Some addictions can even show up in our personalities...” Don Colbert
 - b. Controlling Luke 21:34- *“And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, [“surfeiting”—“Oppressing the system by excessive eating and drinking”] and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.”*
 - (1) “Fasting finds great favor in God’s sight because of its ability to break the control of the flesh.” Don Colbert
 - (2) “It was because of appetite that Eve, and later Adam, fell into sin by eating the forbidden fruit. Uncontrolled appetite for food plunged the entire human race into sin...” Don Colbert
 - (3) Genesis 3:6- *“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to*

make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”

- (4) “Our fleshly appetite can be a ravenous animal, overpowering the spiritual man within us.” Don Colbert
- (5) “Today, people are so bound to their flesh that they often cannot go one meal without eating some form of meat, something sweet, fatty or some type of rich food.” Don Colbert
- (6) “...Abraham’s grandson Esau was also unable to gain control over his appetite for food. Esau sold his birthright...for no more than a single meal—and only a bowl of soup at that!” Don Colbert
- (7) “Years later, when Israel’s descendants wandered around in the...wilderness, the entire nation encountered the same struggle. When they were unable to get food, God supernaturally sent them manna from heaven from heaven to eat. But instead of appreciating this incredible miracle, they complained that they didn’t like it.” Don Colbert
- (8) Numbers 21:5- *“And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.”*
- (9) Numbers 11:4-6- *“And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.”*
- (10) “...fasting, when accomplished through the direction and enabling of the Holy Spirit, has the power to break the gripping control of our lower nature.” Don Colbert
- (11) I John 2:16- *“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”*
- (12) The lust of the flesh can include gluttony, adultery, fornication, anger, and gossip.
- (13) Romans 8:7-8- *“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”*
- (14) “As long as our fleshly, carnal nature controls us, we will be unable to do the will of the Holy Spirit because it is in direct opposition to His will.” Don Colbert
- (15) Galatians 5:16- *“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”*

3. The Essentials of Fasting

- a. The Diet Esther 4:16- *“Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day:*

I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.”

b. The Devotion Zechariah 7:1-14

c. The Direction

(1) Sincere Ezra 8:21-23- *“Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.”*

(2) Self Isaiah 58:1-14

(a) II Samuel 12:16- *“David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.”*

(b) Jeremiah 14:10-12- *“Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.”*

d. The Denial I Corinthians 7:5- *“Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.”*

(1) Romans 13:14- *“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”*

(2) Colossians 3:5- *“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry”*

(3) I Corinthians 9:27- *“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”*

(4) Galatians 2:20- *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

(5) I Peter 2:11- *“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul”*

(6) *“We must decide: Is the body the master, or is the Holy Spirit the master? The body makes a wonderful servant but a very poor master.” Don Colbert*

Body: “To perform a biblical fast you must voluntarily abstain from food for a period of time... [and pray] for a spiritual purpose. During a spiritual fast, you deny yourself one of the most basic elements of survival, one that is loved and cherished by your body—food.” Don Colbert

- I. Fasting is for Sin—When a person fast because of sin, there will be:
 - A. Confession Deuteronomy 9:18- *“And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.”*
 1. I Samuel 7:6- *“And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.”*
 - a. “America needs to be healed. Our children need to be healed from the spirits of rebellion, drugs, alcohol, revelry, homosexuality, sexual lusts and perversion.” Don Colbert
 - b. “...fasting is a powerful tool for spiritual healing, whether for a nation as a whole, for cities, for families or for individuals.” Don Colbert
 2. Nehemiah 9:1-2- *“Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.”*
 - a. “One of the key reasons that fasting gets God’s attention is that it is a key to humility.” Don Colbert
 - b. “Fasting humbles our flesh...” Don Colbert
 - c. I Peter 5:6- *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time”*
 - d. James 4:6- *“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”*
 - e. James 4:10- *“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”*
 - f. We can humble ourselves to God through fasting and praying.
 - B. Change Jonah 3:5- *“So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.”*
 1. Jonah 3:8- *“But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.”*
 2. Joel 2:12- *“Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning”*

- II. Fasting is for Seeking—We can seek God by fasting and prayer in times of:
- A. Distress II Chronicles 20:3- *“And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.”*
 - B. Destruction Joel 1:6-14
 - C. Despondency Nehemiah 1:4- *“And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven”*
 1. Fasting offers spiritual direction.
 2. “When you are making critical decisions such as choosing your mate, changing a job, deciding to move or other major life-impacting decisions, you need God’s divine guidance to be sure you are not holding onto opinions or other judgments that are in error.” Don Colbert
 3. “The problem with error is that when we’re in it, we think we’re right. That’s why we need divine guidance for life’s major decisions.” Don Colbert
 4. “There are times in all of our lives when we are being led around by our own misjudgments and desires, and we don’t even know it. Regular fasting can protect us from the blindness of our own opinions and desires.” Don Colbert
 - D. Destitution I Samuel 1:6-7- *“And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.”*
- III. Fasting is for Service
- A. The People that Served through Fasting
 1. Anna Luke 2:37- *“And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.”*
 2. Paul II Corinthians 6:4-5- *“But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings”*
 - B. The Power that was Secret to Fasting Matthew 17:21- *“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”*
 1. Mark 9:29- *“And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.”*
 2. “Many of our own youth, teens and young adults are bound with alcohol, drugs, nicotine, sexual desire, a spirit of revelry and partying, homosexuality, Satanism, witchcraft, palm reading and other dangerous strongholds.” Don Colbert
 3. Isaiah 58:6- *“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?”*

4. “The disciples’ fast breaks yokes, or breaks mental, spiritual, and emotional bondages, and sets people free.” Don Colbert
 5. Luke 4:1-2- *“And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.”*
 6. Luke 4:13-14- *“And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.”*
- C. The Preachers that were Sent because of Fasting Acts 13:2-3- *“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”*

Conclusion: “Are you interested in going on a spiritual fast? Do you seek to influence your nation, city, workplace or family? Would you like to break through the strength of your flesh or the power of a particular bondage?” Don Colbert

“Fasting is a privilege, and it is a biblical key to cleansing that will bless your life with the gift of health, healing, renewed vitality, longevity and deeper spirituality.” Don Colbert

“As you develop a life of fasting and prayer, you will find that God will feed you with the heritage of Jacob. You will walk in the footsteps of great men and women who have gone before us—men and women who increased in purity of body, mind and spirit, and who touched heaven with their prayers and nations with their passion.” Don Colbert