



Life of Christ

A study of the life and teachings of Jesus

Fasting

by Kevin Little

I still remember the first time I ever attempted fasting. I had just finished the first semester of my freshman year, and, challenged in a Bible study group, I picked a day, decided I would allow myself water and orange juice (this hypoglycemic needs his sugar), and gave it a shot. Y'all. It was miserable. As a typical middle-class American, I had never gone without, never experienced hunger. I spent the entire day thinking about not eating, about the gnawing in my belly. Now, there is power in denying the flesh, but the spiritual transformation—the Kingdom's advance—that came from this type of fast? Nothing.

I had asked myself one question as I prepared: "What am I fasting from?" But I completely forgot the more important question, "What am I fasting for?" In Matthew 6, Jesus talks about the God in heaven Who rewards fasting done in secret, but I expected only hunger and denial on that day. By asking, "What am I fasting for?" as I continued the practice of fasting more and more, I began forming a sense of expectation in my spirit each time I planned one. Only after God and I talked about what I was seeking in a particular season did I then move forward to decide what I would sacrifice.

Throughout the Bible, God shows us how He rewards fasting:

Repentance

Marc shared deeply about this one, so I will simply mention it and move on. When I fast, God wants to reveal the barriers that I have set up between Him and me. He wants to bring me to a place where I repent and choose a different direction.

Launching into Something New

Even Jesus experienced this one. In Matthew 4, the Spirit led Him into the desert, where He fasted for forty days and Satan tested Him. After this season of fasting, Jesus came back to civilization and launched His public ministry. In Acts 13, the church in Antioch enjoyed a time of worship and fasting that led up to the elders setting apart Paul and Barnabas, launching them into Paul's first missionary journey.

Do you feel stuck? Are you unsure about how to move forward? Set aside a week of fasting for clarity and direction. God responds to this type of fast and loves to reward those who seek Him in this way.

Meeting an Urgent Need

In Esther 4, Mordecai approaches Esther, revealing Haman's plot to destroy the Israelites, who are already cast out in exile. Seeing her hesitation, Mordecai drops this challenge bomb on Esther: "For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14). Esther agrees to help, even though she knows that means she will risk her life. So, she asks her uncle to get every Jew in the land of Susa to fast, refusing food and drink for three days, and pray for favor before she approaches the king.

Has sickness struck your house? Has an enemy come to destroy your business? Then start a fast right now and refuse to stop until God brings deliverance or direction. God loves to show up as the hero, loves to put His glory and character on display. His plan may shock you, but Wise God knows what He's doing.

So what will you fast for? And what will you fast from? Marc also invites us to ask ourselves another question: Who will you fast with? God loves to reward fasting done for His glory and for the strengthening of our relationships with Him.

Question What will you fast for? What will you fast from? Who will you fast with?

Family Chat As a family, talk about something you can give up to spend more time with Jesus, like social media or video games. Ask Jesus to help you know what to fast from.

Take Action Set aside one day this week to fast and pray with your family and/or your life group. Repent to the Lord for the things that are creating barriers between Him and you.