

Should Christians Fast Today?

Introduction

Fasting is a spiritual discipline practiced throughout the Bible from the days of Moses to the ministry of Jesus and the early church. In today's modern context, the question arises: Is fasting still relevant for Christians? This sermon explores the biblical basis for fasting, examples from both the Old and New Testaments, and how Christians can engage in this practice with purpose and power.

I. The Biblical Purpose and Power of Fasting

Fasting appears throughout Scripture for various purposes. These include:

- Humbling oneself before God (Ezra 8:21; Psalm 35:13).
- Seeking God's guidance (2 Chronicles 20:3-4; Judges 20:26-28).
- Repentance and confession (Jonah 3:5-10; Joel 2:12-13).
- Preparing for ministry (Exodus 34:28; Matthew 4:1-2; Acts 13:2-3).
- Mourning or grieving (1 Samuel 31:13; Nehemiah 1:4).
- Intercession for others (Esther 4:16; Daniel 9:3).
- Seeking deliverance and protection (Ezra 8:21-23; 2 Chronicles 20:3).

II. Old Testament Examples and Lessons

- **Moses** fasted 40 days on Mount Sinai while receiving the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:28). Lesson: Fasting precedes divine revelation and covenant renewal.
- **David** fasted for his sick child and in repentance after sin (2 Samuel 12:16). Lesson: Fasting expresses deep sorrow and repentance, though it doesn't guarantee the outcome we desire.
- **Esther and the Jews** fasted before she went before the king to save her people (Esther 4:16). Lesson: Fasting can be a tool of bold intercession in the face of danger.
- **The people of Nineveh** fasted in response to Jonah's message (Jonah 3:5-10). Lesson: Fasting in humility can avert judgment when paired with true repentance.

- **Daniel** fasted to gain understanding and to confess the sins of Israel (Daniel 9:3; 10:2-3). Lesson: Fasting opens the heart to receive insight from God and to engage in spiritual warfare.

III. New Testament Examples and Lessons

- **Jesus** fasted for 40 days before beginning His public ministry (Matthew 4:1-2). Lesson: Fasting is a preparation for spiritual battles and clarity of mission.

- **Anna the prophetess** worshiped day and night with fasting and prayer (Luke 2:37). Lesson: Fasting is a sustained expression of devotion and longing for God.

- **The early church** fasted before making major decisions (Acts 13:2-3; Acts 14:23). Lesson: Fasting invites the Holy Spirit's guidance and confirms leadership decisions.

- **Paul** experienced fasting during his conversion and times of hardship (Acts 9:9; 2 Corinthians 6:5). Lesson: Fasting is part of the Christian life of endurance, discipline, and spiritual sensitivity.

IV. Right Attitudes and Warnings

- Fasting should be sincere and private, not done to impress others (Matthew 6:16-18).

- God rebukes fasting disconnected from justice and righteousness (Isaiah 58:3-9).

- The Pharisee's prideful fasting was rejected; the humble tax collector was justified (Luke 18:10-14).

- Fasting done routinely or selfishly is not pleasing to God (Zechariah 7:5-6).

- Paul warns against legalistic asceticism and outward religion without inward change (Colossians 2:20-23).

V. Application and Encouragement

Fasting is a gift, not a burden. It should be approached with humility and joy, not guilt or pressure.

Ask yourself: Am I fasting to seek God, or to earn something? Am I pairing fasting with prayer, justice, and love?

Types of fasting may vary (food, media, habits), but the goal remains the same—drawing near to God.

Those with health conditions or physical limitations can still participate by fasting in alternative ways with wisdom and grace.

Make fasting part of your spiritual rhythm not legalistically, but intentionally, especially in times of seeking clarity, repentance, or breakthrough.

Conclusion

Should Christians fast today? Yes but not out of obligation. Fasting is a timeless spiritual tool that aligns our hearts with God's purposes.

From Moses to Jesus to the early church, fasting has served as a gateway to intimacy, clarity, and spiritual power.

Let us fast not to move God, but to be moved by Him. May our fasting be fueled by love, anchored in humility, and marked by transformation.