

BEN WASHINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

BIBLE STUDY

Are you Disciplined to be Spiritual?

The Discipline of Fasting – Part 5

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SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

BIBLE STUDY SERIES SCHEDULE

Week #1 – February 4, 2026

“The Purpose of Spiritual Disciplines”

Week #2 – February 11, 2026

“The Discipline of Bible Intake”

Week #3 – February 18, 2026

“The Discipline of Bible Study & Meditation”

Week #4 – February 25, 2026

“The Discipline of Prayer”

Week #5 – March 4, 2026

“The Discipline of Fasting”

Week #6 – March 11, 2026

“The Discipline of Worship”

Week #7 – March 18, 2026

“The Discipline of Fellowship & Accountability”

Week #8 – March 25, 2026

“The Discipline of Service & Stewardship”

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

The purpose of **spiritual disciplines** is to intentionally cultivate spiritual growth, transform one's inner self, and deepen a relationship with God (or a higher power) by developing habits like prayer, scripture study, and fasting. They are not the goal itself but rather spiritual "exercises" or training tools, much like athletic training, that build spiritual strength, foster reliance on God, and help align one's life with divine will, leading to greater likeness to Christ and spiritual maturity.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

The Discipline of Fasting

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Understand the Purpose of Fasting!

Before beginning a fast, it is important to understand why you are fasting. In the Bible, fasting was practiced for several spiritual reasons.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Common Biblical Purposes

- Seeking God's guidance – Acts 13:2–3
- Repentance and spiritual cleansing – Joel 2:12
- Humbling oneself before God – Ezra 8:21
 - Intensifying prayer – Daniel 9:3
- Spiritual breakthrough – Matthew 17:21
 - Drawing closer to God – James 4:8

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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.

Acts 13:2 (ESV)

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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 (ESV)

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Scripture does not command Christians to fast. God does not require or demand it of Christians. At the same time, the Bible presents fasting as something that is good, profitable, and beneficial.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Too often, the focus of fasting is on the lack of food. Instead, the purpose of fasting should be to **take your eyes off the things of this world to focus completely on God.** Fasting is a way to demonstrate to God, and to ourselves, that we are serious about our relationship with Him. Fasting helps us gain a new perspective and a renewed reliance upon God.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Although fasting in Scripture is almost always a fasting from food, there are other ways to fast. Anything given up temporarily in order to focus all our attention on God can be considered a fast.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

1 Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." 2 But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. 3 The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (1 Corinthians 7:1-5)

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Fasting should be limited to a set time, especially when fasting from food. Extended periods of time without eating can be harmful to the body. **Fasting is not intended to punish the flesh, but to redirect attention to God.** Fasting should not be considered a “dieting method” either. The purpose of a biblical fast is not to lose weight, but rather to gain deeper fellowship with God. Anyone can fast, but some may not be able to fast from food (diabetics, for example). Everyone can temporarily give up something in order to draw closer to God.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

By taking our eyes off the things of this world, we can more successfully turn our attention to Christ.

Fasting is not a way to get God to do what we want.

Fasting changes us, not God. Fasting is not a way to appear more spiritual than others. Fasting is to be done in a spirit of humility and a joyful attitude.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Matthew 6:16-18 declares, “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Scripture presents fasting as a way to humble ourselves before God, seek His direction, deepen our prayer life, and draw closer to Him.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Choose the Type of Fast

Not every fast looks the same. Scripture shows different types of fasting.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Normal Fast

Abstaining from food while drinking water. Example: Jesus fasted 40 days (Matthew 4:2)

Partial Fast

Limiting certain foods or meals. Example: Daniel Fast – Daniel 10:3

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Absolute Fast

No food or water for a short time. Example: Esther 4:16 (3 days)

Corporate Fast

A group or church fasting together. Example: Joel 2:15–16

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Non-Food Fast

Abstaining from things such as social media, entertainment, or other distractions in order to focus on God.

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Prepare Spiritually Before the Fast

Preparation is important.

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Before beginning:

- Pray and ask God for clarity of purpose
- Confess any known sin
- Ask for strength and spiritual focus
- Decide the length of the fast
- Determine what you will replace the time with (prayer, scripture, worship)

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

**FASTING SHOULD BE INTENTIONAL,
NOT ACCIDENTAL.**

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Replace Eating with Spiritual Activities

The key to fasting is what replaces the food.

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During the time you would normally eat:

- Pray
 - Read Scripture
- Meditate on God's Word
 - Worship
- Journal what God is revealing

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Helpful Scriptures for fasting:

- Psalm 51
- Isaiah 58
- Matthew 6:16–18
 - Psalm 63
- James 4:8–10

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Maintain the Right Heart

Jesus warned against fasting for attention or spiritual pride.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

The goal is **humility before God**, not recognition from people.

Right attitudes include:

- Humility
- Repentance
- Surrender
- Dependence on God
- Expectation of spiritual growth

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Listen for God's Voice

Fasting creates spiritual sensitivity.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

During the fast

- Pay attention to what God is speaking
 - Write down scriptures or insights
- Be open to conviction, direction, or correction

Many believers testify that fasting clarifies

- Calling
- Decisions
- spiritual direction

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Break the Fast Wisely

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

When ending a fast

- Break it gradually
- Start with light foods
- Thank God for what He has done during the fast

Use the moment as a time of reflection and gratitude.

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What Fasting Produces Spiritually

When practiced sincerely, fasting can produce:

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

- **Deeper intimacy with God**
- **Greater spiritual discipline**
 - **Clearer direction**
 - **Stronger prayer life**
- **Increased sensitivity to the Holy Spirit**
 - **Spiritual renewal**

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Isaiah 58 describes the spiritual power of true fasting

“Then your light shall break forth like the morning...and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.”— Isaiah 58:8

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Questions?