

Wednesday, May 14, 2025

## Fasting: Making Space for the Divine

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### Stand Alone Lesson

#### INTRODUCTION: THE INVITATION TO WRESTLE

Hey everyone.

So I want to invite you to wrestle with something tonight—something that might feel kind of old, kind of religious, and honestly... a little strange: *fasting*.

Yeah. Not eating. On purpose.

But here's the deal. If we dig into the story—if we open up the Scriptures with an eastern lens—we'll see that fasting isn't about punishing ourselves. It's not about impressing God. It's about *making space*. It's about *returning*.

Let's go on a journey.

#### PART 1: FASTING IN THE STORY OF SCRIPTURE

Let's start in the book of **Joel**. There's this moment where things are falling apart—locusts are destroying the land, people are desperate, and God says something wild through the prophet:

**Even now, this is the Lord's declaration, turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning.**

– Joel 2:12

You see, in the Hebrew worldview, fasting was never about checking a box. It was about *teshuvah*—**returning**. Coming back to who you were always meant to be.

And the people of Israel didn't fast because they wanted to twist God's arm. They fasted to wake themselves up. To say, *something's off, and I need to realign with God's heart.*

Have you ever felt like that?  
Like something's just... not right?  
And you don't know how to fix it?  
Fasting was a way of saying: "God, I need You to help me come back home."

## **PART 2: ISAIAH BLOWS THE WHISTLE**

But here's where it gets real.

Let's go to **Isaiah 58**. This is like God grabbing a megaphone and saying, "You think you're fasting? You've missed the point."

**Will the fast I choose be like this: A day for a person to deny himself, to bow his head like a reed, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast and a day acceptable to the Lord?**

– Isaiah 58:5

God says, *That's not it.* You're skipping meals, but your heart is still full of violence and injustice.

Then God flips the script:

**Isn't this the fast I choose: to break the chains of wickedness, to untie the ropes of the yoke, to set the oppressed free, and to tear off every yoke?**

– Isaiah 58:6

You catch that?  
Fasting isn't just about food.  
It's about freeing people.  
It's about making space for others, not just yourself.

**So here's the question:**

*What kind of fasting are we being invited into today?*

## PART 3: JESUS ENTERS THE WILDERNESS

Now let's go to Jesus.

He gets baptized, the Spirit descends, and what's the first thing the Spirit does?

**Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.**

– Matthew 4:1-2

No kidding, right? He was hungry.

But Jesus didn't fast to become super-spiritual. He fasted to *prepare*. He was making space. Stripping away all distractions, all comforts, all noise—so that he could listen. So that he could respond.

And in the wilderness, the enemy whispers, “Turn these stones into bread.”

But Jesus quotes **Deuteronomy**:

**Man must no live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.**

– Matthew 4:4

That's the essence of fasting.

It's a reminder:

I don't live by what I consume.

I live by what God *speaks*.

## **PART 4: PRACTICAL WRESTLING & RESPONSE**

So here's what I want to leave you with—not a rule, but an invitation.

What would it look like for you to fast—not just from food—but from distraction?

What if you fasted from social media for a day?

From complaining?

From noise?

Not because God demands it. But because maybe you need to *make space*.

To remember what matters.

To return.

Maybe you want to fast to stand in solidarity with someone who's hurting.

Maybe you fast to say, "God, I'm hungry for more than this world is offering."

### **PRAYER:**

May you be a people who fast not to prove something,  
but to *wake up*.

May you hunger not just for bread,  
but for justice,  
for righteousness,  
for the presence of God.

May you fast in such a way that others are fed.

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