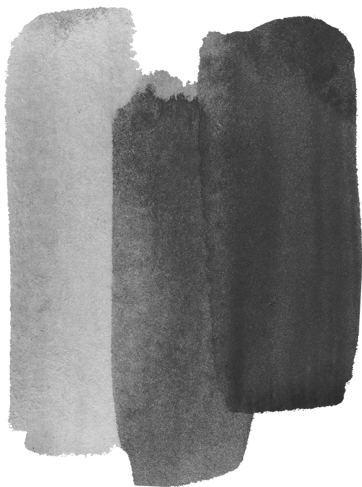


QUICK THEOLOGY

Practicing Biblical Fasting



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Introduction

When you look throughout church history, you cannot help but see the legacy of people whose spiritual lives included prayer and fasting. Fasting is a practice we see in the lives of these believers, and it is one worth emulating. Of course, there are other religions that practice fasting as well. But in Christianity, fasting serves a purpose of lament, of repentance, and of coming to the Lord in humility and recognizing that He is God and we are not.

John Wesley is one believer who was known to integrate fasting into his spiritual life. Another is John Knox, of whom Queen Mary is said to have remarked that she feared Knox's prayers more than the armies of Scotland because he was known to fast and pray on a weekly basis. Obviously, we all are not amazing spiritual leaders of church history, but even these respected men were simply normal humans who had a supernatural

capacity to accomplish what God had called them to do. I would argue that the reason they had that capacity is because of the time they spent in God's presence—both in prayer and in the Word—and also in fasting. That is why this topic is worth diving into.



What is Fasting?

What exactly is fasting? I think a lot of us first hear about fasting in the context of Lent, where we see the practice of going without something in order to draw close to the Lord. The church holiday of Lent has become more popular in recent years as nondenominational churches have adopted more liturgical practices. What is interesting is that most of the time the thing people choose to go without is not food. Most of the time people are fasting from social media, shopping, or something else. And those things are very good. However, the biblical example of fasting we see is to fast from food. This does not mean that fasting from other things is not important, but it is not the same as the biblical practice of fasting from food that we see in Scripture.

FASTING IN SCRIPTURE

In Scripture we see fasting as the practice of going without food for a designated period of time in order to draw near to the Lord in prayer. Sometimes this time is specifically to pray over an issue that is on your heart, or one that has been impressed on you to intercede for or to seek the Lord's face over.

There are two types of fasting. There are partial fasts, such as Daniel's fasts from rich foods and meat. Or there is a complete fast, which is what Jesus did in the wilderness, what we see some of the disciples doing, and what we see in the Old Testament. This means abstaining from all forms of food and just drinking water or sometimes broth or juice. The Bible is full of passages about fasting. Judges 20:26-27 says, "Then all the people of Israel, the whole army went up and came to Bethel and wept. They sat there before the Lord and fasted that day until evening, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. And the people of Israel inquired of the Lord (for the Ark of the Covenant God was there in those days)." So the purpose of this fast was to lament and to seek the Lord's face for wisdom in the decision they were going to be making. Moving forward

