**WHY DO WE FAST?**

The purpose of fasting is ultimately God himself. There are many reasons to undertake a fast, but the bottom line for them all is to align your heart directly with Him. Think of that as the big picture. The small picture, the immediate purpose for a fast, can vary. So, the first step for any kind of fast is to declare our immediate purpose. Fasting can’t be done casually because there isn’t any spiritual benefit in simply not eating. Going through the motions just makes us hungry, but genuine, purposeful fasting is a powerful discipline for the disciple of Jesus and can play a part in literally transforming your life.

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To help us define a godly purpose for fasting, Donald Whitney gives us these 10 reasons:

1. To strengthen prayer
2. To seek God’s guidance
3. To express grief
4. To seek deliverance or protection
5. To express repentance and return to God
6. To humble oneself before God
7. To express concern for the work of God
8. To minister to the needs of others
9. To overcome temptation and dedicate yourself to God
10. To express love and worship to God

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Throughout the Bible, we see people fast for a variety of reasons:

1. To be like Jesus ([Matt. 4:1–17](about:blank); [Luke 4:1–13](about:blank))
2. To obtain spiritual purity ([Isa. 58:5–7](about:blank))
3. To repent from sins (See [Jon. 3:8](about:blank); [Neh. 1:4](about:blank), [9:1–3](about:blank); [1 Sam. 14:24](about:blank))
4. To influence God ([2 Sam. 12:16–23](about:blank))
5. To mourn for the dead ([1 Sam. 31:13](about:blank); [2 Sam. 1:12](about:blank))
6. To request God’s help in times of crisis and calamity ([Ezra 8:21–23](about:blank); [Neh. 1:4–11](about:blank))
7. To strengthen prayer ([Matt. 17:21](about:blank); [Mark 9:17–29](about:blank); [Acts 10:30](about:blank); [1 Cor. 7:5](about:blank))

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None of these purposes amounts to twisting God’s arm to do what we want. Who can do that? God is not a genie who will grant us whatever we wish. He is a good Father who is working out His sovereign will. Our reasons for fasting are for our own humility. By denying ourselves for a time, we provoke ourselves to rely more on God Almighty. It isn’t about changing God; it’s about changing us. In fasting:

1. We pray more intently
2. We become more receptive to God’s guidance
3. We lean more on Scripture to hear His voice
4. We demonstrate our grief and honest repentance
5. We physically declare that we need God to survive
6. We learn to sense spiritual reality more than the physical world
7. We prepare to love others better than ourselves

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Lastly, fasting helps us to remember the true source of our utmost joy. Most people would agree that food is a good thing. If you’re unable to fast but choose to abstain from something else, such as a hobby or technology or entertainment, those can also be good things. All good things come from God, but the human heart is inclined to worship God’s gifts rather than God Himself. Fasting helps our hearts to look past the good gift to the good God, who blesses us despite ourselves.

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**I DON’T REALLY FEEL LIKE IT**

Even if fasting makes sense, you may not feel like you need it right now. But think of fasting as similar to praise and worship. Oftentimes joy overflows in songs of praise, but more often singing leads us into joy. We sing first and that brings us to a place of thankfulness and joy. Likewise, when our souls overflow with godly emotions and repentance, we may be led to fasting, but far more often we need to choose to fast in order to be humbled and to fight our pride by rejecting the ways we so often cope with our feelings. It’s the proactive approach.