

Getting A Greater Glimpse of God's Glory

A Study about Prayer from Matthew 6:1–34

Fasting For Focus:

Developing Discipline to Overcome Idolatry!

—Matthew 6:1–18 with other relevant biblical passages

A Bird's Eye View to Help Us See the Context:

Matthew 6:1–18 highlights
three spiritual disciplines
introduced by a wise warning!

#1 Generous Giving

#2 Passionate Prayer

#3 Faithful Fasting

—A Word of Warning = Be careful not to display your righteous actions in order to look good. We should never allow holy hypocrisy and personal pride to control our actions!

Matthew 6:19–34 emphasizes
the dangers of making money
and materials into idols!

—An Application to Absorb = Because our dedication and devotion to God Almighty can never be divided, we should avoid anything and everything that might become a substitute for God! We should always seek His glory and acknowledge His authority!

—Matthew 6:16–18 16 *When you fast*, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by people when they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have their reward! 17 *When you fast*, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that it won't be obvious to others when you are fasting, but only to your Father who is in secret. And your Father, your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

—A biblical use and definition of fasting:

—The word for fasting used in both the Old (Hebrew) & New (Greek) Testaments literally means *to abstain* as a religious exercise from **food** and/or **drink**. However, there are a few occasions where scripture suggests that someone might want or need to refrain from certain pleasures, desires, or activities in a similar way.

—Fasting is closely connected or related to prayer. It should be obvious that a person can pray without fasting, but in order to be biblically correct, a person shouldn't fast without praying.

—The primary purpose of fasting revolves around giving up food to seek or pursue God in a more focused way. This is an attempt to enhance one's prayer life and strengthen our relationship with God!

—The only required time to fast in the Bible is when Israel participated in their annual Day of Atonement. There are many occasions when people in the Bible fasted, and the Pharisees established several rules about fasting, but Jesus rebuked them for what He called their self righteous pride and hypocrisy in trying to look righteous without true and sincere faith in God.

Analyzing what Jesus taught in Matthew 6:16–18:

—1— When you fast = Even though we aren't ever commanded to fast, this suggests that **fasting is**

—2— Avoid being a hypocrite = **Fasting isn't**

—3— **Fasting is a private and personal decision** to become

—Some additional TRUTHS related to fasting:

- We are NOT required or obligated to fast. But fasting is a way to develop a deeper relationship with the Lord God
- Fasting is not related to dieting or eating habits. It's about removing distractions so we can concentrate on prayer.
- In Isaiah 58, God indicted Israel for their hypocritical fasting that offends Him and defined the kind of fasting He desires. He pointed out that fasting can provide us with the opportunity to bless someone who's in need.
- Fasting is an appropriate way of mourning and repenting over sin. Fasting can help us identify any unconfessed sins that are unknown to us.
- Daniel fasted when he wanted to gain wisdom and insight from God.
- Nehemiah fasted when we wanted to gain approval from King Artaxerxes to go to Jerusalem.
- The Elders in Antioch fasted before sending Paul and Barnabas on their initial missionary journey
- Fasting is a way to ***develop and increase self-control.***
- Fasting can help us ***defeat the temptations we experience from idolatry.*** There are many idols that plague our lives and ***too often we don't realize how much certain things take control over us.*** When we fast and pray for God to reveal these things, He will not only show us, ***He will enable us to gain freedom from them!***

John MacArthur recommends fasting as a method to gain greater understanding in God's Word, "We often fail to understand God's Word as fully as we ought simply because, unlike those great people of God, we do not seek to comprehend it with their degree of intensity and determination. Skipping a few meals might be the small price we willingly pay for staying in the Word until understanding comes."

Four principles about FASTING:

- 1— Fasting can provide a _____ that will help us ELIMINATE SINS & IDOLS THAT DOMINATE OUR LIVES!
- 2— Fasting is an _____ OF WORSHIP that **draws us closer to our Lord God Almighty!**
- 3— Fasting is a _____ of our TOTAL TRUST & DEPENDENCE on God!
- 4— Fasting provides us with additional _____ to **pray & focus on God.**