FASTING & PRAYER

ADVANCED SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

Power, Breakthrough, and Communion with God

An Expanded Research Synthesis on the Biblical Theology, History, and Practice of Fasting Joined to Prayer

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Fasting & Prayer

Advanced Spiritual Discipline for Power and Breakthrough. An expanded research synthesis examining the biblical theology, historical development, and faithful practice of fasting joined to prayer in the life of the maturing disciple. Prepared for The King Is Coming Ministry — Kyle Lauriano, kylelauriano.com. This paper treats fasting not as a technique for manipulating God but as a means of grace by which the disciple humbles the body, sharpens spiritual attentiveness, and presses into deeper communion with Christ.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines fasting as a spiritual discipline joined to prayer, arguing that Scripture presents fasting not as a mechanism for compelling God to act but as a means of grace that humbles the disciple, intensifies prayer, and cultivates dependence on God. Drawing on the biblical witness from the Pentateuch through the apostolic church, the testimony of the early church fathers, the medieval and Reformation traditions, and the recovery of the discipline among modern writers, the paper develops a theology of fasting oriented toward spiritual formation rather than spiritual leverage.

Three claims organize the argument. First, biblical fasting is fundamentally an expression of humility and repentance before God, not a transaction. Second, the recurring scriptural pattern joins fasting to prayer, and it is this union — not abstinence alone — that Scripture associates with breakthrough. Third, the value of fasting lies in what it forms in the disciple: a heart weaned from lesser appetites and fixed on God.

This expanded treatment adds close readings of the central biblical texts, a fuller history of the discipline across the church's life, a section addressing common questions and objections, and a practical guide with study questions suitable for personal use or group study. Throughout, the paper closes the gap between knowing about fasting and practicing it well, while attending carefully to matters of wisdom, stewardship, and health.

INTRODUCTION: RECOVERING A NEGLECTED DISCIPLINE

Among the classical spiritual disciplines, fasting may be the most widely neglected and the most poorly understood. Prayer, Scripture reading, worship, and giving retain a regular place in the rhythms of most believers. Fasting, by contrast, has quietly receded — practiced occasionally, taught rarely, and often surrounded by confusion about its purpose. Richard Foster observed that in the great body of devotional literature, fasting receives surprisingly little sustained treatment, despite its prominence throughout Scripture and Christian history.

This neglect is not accidental. Fasting runs against the grain of a culture of abundance and immediate gratification. To deliberately go without food in order to seek God can seem extreme, even unhealthy, to modern sensibilities. We live in a time and place in which food is constantly available, discomfort is to be avoided, and the satisfaction of appetite is treated almost as a right. In such a setting the very idea of voluntary hunger for spiritual purposes strikes many as strange. Yet the consistent witness of Scripture and the practice of the church across the centuries press a different conclusion: that fasting, rightly understood and joined to prayer, is a normal and powerful part of the disciple's walk with God.

There is also a second reason for neglect, more subtle than cultural discomfort. Where fasting has been taught, it has too often been taught badly — framed as a spiritual technique for obtaining results, a lever the believer pulls to move the hand of God. This distortion produces a predictable disillusionment. People fast, expecting a guaranteed outcome; the outcome does not come as hoped; and they conclude that fasting "does not work," quietly abandoning it. The problem is not the discipline but the false theology attached to it.

This distortion is worth naming precisely because it is so common and so damaging. It treats God as a vending machine and fasting as the coin: insert sufficient self-denial, and the desired blessing drops out. When the blessing does not come, the disappointed believer is left with two equally corrosive conclusions — either that God is unfaithful, or that he himself failed to fast hard enough. Both conclusions wound faith. The first impugns God's goodness; the second crushes the believer under a burden of works he can never satisfy. A whole subculture of anxious, striving, results-driven fasting has grown up around this error, and it has driven many away from a discipline that was meant to free them. Recovering fasting therefore requires not merely defending the practice but dismantling the false theology that has so often accompanied it. That dismantling is among the central tasks of this paper.

This paper sets out to recover the discipline on biblical terms. The aim is twofold: to correct distortions that treat fasting as a spiritual lever for extracting outcomes from God, and to commend fasting as a means of grace that forms the heart. The maturing disciple does not fast to earn God's attention or to manipulate circumstances. The disciple fasts to humble the self, to sharpen prayer, and to declare with the body what the heart confesses: that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

The structure of what follows moves from foundation to practice. After surveying the biblical foundations (Part I) and reading the central texts closely (Part II), the paper develops a positive theology of fasting (Part III), examines the union of fasting and prayer (Part IV), and traces the history of the discipline (Part V). It then turns practical: the forms of fasting (Part VI), wisdom and health (Part VII), common questions (Part VIII), and a usable guide with study questions (Part IX). A reader seeking only the practical material may begin at Part VI; a reader wanting the full argument should start at the beginning.

PART I: THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF FASTING

1.1 The Vocabulary of Fasting in Scripture

Before surveying the narrative, it helps to notice the language Scripture uses. In the Hebrew Scriptures the principal word is *tsum*, "to fast," frequently paired with the idiom to "afflict" or "humble" the soul (*anah nephesh*). This pairing is significant: fasting is not merely the omission of food but a deliberate humbling of the whole person before God. In the Greek of the New Testament the word is *nesteia* (and the verb *nesteuo*), simply "to abstain from food." The plain meaning across both Testaments is the voluntary giving up of food for a spiritual purpose, for a set time.

The link between fasting and humbling is theologically load-bearing. It tells us at the outset that the point of the practice is not the abstinence itself but the posture it expresses and cultivates: lowliness, dependence, and earnest seeking of God. Where that posture is absent, Scripture treats the outward act as empty. Where it is present, even a brief fast carries weight.

This is also why fasting is so frequently paired in Scripture with other outward signs of humbling — sackcloth, ashes, weeping, lying prostrate, the tearing of garments. These were the bodily vocabulary of a humbled heart in the ancient world. The fasting that accompanied them was of a piece: a turning of the whole person, body and soul together, toward God in lowliness. The modern disciple need not adopt sackcloth, but should grasp the principle these signs embody — that genuine repentance and earnest seeking engage the body as well as the mind, and that fasting is the enduring form of this embodied humbling that Scripture commends to the church. The body is not incidental to our spirituality; we are not souls trapped in flesh but whole persons, and fasting honors that wholeness by enlisting the body in the soul's pursuit of God.

1.2 Fasting in the Law and the Historical Books

Fasting appears early and runs throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. The Day of Atonement called Israel to "afflict your souls" (Leviticus 16:29; 23:27), a phrase the tradition understood to include fasting as an outward sign of inward humbling. This was the one fast commanded in the Law for all Israel, set within the most solemn day of the year, when the nation sought atonement for its sins. Fasting thus enters Scripture not as a private spiritual experiment but as part of the corporate life of God's people, bound to repentance and to seeking God's mercy.

Beyond the one commanded fast, Scripture records many occasional fasts called in response to crisis, grief, or the need for guidance. Moses fasted forty days on the mountain as he received the Law (Exodus 34:28), a fast of unusual length associated with extraordinary encounter with God. The people fasted in repentance at Mizpah under Samuel (1 Samuel 7:6). David fasted in grief and intercession for his child (2 Samuel 12:16). Jehoshaphat proclaimed a national fast in the face of invasion (2 Chronicles 20:3). Ezra and Nehemiah led the returning exiles in fasting and confession (Ezra 8:21; Nehemiah 9:1). In each, fasting expresses a turning to God in dependence at a moment of need.

1.3 Fasting in the Prophets

The prophets both called the nation to fasting and sharply critiqued fasting that had become hollow. Joel summoned Israel with striking urgency, calling the people to return to the Lord with fasting, weeping, and mourning — yet immediately qualifying the outward act with the deeper demand:

Joel 2:12–13 (KJV)

> *"Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness."*

This qualification is essential to a biblical theology of fasting. From the beginning, Scripture warns that the external act is worthless apart from a humbled and repentant heart. The form without the substance is not merely useless; it is offensive. Zechariah presses the same point: when the people ask whether they should continue their customary fasts, the Lord answers with a question of his own — whether they fasted to him at all, or merely for themselves (Zechariah 7:5). The prophetic witness consistently refuses to let fasting become a self-regarding ritual.

1.4 Fasting in the New Testament

The New Testament continues and deepens the practice. Jesus fasted forty days in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1–2). Anna the prophetess served God in the temple "with fastings and prayers night and day" (Luke 2:37). Jesus taught his disciples how to fast (Matthew 6:16–18), assuming they would. The early church fasted when commissioning leaders and seeking direction (Acts 13:2–3; 14:23). Paul refers to being "in fastings often" (2 Corinthians 11:27).

Across both Testaments, then, fasting is woven through the life of God's people — commanded once for all Israel, practiced often in response to need, critiqued when hollow, assumed and taught by Jesus, and carried forward by the apostolic church. It is neither marginal nor optional in the biblical witness. The following section reads the most important of these texts closely.

PART II: KEY TEXTS IN DEPTH — A CLOSE READING

Three passages bear the greatest weight in any biblical theology of fasting: Isaiah 58, the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4, and Jesus' teaching on fasting in Matthew 6. A close reading of each repays the effort, because each guards against a characteristic distortion of the discipline.

2.1 Isaiah 58 — The Fast God Chooses

No passage shapes the theology of fasting more decisively than Isaiah 58. The chapter opens with the people's complaint: they have fasted, and God has not noticed (Isaiah 58:3). On the surface this sounds pious — they are seeking God and seem frustrated by his silence. But the divine answer exposes what lies beneath the outward observance. They fast, God says, while pursuing their own pleasure and exploiting their workers; they fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fist of wickedness (58:3–4). Their fasting and their daily conduct are at war with one another.

The Lord then redefines the fast he actually desires. It is not chiefly about abstaining from food at all, but about a whole reorientation of life:

Isaiah 58:6–7 (KJV)

> *"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?"*

The passage does not abolish fasting from food; rather, it refuses to let that abstinence be separated from justice and mercy. True fasting humbles the heart, and a humbled heart cannot remain indifferent to the oppressed and the hungry. The fast God chooses bends the whole life toward God and neighbor. This is the indispensable frame for everything else in this paper: fasting is never an end in itself, never a private negotiation with God, and never compatible with injustice. It is a humbling that reorders the entire life. Isaiah 58 also carries a promise — light, healing, guidance, and answered prayer (58:8–9) — but pointedly attaches it to this integrated obedience, not to abstinence alone.

The structure of the promise deserves notice, because it is so easily misread. The people had assumed a simple equation: we fast, therefore God must respond. God overturns this not by denying that he responds to his people, but by exposing the hollowness of their fasting. The blessings of Isaiah 58 — that their light shall break forth as the morning, that the Lord shall answer when they call, that he will guide them continually — are real, but they flow to a people whose fasting has become inseparable from righteous living. The lesson is not that good works earn God's favor, but that genuine fasting and a transformed life cannot be pried apart. A fast that leaves a person unjust, ungenerous, and self-absorbed is, by definition, not the fast God chooses, whatever the stomach has gone without. The chapter thus stands as a permanent rebuke to every merely technical or self-interested approach to the discipline.

2.2 Matthew 4 — Fasting and the Word of God

Jesus fasted forty days in the wilderness at the outset of his ministry (Matthew 4:1–2), led there by the Spirit. The number forty deliberately echoes Moses on the mountain and Israel in the wilderness; Jesus relives Israel's testing and, where Israel failed, he prevails. At the point of greatest physical weakness — "he was afterward an hungred" — the tempter strikes, urging him to turn stones to bread. Jesus answers from Deuteronomy:

Matthew 4:4 (KJV)

> *"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."*

The episode frames fasting as a declaration of dependence. To fast is to enact this very confession: that the human person does not live by bread alone, that physical appetite is not the deepest hunger, and that the word of God sustains more truly than food. Notice too that Jesus does not use his hunger as leverage with God, nor does he treat his fast as a credential. He simply trusts and obeys. His fast is the soil in which dependence grows; it is not a transaction. For the disciple, Matthew 4 establishes that fasting belongs to the life of faith precisely as an embodied trust in God over the demands of the body.

The contrast with Israel is pointed and instructive. Israel, fed with manna in the wilderness, nonetheless grumbled, doubted, and demanded, failing the test of dependence (Deuteronomy 8:2–3, the very passage Jesus quotes). Where Israel turned its hunger into a grievance against God, Jesus turns his hunger into an occasion for trust. The word he cites — that man lives by every word from God's mouth — was originally God's own commentary on the manna: he humbled Israel and let them hunger, then fed them, to teach them that life comes from God's word and not from bread alone. Jesus, fasting, embodies the lesson Israel failed to learn. This is why fasting is so fitting a discipline for the disciple: it is a deliberate entry into controlled, voluntary hunger precisely in order to learn, in the body, the lesson that God is our true sustenance. Each pang becomes a small catechism, teaching the heart where life really comes from.

2.3 Matthew 6 — Fasting in Secret

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus places fasting alongside giving and prayer as one of three assumed practices of the righteous life (Matthew 6:1–18). He does not say "if ye fast" but "when ye fast" (6:16), taking for granted that his followers will. His concern is entirely with motive. The hypocrites disfigure their faces so their fasting will be seen by others; they have their reward already — the admiration they sought. The disciple, by contrast, is to fast unobtrusively, "that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret" (6:18).

Three things follow. First, fasting is fundamentally Godward and private, not a performance for human eyes. Second, the reward of fasting is God himself and what he gives, not human esteem. Third, the very secrecy Jesus commands guards the heart against the spiritual pride that fasting can so easily breed. Where Isaiah 58 guards against fasting divorced from justice, Matthew 6 guards against fasting performed for reputation. Together these texts fence the discipline on both sides: fasting must issue in love of neighbor, and it must be hidden from the desire for applause.

It is worth dwelling on the strange phrase Jesus uses of the hypocrites: "they have their reward" (Matthew 6:16). The word suggests a transaction paid in full. Those who fast to be seen by others receive exactly what they sought — the notice and admiration of people — and nothing more. They have been paid; the account is closed. The tragedy is not that they receive too little but that they aimed too low, trading the reward of God for the applause of men. Jesus's instruction to anoint the head and wash the face while fasting (6:17) is correspondingly practical: the disciple is to look entirely ordinary, giving no outward signal of the fast, so that the fast is offered to the Father alone. This does not forbid the corporate fasts Scripture elsewhere commands, in which a community openly fasts together for a shared purpose; it forbids the parading of personal devotion for personal credit. The principle reaches well beyond fasting: it is the call to do righteousness before God rather than before an audience, a call that searches the motives of every spiritual act.

2.4 David's Fast for His Child — 2 Samuel 12

A fourth passage deserves close attention because it so directly confronts the transactional view of fasting. When the child born to David and Bathsheba fell ill, David fasted and lay all night on the ground, refusing food and pleading with God for the child's life (2 Samuel 12:16–17). His servants feared to tell him when the child died, knowing how intensely he had sought God. Yet when David learned of the death, he rose, washed, worshiped, and ate (12:20).

His explanation is theologically striking. While the child lived, he fasted and wept, "for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?" (12:22). But now that the child had died, fasting could not bring him back. David's fasting was never a mechanism guaranteed to produce the outcome he desired; it was an earnest, humble pleading with a God who remained free to answer as he saw fit. When the answer came, even an answer of sorrow, David worshiped. Here is the biblical posture in its purest form: fasting as humble petition offered to a sovereign and gracious God, held with open hands, surrendered to his wisdom. David did not rage that his fasting had "failed"; he worshiped the God whose will is good even when it wounds.

PART III: A THEOLOGY OF FASTING — WHAT FASTING IS AND IS NOT

3.1 Fasting Is Humbling, Not Earning

The most common distortion of fasting treats it as a form of payment: the disciple endures hunger, and God, impressed or obligated, releases the desired outcome. Scripture knows nothing of such a transaction. The God of the Bible is not moved by hunger as leverage; he is drawn to the humble and contrite heart (Isaiah 66:2; Psalm 51:17). Fasting matters because of what it expresses and what it forms, not because it places God in anyone's debt.

Properly understood, fasting is an enacted humility. To set aside food is to confess in the body that one's deepest hunger is for God, that physical appetite is not master, and that one comes before God needy and dependent rather than self-sufficient. The discipline does not change God; it changes the one who fasts. This is why the same outward act can be either pleasing or offensive to God depending entirely on the heart behind it. The Pharisee who fasted twice a week and announced it (Luke 18:12) went home unjustified; the tax collector who simply cried for mercy went home justified. The difference was never the menu.

The Pharisee's error repays study, because it is the perennial temptation of the person who fasts. He fasted genuinely — twice a week, more than the Law required — yet his fasting fed his pride rather than his humility. He stood and prayed "with himself," thanking God that he was not as other men, and he listed his fasting among his credentials (Luke 18:11–12). His discipline had become a measuring rod by which he ranked himself above others. This is precisely the corruption Jesus warned against in Matthew 6, and it shows that fasting, of all disciplines, is peculiarly liable to breed self-righteousness. The remedy is not to abandon fasting but to fast as the tax collector prayed — out of a sense of need and unworthiness, casting oneself on mercy rather than tallying merit. Fasting that increases our sense of spiritual achievement has gone wrong at the root; fasting that deepens our sense of dependence on grace is doing its proper work.

3.2 Fasting Exposes What Governs Us

One of the most valuable effects of fasting is diagnostic. When the steadying comfort of food is removed, what surfaces is revealing. Foster noted that fasting brings to the surface the things that control us — irritability, anger, anxiety, pride — feelings we normally keep medicated by comfort and routine. The fast does not create these things; it uncovers what was already there, so that it can be confessed and surrendered to God.

Consider how much of ordinary life is organized around the management of appetite and the avoidance of discomfort. We eat not only from hunger but from boredom, stress, habit, and the desire for comfort. Remove food for a day, and the soul's reflexes are laid bare: how quickly irritation rises, how readily we reach for substitutes, how anxious we become when a familiar comfort is withheld. In this way fasting serves self-knowledge and repentance. It is a mirror held up to the soul. The disciple who fasts learns how much of life is governed by appetite — and is invited to reorder those loves around God.

3.3 Fasting as Worship and Longing

Fasting is finally an act of worship and a posture of longing. The fasting disciple says with the body what the soul declares: that God is more desirable than food, that communion with Christ is the truest nourishment, and that the present age is not yet the feast. Anna the prophetess served God in the temple "with fastings and prayers night

and day" (Luke 2:37), and in that posture of expectant longing she recognized the coming of the Messiah.

This longing dimension distinguishes Christian fasting from mere asceticism or self-improvement. The goal is not the denial of the body for its own sake, nor health, nor willpower, but God himself. There is also an eschatological note. When Jesus was asked why his disciples did not fast, he answered that the wedding guests do not fast while the bridegroom is with them, "but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast" (Matthew 9:15). Christian fasting in this present age is the hunger of those who have tasted the kingdom and long for its fullness — the fasting of a people who await their returning King. For a ministry named for the King who is coming, this is fasting's most fitting key: hunger pointed Godward, longing for the wedding feast of the Lamb.

This frames the whole Christian life as lived between two feasts: the foretaste already given in Christ, and the marriage supper of the Lamb yet to come (Revelation 19:9). In that in-between time, fasting and feasting both have their place. The disciple feasts in celebration of what God has already done, and fasts in longing for what he has yet to complete. To fast is to refuse to be fully satisfied by the present age, to keep alive a holy dissatisfaction that says, with the whole creation, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20). Understood this way, fasting is not gloom but hope — the bodily expression of a people who know that the best is yet to come and who refuse to settle their hearts on lesser things in the meantime. The empty stomach becomes a kind of prayer for the Kingdom: a declaration that we are not yet home.

3.5 Fasting Among the Means of Grace

It helps to locate fasting within the larger family of spiritual disciplines. The classical disciplines — prayer, the reading and hearing of Scripture, worship, the Lord's Supper, fellowship, giving, service, silence, and fasting — are not ways of earning God's favor but channels through which God ordinarily communicates his grace to his people. They are means, not merits. The disciple who practices them is not negotiating with God but placing himself where God has promised to meet him.

Fasting occupies a particular place among these disciplines. Where prayer and Scripture engage the mind and spirit directly, fasting engages the body, enlisting even our appetites in the pursuit of God. It is among the most embodied of the disciplines, and for that reason among the most humbling, since it confronts us with how thoroughly we are governed by physical desire. Practiced alongside the others — never as a substitute for them — fasting deepens and intensifies the whole devotional life. It is not a higher or more advanced discipline reserved for spiritual elites, but a normal part of the ordinary Christian's walk, available to all and commanded by none for the sake of merit.

It is worth stating plainly the things fasting is not, since each error has done real damage. Fasting is not a hunger strike against God, designed to extract concessions. It is not a diet or a health regimen dressed in spiritual language; while fasting may have incidental physical effects, pursuing it for weight loss or wellness empties it of its meaning. It is not a demonstration of willpower or spiritual athleticism, to be measured and compared. And it is not a payment that obligates God to act. Strip away these distortions and what remains is the biblical reality: a humble, Godward turning of the whole person, expressed through the voluntary setting aside of food, for the sake of deeper communion with God.

PART IV: FASTING AND PRAYER JOINED — THE PATTERN OF BREAKTHROUGH

4.1 The Inseparable Pair

Throughout Scripture, fasting rarely stands alone. It is joined to prayer, and it is this union that the biblical narrative associates with seasons of decisive spiritual movement. Fasting without prayer is merely going hungry; prayer intensified by fasting is the pattern Scripture commends. The abstinence is not the power. The abstinence clears space, sharpens focus, and expresses the seriousness of prayer that seeks God with the whole self.

Why should the two belong together so consistently? Because fasting gives the body a voice in prayer. It enlists the whole person — not the mind and will alone, but the appetites and the flesh — in the act of seeking God. The empty stomach becomes a recurring summons to prayer through the day; the discomfort itself turns the heart Godward again and again. Fasting, in this sense, is prayer made bodily. It is the physical underlining of the soul's petition.

There is a deeper logic here as well. Much of our prayerlessness flows from a settled sense of self-sufficiency. When life is comfortable and our needs are met, prayer easily becomes perfunctory, because we do not feel our dependence. Fasting deliberately introduces a felt need — hunger — and in doing so awakens the heart to its deeper and more permanent dependence on God. The body's craving becomes a parable of the soul's craving; the hunger we feel for food points to the hunger we ought to feel for God. This is why fasting so reliably intensifies prayer: it strips away, for a time, the illusion of self-sufficiency and returns us to the posture of the needy child before a generous Father. Prayer offered from that posture is prayer of a different quality — more earnest, more honest, more dependent — than the comfortable prayers of the well-fed and self-satisfied.

4.2 Biblical Instances of Fasting and Prayer

The pattern recurs at pivotal moments. When the people of Judah faced overwhelming invasion, Jehoshaphat "proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah" and the nation sought the Lord together (2 Chronicles 20:3); the deliverance that followed was received as God's gift, not as wages earned. Ezra proclaimed a fast by the river Ahava to seek a safe journey, "that we might afflict ourselves before our God" (Ezra 8:21), explicitly because he was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers after testifying that God would protect them. Esther called the Jews to fast for three days before she approached the king on behalf of her people (Esther 4:16). Daniel set his face to seek God "by prayer and supplications, with fasting" (Daniel 9:3), and received understanding and angelic visitation. Hannah, in bitterness of soul, wept and would not eat as she poured out her petition for a child (1 Samuel 1:7–10).

In each case the structure is the same: a community or an individual faces a matter beyond human resource, turns to God in concentrated prayer, and joins fasting to that prayer as an expression of urgency, humility, and dependence. The breakthrough, when it comes, is attributed to God's mercy, not to the mechanics of abstinence. Nowhere does Scripture present fasting as a guaranteed cause with an automatic effect.

Two of these examples reward a closer look. Esther's fast (Esther 4:16) was called at the hinge of her people's history, before she risked her life by approaching the king unbidden. She summoned the Jews of Susa to fast with her and her maidens for three days, after which she would go to the king "and if I perish, I perish." The fast did not coerce a particular outcome; it steeled a frightened woman for obedience and bound a threatened community together before God in the face of mortal danger. The deliverance that followed unfolded through ordinary providence — a sleepless king, a remembered record, a reversal of fortune — never through spectacle, yet

unmistakably as the answer of a God who had been earnestly sought.

Daniel's fast (Daniel 9–10) is equally instructive. In chapter 9 he sets himself to seek God by prayer and supplication, with fasting, confessing not only his own sin but the sin of his people, pleading God's mercy on the basis of God's own character rather than any merit of Israel. In chapter 10 he mourns and partially fasts for three weeks, after which understanding and an angelic messenger are granted. Daniel's fasting is saturated with humility and confession; it is the posture of a man who knows he has no claim on God and casts himself wholly on divine mercy. This is the opposite of leverage. It is the abandonment of every claim, the empty hands of one who simply seeks God's face.

4.3 Fasting in the Mission of the Early Church

The apostolic church carried the practice forward, now centered on discerning and advancing the mission of God. At Antioch, "as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted," the Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul for their work; the church responded with further fasting and prayer before sending them (Acts 13:2–3). When Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the new churches, they did so "with prayer and fasting" (Acts 14:23).

Here fasting is bound to guidance and commissioning. It is the posture of a church seeking God's direction for its mission, not a church bargaining for personal outcomes. The Antioch episode is especially instructive: the leaders were already worshiping and fasting when the Spirit spoke. Their fasting was not aimed at extracting a particular answer; it was the attentive, undistracted seeking of God in which his direction could be heard. This missional dimension has been recovered powerfully in the modern disciple-making movements of the global church, where corporate prayer and fasting frequently accompany seasons of significant gospel advance.

4.4 What "Breakthrough" Means — and Does Not Mean

Jesus' words concerning a difficult deliverance — that "this kind" comes out only by prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29 in the longer textual tradition; some manuscripts read simply "by prayer") — are often cited to support fasting as a tool for forcing spiritual results. Read carefully, the saying points the other way. The disciples failed not for lack of a technique but for lack of the deep, prayerful dependence on God that fasting cultivates. The remedy Jesus names is not a more powerful method but a more thorough reliance on God. Fasting and prayer are the marks of that reliance, not its mechanism.

"Breakthrough," in biblical terms, is therefore not an outcome the disciple manufactures by sufficient self-denial. It is the work of God, sought by a people who have humbled themselves and prayed. The disciple's task is faithfulness in seeking; the results belong to God. This distinction matters pastorally. A theology that promises guaranteed outcomes in exchange for fasting sets people up for crushing disappointment and, worse, for blaming themselves — concluding they did not fast hard enough — when God in his wisdom answers differently than they hoped. Any teaching that turns fasting into a guaranteed transaction has crossed from biblical discipline into superstition. The promise of Scripture is not that fasting controls God, but that God draws near to the humble who seek him.

PART V: FASTING IN CHURCH HISTORY — FATHERS, MEDIEVALS, REFORMERS, MODERNS

5.1 The Early Church and the Fathers

The post-apostolic church practiced fasting as a regular rhythm. The Didache, an early manual of Christian practice, instructs believers to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, deliberately distinguishing the Christian pattern from the customary fast days of others. Fasting accompanied baptism: candidates and, with them, the community fasted in preparation. It preceded the Lord's Supper in many places and marked seasons of repentance. Out of these rhythms the Lenten fast before Easter gradually developed as a communal preparation for the celebration of the resurrection, eventually settling into a forty-day form echoing Christ's wilderness fast.

The fathers consistently joined fasting to prayer and almsgiving, echoing Isaiah 58. This triad — prayer, fasting, and giving to the poor — recurs across early Christian teaching, holding together the Godward and the neighborward dimensions of the discipline. Augustine and others insisted that fasting which did not issue in care for the poor was incomplete; the food set aside was, in part, to be given to the hungry. The early church thus preserved the prophetic insistence that fasting and justice belong together, refusing to let the discipline curdle into private religiosity.

This practical instinct — that what is saved by fasting should be given away — is worth recovering. It guards fasting from becoming a self-improvement project and binds it to love of neighbor in a concrete way. The disciple who fasts and then gives the cost of the missed meals to the hungry has fasted in a manner the prophets and the fathers would recognize. The early church also fasted corporately in preparation for the great feasts, so that seasons of abstinence gave way to seasons of celebration. This rhythm of fasting and feasting embodied a deep truth: that the present age is a time of longing and the age to come a time of feasting, and that the Christian life moves between the two. Fasting was never meant to be a permanent gloom but a season pointing toward joy.

5.2 The Medieval Period

Through the medieval centuries, fasting became increasingly formalized within the liturgical calendar. Fixed fast days, the Lenten season, Ember days, and vigils before feasts structured the year. This formalization had real strengths: it embedded fasting in the shared life of the whole church and handed it down across generations. But it also carried a danger that the Reformers would later name — the drift from fasting as a heartfelt turning to God into fasting as a meritorious work, observed by rule and counted toward favor. The medieval monastic traditions, at their best, kept the inward reality alive, treating fasting as a means of weaning the soul from lesser appetites and ordering desire toward God.

5.3 The Reformers

The Reformers, while rejecting what they saw as mechanical or merit-based observance, did not abandon fasting. John Calvin, in the *Institutes*, commended fasting joined to prayer in times of public calamity or particular need, treating it as a fitting accompaniment to earnest prayer and repentance. His concern was twofold: to guard against superstition (the notion that the act itself pleases God) and against the idea that fasting earns merit. Fasting, for Calvin, was an aid to prayer and an expression of humility, never a payment. The Reformation concern was thus to restore fasting to its biblical purpose: humility and dependence, not the earning of favor.

This corrective remains pertinent. The perennial temptation is to slide from fasting as a means of grace into fasting as a work that obligates God. The Reformers' insistence on grace guards the discipline from that distortion, and it is worth keeping their caution in view precisely in settings where fasting is most enthusiastically promoted.

5.5 The Monastic and Devotional Streams

Running alongside the formal liturgical fasts was a deeper devotional stream, especially in the monastic traditions, that kept fasting's inward purpose alive. The desert fathers and mothers of the early centuries practiced fasting not as a rule to be checked off but as a discipline for mastering the appetites and clearing the heart for prayer. Their wisdom was characteristically balanced: they warned as sternly against excessive, showy fasting as against laxity, recognizing that a fast pursued for spiritual pride or self-punishment was as deadly to the soul as no fast at all. Moderation, hiddenness, and love were their watchwords.

This devotional stream understood fasting as part of a larger reordering of desire. The goal was not to despise food or punish the body but to loosen food's grip on the soul so that the deepest hunger — the hunger for God — could come to the surface and be satisfied in him. At its best, the tradition held together what is so easily split apart: rigorous discipline and tender love, bodily self-denial and spiritual joy. The maturing disciple today can learn from this stream both its seriousness about the discipline and its wariness of the pride that can corrupt it.

In the modern era, after a long period of neglect in many Protestant circles, writers have called the church to recover fasting as a normal spiritual discipline. Arthur Wallis's *God's Chosen Fast* offered a careful biblical and practical treatment that shaped a generation. Richard Foster, in *Celebration of Discipline*, placed fasting among the classical disciplines and pressed its God-centered purpose. Their shared emphasis is instructive: fasting is for God, centered on God, and dangerous only when it becomes about anything other than God. Foster warns pointedly that fasting must center on God or it degenerates into a self-centered exercise — whether for health, willpower, or spiritual reputation.

The modern disciple-making movements have likewise rediscovered corporate fasting and prayer as a means of seeking God for revival and mission, often pointing to the global church — in Africa, Asia, and Latin America — where prayer and fasting remain woven into ordinary congregational life and frequently accompany seasons of rapid gospel growth. Across all these recoveries the consistent testimony is the same: fasting's power is not in the abstinence but in the deepened seeking of God to which it gives expression. The history of the discipline, rightly read, is a long commentary on the single biblical point — that God draws near to the humble.

Two cautions emerge from this history that are worth carrying into the present. The first is the danger the Reformers named: that fasting, especially when formalized or promoted with promises of results, drifts toward a works-based, merit-seeking practice. Wherever fasting is taught as a way to obligate God or to advance one's spiritual standing, the Reformation correction must be applied afresh. The second is the danger the desert tradition guarded against: that fasting becomes a competitive asceticism, measured and compared, feeding pride rather than humility. The whole history of the discipline can be read as a series of corrections, in each generation, bringing fasting back from these two perennial distortions to its biblical center — humble, hidden, loving, Godward seeking. The maturing disciple inherits this hard-won wisdom and does well to heed it, neither neglecting the discipline nor corrupting it, but receiving it as the church has learned to receive it: as a means of grace, held with open hands.

PART VI: TYPES OF FASTS AND THE POSTURE OF THE HEART

6.1 The Biblical Variety of Fasts

Scripture describes several forms of fasting, suited to different circumstances. Recognizing this variety frees the disciple from a single rigid model and invites wisdom in practice. No one form is more spiritual than another; each fits particular needs, seasons, and capacities.

Type of Fast	Description	Biblical Reference
Normal fast	Abstaining from food while continuing to drink water	Matthew 4:2
Partial fast	Restricting certain foods rather than all food	Daniel 10:2–3
Absolute fast	Abstaining from food and water; rare and brief	Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9
Corporate fast	A community fasting together for a shared purpose	2 Chron. 20:3; Acts 13:2
Regular/rhythmic fast	A recurring fast woven into ordinary life	Luke 18:12 (cf. Didache)

The “Daniel fast,” drawn from Daniel’s abstention from rich food and wine for a season (Daniel 10:2–3), has become a common partial fast in contemporary practice. Because it restricts rather than eliminates food, such a fast can be sustained over longer periods and is often appropriate for those who cannot safely undertake a full fast. The absolute fast — without food or water — appears in Scripture only briefly and in extremity (Esther’s three days; Paul’s three days after the Damascus road); it is dangerous beyond a very short span and should never be attempted as a feat.

6.3 Occasions and Purposes for Fasting

Scripture and Christian experience suggest a range of occasions on which fasting is fitting. Naming them helps the disciple move from vague intention to purposeful practice. None of these is a formula; each is simply a season in which God’s people have found it good to seek him with fasting.

- **Repentance and confession.** When conviction of sin is deep, fasting gives bodily voice to sorrow and to the seriousness of turning back to God (Joel 2:12; 1 Samuel 7:6).
- **Grief and lament.** In seasons of loss or distress, fasting expresses a grief too deep for ordinary comfort and casts the mourner on God (2 Samuel 1:12).
- **Seeking guidance.** Before significant decisions or commissionings, fasting clears the heart to discern God’s direction (Acts 13:2–3; 14:23).
- **Intercession for others.** Fasting on behalf of another’s need expresses love and earnestness in prayer for them (Esther 4:16; Daniel 9).
- **Spiritual hunger and renewal.** Sometimes the disciple simply longs for God and fasts to deepen communion, with no crisis at all but holy desire (Luke 2:37).

- **Times of trial or spiritual conflict.** When facing intense opposition or temptation, fasting fortifies prayerful dependence on God (Matthew 4:1–4).

Notice that personal benefit is never the goal in any of these. In every case the fast is oriented toward God — toward repentance before him, grief poured out to him, guidance sought from him, intercession addressed to him, communion with him, or dependence upon him. The occasion supplies the reason; God remains the object.

Whatever the form, the posture of the heart is decisive. Scripture is emphatic that the type and length of a fast count for nothing apart from genuine humility and devotion to God. A short fast offered in sincerity is of far greater worth than an extended fast undertaken for display or self-discipline divorced from God. The widow's mite of fasting — a single skipped meal given wholly to God — outweighs the spectacular fast performed for reputation.

Before beginning a fast, the disciple does well to clarify its purpose: to seek God, to repent, to intercede for another, to seek direction, or simply to draw near in love. A fast without purpose is, as one writer put it, merely going hungry. A fast with a God-ward purpose becomes a focused season of prayer. It is wise to name the purpose before God at the outset and to return to it through the fast, lest the discipline dissolve into mere endurance.

PART VII: PRACTICAL WISDOM, STEWARDSHIP, AND HEALTH

7.1 Beginning Wisely

Those new to fasting are wise to begin modestly. Skipping a single meal and devoting that time to prayer is a fitting starting point. From there one may grow into longer or more regular fasts as spiritual maturity and physical capacity allow. The goal is not to impress God or others with the severity of the fast but to grow in dependence on God. Persistence matters more than intensity; a sustainable rhythm of modest fasting forms the soul more deeply than an occasional heroic effort that is never repeated.

It is often helpful to plan the use of the time freed by fasting. The hours normally given to meals can be redirected to Scripture, prayer, and intercession, so that the fast becomes a positive season of seeking rather than a mere absence of food. Some find it useful to keep a simple journal through a fast, noting what surfaces in the heart and how God meets them. Planning ahead for the practical realities — lighter commitments, adequate rest, hydration — helps the fast serve its purpose rather than becoming an ordeal of mere survival.

A few common pitfalls are worth anticipating. The first is overreach: attempting a long or severe fast at the outset, failing, and concluding that fasting is not for oneself. Far better to succeed at a modest fast and build from there. The second is distraction: fasting while filling the freed time with entertainment and busyness, so that the fast accomplishes nothing Godward. The remedy is to plan the prayer, not only the abstinence. The third is irritability spilling onto others: the hungry disciple can become short-tempered, which is itself a revelation of the heart but should not be inflicted on family and coworkers. Naming this in advance, and asking God's grace for patience, guards against it. The fourth is secret pride — the quiet satisfaction of having fasted, which Jesus so pointedly warned against. Keeping the fast hidden and turning every flicker of self-congratulation back into dependence on grace is the ongoing discipline within the discipline.

7.2 The Body as a Stewardship

The body is a gift and a stewardship, "the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 6:19). Fasting is not the punishment or contempt of the body but its right ordering — teaching appetite to serve rather than rule. The Christian tradition has always rejected the notion that the body is evil or that its mortification is good in itself; that is a pagan and gnostic idea, not a biblical one. For this reason fasting must always be pursued with care for the body God has given, never in a spirit of self-harm or in pursuit of an unhealthy relationship with food. A fast that damages the body it was meant to steward has lost its way.

7.3 Health Cautions

Genuine care for the body requires honest attention to health. Fasting from food is not appropriate for everyone, and the following cautions should be taken seriously. These are matters of wisdom and stewardship, not weakness of faith. No one should be made to feel that prudent care for their health is a failure of devotion; it is the opposite.

- Anyone with a medical condition — including diabetes, blood-pressure conditions, or any condition affected by food intake — should consult a physician before fasting from food.
- Those who are pregnant or nursing should not undertake food fasts.
- Those who take medication affected by eating should seek medical guidance first.

- Anyone with a history of disordered eating should not fast from food, and should speak with a doctor or counselor; fasting can reinforce harmful patterns. A non-food fast (for example, from media or a particular comfort) is a wiser path to the same Godward end.
- Children and adolescents, whose bodies are still growing, should not undertake food fasts; an age-appropriate non-food fast is more fitting.
- Extended fasts call for medical awareness, adequate hydration, careful re-introduction of food afterward, and trusted accountability throughout.

Where a food fast is unwise or unsafe, the heart of the discipline remains fully available. One may fast from entertainment, social media, a habitual comfort, or any good thing that has come to occupy too large a place — setting it aside for a season to seek God. The principle is constant: the disciple turns from a lesser thing in order to turn more fully toward God. The point was never the hunger; the point was always God.

PART VIII: COMMON QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIONS

8.1 “Isn’t fasting an Old Testament practice we’ve outgrown?”

No. Jesus fasted, taught his disciples how to fast, and said they would fast after he was taken from them (Matthew 9:15). The early church fasted (Acts 13–14). Fasting belongs to the present age of the church, the age between Christ’s ascension and his return. Far from being outgrown, it is fitted to a people who await their King.

8.2 “If fasting doesn’t move God, why do it?”

Because it moves us. Fasting humbles the heart, intensifies prayer, exposes what governs us, and expresses dependence and longing. God commands and commends practices that form his people, and he genuinely meets those who seek him. To say fasting is not a lever is not to say it is pointless; it is to locate its value rightly — in communion and formation rather than in coercion.

There is also a subtle but important distinction between God being *moved* and God being *coerced*. Scripture freely speaks of God responding to the prayers and the humbling of his people; he is not unmoved by those who seek him. Fasting joined to prayer is part of how God’s people seek him, and he has bound himself to draw near to such seekers (James 4:8). What Scripture denies is that fasting *compels* God, as if the act itself obligated him regardless of the heart, or guaranteed a particular outcome regardless of his wisdom. The God who responds to humble seeking remains free and good; he gives what is best, which is not always what we asked. To fast, then, is to seek the face of a Father who delights to be sought — not to operate a mechanism that produces results on demand. Held this way, the question dissolves: we fast because God meets those who seek him, and being met by God is the whole point.

8.3 “How long and how often should I fast?”

Scripture gives no universal rule, which is itself instructive. Begin where you are. A skipped meal, a day, or a partial fast over a season are all biblical. Let frequency and length grow with maturity and be governed by wisdom, health, and purpose rather than by comparison with others. Regular modest fasting generally forms the soul more than rare extreme fasting.

8.4 “What if I fail or break the fast early?”

A broken fast is not a broken relationship with God. Fasting is a means of grace, not a test of worth. If you stumble, turn the very stumble into prayer, receive God’s mercy, and continue. The aim is a humbled and seeking heart, and few things humble us more honestly than discovering our own weakness. That discovery, brought to God, is itself part of fasting’s fruit.

8.6 “Can I drink coffee, juice, or take medication while fasting?”

These are practical questions, and Scripture gives liberty rather than law. A normal fast abstains from food while continuing water; many include herbal tea or limited juice, especially on longer fasts, for safety. Medication should never be stopped for the sake of a fast without a physician’s guidance — obedience to God does not require endangering the body he gave you. The spirit of fasting is humble seeking, not a contest of severity. Choose a form that is safe for you and keeps your heart turned to God.

8.7 “What should I expect to feel?”

Honesty here prevents disillusionment. Especially at first, fasting often feels like little more than hunger, distraction, and irritability — not soaring spiritual experience. This is normal and even useful, for it exposes how much we depend on comfort and how restless the heart becomes without its usual props. Spiritual fruit from fasting tends to come quietly and over time: a softened heart, sharpened prayer, a loosened grip of appetite, a deepened sense of dependence. Do not measure a fast by its emotional intensity. Measure it by whether it turned you, however haltingly, toward God.

Both have biblical warrant. Jesus commands secrecy regarding personal fasting, guarding against fasting for reputation (Matthew 6). Yet Scripture also records corporate fasts called for shared purposes (2 Chronicles 20; Acts 13). The principle is that personal fasting is hidden from the desire for applause, while a community may rightly fast together for a common need. Even in corporate fasting, the individual’s heart is to be turned to God, not to the watching group.

PART IX: A PRACTICAL GUIDE AND STUDY QUESTIONS

9.1 A Simple Pattern for a First Fast

For a disciple beginning to fast, the following pattern offers a gentle, God-centered starting point. It is a guide, not a law; adapt it to your circumstances and health.

- **Before:** Choose a length you can sustain (one meal, or one day from supper to supper). Name the purpose before God — what are you seeking him for? Plan light commitments and ensure fasting is safe for you.
- **During:** When hunger comes, let it call you to prayer rather than to a substitute. Redirect mealtimes to Scripture and prayer. Keep hydrated. Resist the urge to announce the fast.
- **Praying:** Bring your stated purpose to God repeatedly. Confess what the fast surfaces — irritability, anxiety, craving — and surrender it.
- **After:** Break the fast gently with a light meal. Thank God for what he showed and gave, whether or not circumstances changed. Note what you learned for next time.

9.2 Combining Fasting with Prayer and Scripture

Because fasting and prayer belong together, a fast is most fruitful when deliberately joined to focused prayer and the Word. The hours freed from preparing and eating meals become an invitation. Some find it helpful to take each former mealtime as a fixed appointment with God: a passage of Scripture to read slowly, a season of prayer around the fast's stated purpose, and a few minutes of silence to listen. The recurring pangs of hunger between these appointments serve as gentle, all-day summonses back to prayer.

It is wise to choose Scripture that nourishes the particular purpose of the fast. One fasting for repentance might dwell in Psalm 51; one seeking guidance, in the Gospels and Acts; one longing for God, in the Psalms of desire such as Psalm 42 or 63. Praying Scripture back to God — turning its words into petition and praise — keeps the fast anchored in God's own revelation rather than drifting into mere introspection. The aim throughout is communion: the fast is not a project to complete but a meeting to keep.

9.3 Breaking a Fast Well

How a fast ends matters, both physically and spiritually. Physically, longer fasts must be broken gently — with light, easily digested food, in modest amounts, before returning gradually to normal eating. Breaking a long fast with a heavy meal can cause real harm; the body needs time to readjust. This caution applies especially to fasts of several days or more, which should be ended under appropriate guidance.

Spiritually, a fast is well broken with thanksgiving. The disciple gives thanks for what God has shown and given, whether or not outward circumstances changed, and carries forward into ordinary life the humility, dependence, and reordered desire that the fast cultivated. A fast is not meant to be an isolated spiritual event but a season that leaves the whole walk with God deeper than before. Brief notes on what was learned can help the next fast build on the last.

9.4 Study Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

- How has your culture shaped your assumptions about hunger, comfort, and self-denial? Where might those assumptions need reordering?
- Read Isaiah 58. What is the relationship between fasting and justice in this passage? How might that reshape how you fast?
- Why does Jesus command secrecy in fasting (Matthew 6)? What does this reveal about the dangers fasting can carry?
- Consider David in 2 Samuel 12. What does his response to the child's death teach about holding the results of fasting with open hands?
- Where in your life do appetite, comfort, or routine quietly rule? How could fasting expose and reorder those?
- Reflect on the claim that fasting is "formation, not leverage." How does this change the way you would approach a fast?
- Which of the occasions for fasting in Part VI most fits your present season — repentance, grief, guidance, intercession, hunger for God, or trial?
- What is one small, sustainable step you could take to recover fasting as a rhythm in your walk with God?

9.5 A Word of Encouragement

Do not let the cautions of this paper deter you from beginning. They are guardrails for a good road, not reasons to stay home. Fasting is one of God's gifts to his people, available to the weak and the strong, the new disciple and the mature. Begin small, begin humbly, and begin Godward, and you will find that the One who calls you to seek him is faithful to be found.

CONCLUSION: FASTING AS FORMATION, NOT LEVERAGE

Fasting joined to prayer is one of the great gifts God has given his people for the ordering of the heart and the deepening of communion with him. The witness of Scripture, confirmed by the practice of the church across the centuries, presents fasting as an enacted humility: a turning from the comforts of the body in order to seek God with the whole self.

The argument of this paper has been that fasting is formation, not leverage. It does not obligate God or guarantee outcomes. It humbles the one who fasts, exposes what governs the heart, intensifies prayer, and expresses the longing of a people who await their King. Where Scripture associates fasting with breakthrough, the power lies not in abstinence but in the deepened seeking of God to which fasting gives voice. The history of the church, from the Didache to the present, is one long confirmation of this single point: God draws near to the humble who seek him.

This reframing changes everything about how the discipline is approached. The one who fasts for leverage is anxious, measuring, and ultimately disappointed, for God will not be managed. The one who fasts for formation is free — free to fast in weakness as well as strength, free to fail and begin again, free to receive whatever God gives as grace rather than wages. The first treats fasting as a transaction and is enslaved to its results; the second treats fasting as communion and is liberated by its purpose. The maturing disciple is invited into the second way: to fast not to get something from God, but to draw near to God, who is himself the reward. When that is the aim, no fast offered in sincerity is ever wasted, however the circumstances unfold, because the aim — nearness to God — is granted to all who truly seek him.

For the maturing disciple, then, fasting is neither a relic to be ignored nor a technique to be mastered. It is a means of grace — to be entered with humility, joined to prayer, pursued with wisdom and care for the body, and centered always on God himself. “Man shall not live by bread alone” (Matthew 4:4): in fasting, the disciple learns the truth of these words not as doctrine only, but in the body and the soul.

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This paper is a work of synthesis and exposition prepared for The King Is Coming Ministry. Scripture is the primary authority throughout; secondary works are cited for their treatment of the history and practice of fasting and are not necessarily endorsed in every particular. Readers are encouraged to test all things against Scripture (1 Thessalonians 5:21).