



**FIRM FOUNDATION** Series  
**Prayer and Fasting**

## The Purpose of Prayer

When the disciples saw Jesus praying, the disciples marveled at His ability to pray. So when He ended His time of prayer, the disciples came to Him and petitioned, "Lord, teach us to pray!"

After Jesus taught them to pray, He then expected them to pray. In the following verse Luke 11:2, He is quoted as saying "When you pray..." This shows us that it is essential for the followers of Jesus to pray!

### 1. The purpose of prayer is to invite the presence of God into your life.

**Revelation 3:20** *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

**James 4:8** *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.*

**Psalms 145:18** *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.*

### 2. The purpose of prayer is to invite the power of God into your life.

**Psalms 145:19** *He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.*

- As you get to know the Lord through prayer, there are two things that you will readily understand, **God is willing and God is able.**

**Matthew 7:9** *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?*

**Matthew 7:10** *Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?*

**Matthew 7:11** *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*

As you learn to pray and learn the power of prayer, you will appreciate the saying "Where there is much prayer, there is much power. Where there is little prayer, there is little power. Where there is no prayer, there is no power."

## Hindrances to Prayer

### Unrepented Sin

**Psalm 66:18** *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:*

**Isaiah 59:2** *But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*

### Double-Minded

**James 1:5** *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

**James 1:6** *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*

**James 1:7** *For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

### Wrong Motives

**James 4:3** *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

### Praying Contrary to God's Will

**2 Corinthians 12:7** *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*

**2 Corinthians 12:8** *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

**2 Corinthians 12:9** *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

**1 John 5:14** *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

### Withholding Forgiveness

**Mark 11:25** *And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*

**Mark 11:26** *But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*

### Prideful Prayers

**Matthew 6:5** *And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

## Keys to Successful Prayer

### Pray with Faith

**Mark 11:24** *Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*

**Hebrews 4:16** *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

### Pray in Righteousness

**Proverbs 15:29** *The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.*

### Pray in the Spirit

**1 Corinthians 14:2** *For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.*

**1 Corinthians 14:14** *For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.*

**1 Corinthians 14:15** *What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.*

**Romans 8:26** *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

### Pray with Persistence

**Luke 11:5** *And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;*

**Luke 11:6** *For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?*

**Luke 11:7** *And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.*

**Luke 11:8** *I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.*

**Luke 11:9** *And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

**Luke 11:10** *For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

## Prayer is powerful and the weapon of the effectual saint.

**James 5:16** *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

## The Discipline of Fasting

**Mark 9:29** *And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.*

Fasting is one of the most powerful and effective forces we can employ against the enemy. Victories are won, power received and deliverances gained through fasting.

### Examples of Fasting

- **Moses:** He fasted for 40 days on Mt. Sinai. (Deuteronomy 9:9)
- **David:** He humbled his soul through fasting. (2 Samuel 12:16)
- **Elijah:** He fasted for 40 days. (1 Kings 19:8)
- **Anna:** She served God with fasting and prayers. (Luke 2:36-37)
- **Cornelius:** He fasted for four days before his household received the Holy Ghost when Peter visited. (Acts 10:30-48)
- **Church at Antioch:** They fasted and prayed when sending men forth as missionaries. (Acts 13:1-4)
- **Paul:** He fasted three days before his conversion (Acts 9:9) and it is noted that he fasted often. (2 Corinthians 11:27)

**By Inspiration** – The Holy Ghost prompts us to fast because of some special need unknown to us at the time. We may at that time only feel a burden, need or desire to fast. This is the easiest way to fast because we have such strong feelings to do so. However, this method should not be relied upon completely. If we do, our seasons of inspiration can become too far apart.

**By Commitment** – Dedication and consecration to God's Kingdom requires us to fast simply because we are told to do so. Spiritual disciplines cannot be carried out in the believer's life by inspiration alone. Self-control is essential for the Christian, especially in the call to fast. Regulate yourself to fast, and fast when your leaders call on you to do so. Don't wait for others, make your own commitments to fast and keep them.

## Types of Fasts

- **Normal Fast:** No food is eaten, but water is drank. (Matt 4:1-2, Luke 4:2)
- **Absolute Fast:** Abstaining from food and water. It is recommended that you do not go over three days without water. (Acts 9:9)
- **Partial Fast:** Diet is restricted rather than total abstinence from food (Daniel 1:15; 10:2-3)
  - **Biblical Partial Fasts**
    - Daniel's 10 Day Fast: Water, grains, lentils and vegetables. (Daniel 1:12)
    - Daniel's 21 Day Fast: No bread, desserts, juices or meat. (Daniel 10:2-3)
  - **Popular Partial Fasts**
    - Juice only

## Keys to Fasting

Here are some scriptural guidelines that will make our fasting more effective.

### **Should Not Do While Fasting:**

**Isaiah 58:3** *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.*

**Isaiah 58:4** *Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.*

**Matthew 6:16** *Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

**Matthew 6:18** *That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

- *Indulge in pleasure and exact all your labors:* Lay aside pleasure and the feeding of your fleshly desires (their oppressive labor of others.) (Isaiah 58:3)
- *Fast for strife and debate, Smite with the fist of wickedness:* Fasting for competition or an upper hand with others is not acceptable to God. (Isaiah 58:4)
- *Be of a sad countenance:* Looking sad and eliciting sympathy from others destroys the effectiveness of fasting. In this we have our reward. (Matthew 6:16)
- *Appear unto men to fast:* Appearing unto men in any way that we are fasting is wrong because we do not seek to impress men with our fasting, rather it is done to please God. (Matthew 6:18)

## Should Do While Fasting:

**Isaiah 58:6** *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?*

**Isaiah 58:7** *Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?*

**Matthew 6:17** *But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;*

**Matthew 6:18** *That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

- *Loose the bands of wickedness, Undo heavy burdens, Let the oppressed go free:* Let go of oppressive characteristics. Give men freedom, forgive trespasses and offenses. (Isaiah 58:6)
- *Break every yoke:* Lay aside every weight and sin that besets us, breaking every yoke that binds us and keeps us from being spiritual. (Isaiah 58:6)
- *Give bread to the poor and hungry:* Give literal and spiritual bread to a starving world. (Isaiah 58:7)
- *Clothe the naked:* This is both a literal and spiritual application. (Isaiah 58:7)
- *Anoint thine head and wash thy face; Hide not yourself from your own flesh:* Anointing your head and washing your face were daily Jewish customs. Jesus is saying that on the days you fast go forth as on any other day, not appearing to fast. (Matthew 6:17; Isaiah 58:7)
- *Unto thy Father which is in secret:* Let your fasting be unto God, performed discreetly, with a normal appearance that He may reward you openly. (Matthew 6:18)

**Nehemiah 1:2** *That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.*

**Nehemiah 1:3** *And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.*

**Nehemiah 1:4** *And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,*

## Miraculous works will follow prayer and fasting!

*This lesson is adapted notes from The Discover Course by Reverend Bill Hobson*