

The Purpose of Fasting

Matthew 6:16-18

1. Fasting was, and is, part of Christian religious practice.

Matthew 6:16a | ¹⁶ “And when you fast,

Leviticus 23:27 | ²⁷ “Now on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves and present a food offering to the Lord.

Matthew 4:1-2 | ¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

Mark 2:18-20 | ¹⁸ Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, “Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” ¹⁹ And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰ The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

Acts 13:2-3 | ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

2. Fasting to gain attention for ourselves is hypocrisy.

Matthew 6:16 | ¹⁶ “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

3. Fasting is to be between you and the Lord alone.

Matthew 6:17-18 | ¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.