

When You Fast

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon emphasizes the importance of fasting as a spiritual discipline that deepens our relationship with God and brings about His rewards in our lives.

Duration: 16:31

Scripture: Matthew 6:16

Topics: "Fasting", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

Carter Conlon emphasizes the significance of fasting as a spiritual discipline, asserting that Jesus assumed His followers would fast. He explains that fasting helps clear the mind, fosters self-denial, and deepens our awareness of our need for God. Conlon encourages believers to fast sincerely and in secret, promising that God will reward those who do so openly. He shares personal experiences and biblical examples to illustrate the power of fasting in seeking God's intervention in our lives and communities. Ultimately, he calls the church to embrace fasting as a means to bring about deliverance and transformation in society.

Transcript

I want to share with you just a thought the Lord put on my heart earlier today, from Matthew chapter 6. If you have your Bible and you're willing to go there, Matthew chapter 6, beginning at verse 16. So, Father, I thank you, God, with all of my heart for your word, which is indeed a lamp for our feet and a light for our path. The entrance of your words gives light.

So, God, give us light. Give us life tonight. Take us, Lord, deeper, farther, God, in you.

That for your namesake, we might be vessels in your hand to bring about a great deliverance in our generation. So, Lord, we thank you, God. Help us to meditate on these words.

We ask it in Jesus' name. I'm going to give it a title, When You Fast. All right? When you fast.

Not if you fast, when you fast. It was assumed by Jesus that his disciples would fast. Now, fasting means, and we fast every Tuesday.

I don't know how many of you didn't know that here, but this is not just a prayer meeting. It's a prayer and fasting meeting. We've been doing that for a long, long time.

From Monday at midnight to Tuesday after the service is over, we fast, which means we abstain from solid food so that we can spend that time focused on praying that God would show his power and deliver people out of darkness. At least that's the way I have been approaching it for the last few years since we started this meeting. Jesus said these words.

Moreover, when you fast, when you fast, not if you fast, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites with a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. I think every one of us have seen that from time to time.

We may even have been the perpetrators of wanting people to know that we're fasting. I started tonight by telling you that I fast every Tuesday, so I've just hung myself in my own scripture here, but I don't disfigure my face. All right.

It's bad enough as it is without disfiguring it. But when you fast, but you, verse 17, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your father who is in the secret place and your father who sees in secret will reward you openly when you fast. Now fasting, I'm going to just share with you some of my perspective on fasting.

Number one, it clears your mind to be singly focused on that which we are praying for. Fasting seems to get rid of the clutter that can so occupy our day. And a lot of the clutter, of course, centers itself around food.

And when we spend a day not eating and praying, suddenly you'll find your senses are sharpened. Your focus is sharpened and you are singly focused on that which God is burdening you to pray for. Fasting is self-denial.

And self-denial brings us more in tune with Christ who denied himself for you and I. When we fast and we're praying, we're denying ourselves. And it's only the beginnings of learning to deny ourselves to live for the benefit of others as we teach in our Bible school. And it's the beginning of that self-denial.

Like I am not eating today, but I'm doing this for your sake. I remember when I was a police officer one time, I was up in the gym and I was working out and I used to fast every Wednesday back in those days. And I fasted for the men and women that I worked with.

That's why I was fasting. And I'm working out in the gym and I had a workout partner with me. And he said, I noticed that you never eat on Wednesday.

He said, why don't you eat? I said, well, I'm fasting. I fast on Wednesdays. He said, why do you do that? I said, I fast so I can pray and I can focus on what I feel is important in my heart and the heart of God.

And he said to me, what are you fasting for? And I looked at him, I said, I'm fasting for you, for real. And it was the truth. I'm fasting for the guys that I work with, the girls I work with, and you're one of them.

And I spend my Wednesday fasting that God would open your heart to who he is and help you to find him as Lord and savior. And he looked at me and he was deeply, deeply moved by it. He said, you really go a whole day without eating just for me.

I said, yeah, I do. I do it every Wednesday as well. And I was able to lead a lot of these guys to Christ, you know, because they saw something of sincerity.

I wasn't throwing anything in their faces. I was just fasting because Jesus, there was a passage in the gospel of Mark where there was a father who brought his child and the child was like driven by passions. And he was thrown into the water and thrown into the fire.

You remember, he brought him to his disciples, to Christ's disciples, and they couldn't cast the devil out of this kid. Jesus immediately came, set him free. And the disciples later said, why could we not do anything? He said, this kind does not come out, but by prayer and fasting.

I want to suggest to you, we have a, this kind society one more time, a society with our children being driven by passion, thrown into the rivers of confusion in their schools and their society, with all the media that's around them. And if we're going to see a generation set free, I don't believe it's going to be without fasting. People are going to, are going to fast and believe God that there's a power available to us and for their sakes, that comes through fasting.

Fasting also keeps us aware of our own need for God. You can forget that you need God until you haven't eaten for a day or two. I remember the first time pastor Teresa and I fasted, we'd never fasted before ever.

And our church was fasting and they were encouraging us to fast. So we decided to do a 24 hour fast. It was hard.

It was tough because when you're used to eating, it's hard not to eat. And I remember like we were just so hungry all the whole day. I couldn't think about anything but food.

And you suddenly become aware of how weak we really are, how self-indulgent, self-focused. And I wish I could say it finished on a high note. It didn't really.

At the end of the day, it was like 10 to 10 to midnight. We had the water boiling on the stove. We had the hot dogs right there.

And at like four minutes, you know, this was a legal thing back then. It had to be, it had to be a full 24 hours or it wasn't really something that God would honor. But we had a down at four minutes too.

We dropped those hot dogs in the water. We had chopped up onions and we had dill pickle slices and we're at the counter, but you know, it had to be midnight, right? And I'm telling you when the clock hit midnight, those hot dogs came out of that pot and we put onions on there and we down, I downed my three hot dogs in five seconds flat. And the two of us laid in bed till three in the morning, holding our stomachs and groaning.

Not a good thing to eat hot dogs with onions at midnight and stuff yourself with them. But the one thing that fasting does is it actually reminds us of our need of God. It's God who sustains us.

It's God who keeps us. It's not we ourselves, God keeps us. And it reminds us that without him, we wouldn't go very long without him.

And it's just a gentle reminder of our own need for God. And then last, but certainly not least, fasting has a promise of open reward. As we make the effort to say, God, I'm sincere about this in my life or for my family or for the people around me in my society.

I'm sincere. I'm going to do what your word says. I'm going to wash my face.

I'm not going to tell anybody I'm doing this, but I'm going to go into a short season as it is a fasting. I'm going to deny my body food, not liquids, but just food. And I'm going into that secret place because you told me to not so much that there's no formula to this.

You said, when you fast, you said that this kind doesn't come out, but by prayer and fasting. And you said that if I would do this in secret, you would reward me openly. Now, God can't lie.

That's written in red letter in my Bible. That means it's right from the mouth of Jesus. If you fast and you go into that secret place of prayer, God, who sees in secret will reward you openly.

He will do things that only God can do. He will do things for you that only God can do. And he will do things for others that only God can do.

I think it's time to get serious about this discipline in our walk with God that you and I begin to fast. Don't go extreme in this. Okay.

Some people do. I had a friend that fasted 40 days once. And he said to me, all I felt was hungry and disappointed when it was all over.

And some people just think they've got something to prove with God. Don't try that kind of thing. If you don't know what you're doing, we do have a book here.

I think it's called God's Chosen Fast by Arthur Wallace. And it's a medical and spiritual perspective on fasting. If you ever do want to fast, I suggest you read it.

And if you're ever thinking of undertaking any kind of a fast more than three days, now never do so without don't do it without liquid, or I'll be preaching your funeral. I'll tell you right now, you'll be a fast fast and it'll be over. And then you'll be here and we'll be singing.

We'll all be sad. So don't do that. If you ever want to undertake anything beyond a three day fast without solid food, see your doctor, make sure you know what you're doing because your body shuts down.

Okay. You have to understand you can't just start eating after a certain amount of time because it can be actually harmful to your body. You just, you have to know what you're doing, but for the rank and file like you and me, okay, a two, three day fast is not going to kill you.

You'll feel like you're going to die, but it's not going to kill you. Your body is consuming toxins for those first few days, all stored up things that you read about on the labels of bottles and all these things. You don't even know how to pronounce them.

Your body stores that stuff. Most of it's not good for you. And in those first seven days, actually of an extended fast, your body just consumes toxins, which is why your breath is so bad.

When you, it's true. Medically speaking, after the, at the end of seven days, your breath will clear up and you actually are not hungry anymore because you're, you're, you've anyways, it's a long story. You, you read it in the book.

You'll, you'll see it. I've read the book. So I'm just repeating what it, what it says.

I want to encourage you. I just, with all my heart, just sometimes some people can fast a meal and it's not the volume. It's the fact that we're willing to obey God in this.

It's sometimes just giving, giving up your lunch. You can eat breakfast or a big breakfast in the morning and not eat it again until the next day, but whatever, however it works for you. Now, if you have a medical condition, don't fast unless you've talked to your doctor about it, especially if you're diabetic or pregnant or anything like that.

Don't fast unless you have a medical clearance to do so. I just really want to caution people. I don't want anybody going on a tangent here, but it's a, it's a discipline before God to deny yourself for 24 hours, maybe for the sake of somebody else.

Or maybe there's something in your life to say, God, I, I, I seek this open reward that you promise. If I will fast, I seek it, God, with all my heart. I used to fast when I was a young Christian because I wanted God to use my life.

And I wouldn't tell anybody about it because the Bible said, don't tell anybody. And I, I would, I would fast sometimes for more than a few days, but the cry of my heart was, Oh God, I want you to use my life for your glory. I don't want to be just a fence sitter in your kingdom.

I want, I want my life to count for this, for your kingdom. And he has rewarded me openly. I believe in great measure.

I have been where I've been and I am where I am today because I did choose to seek him in sincerity and didn't try to put away what I call the uncomfortable scriptures, things that maybe I don't want to do, but I see the necessity of it in the scriptures. Keep in mind that Jesus was under the assumption that we would fast. It wasn't just an option.

It was something that he assumed that his disciples would do. And so I challenge you with all my heart. And, and if you are going to fast, be sincere, don't join the sneaker snack fellowship.

When we started to fast as a staff here on Tuesdays, you wouldn't believe the number of people I met in the elevator with a little donut bag hidden behind their back. You know, everybody here knows what I'm talking about. Or I met a guy on the street one day, we were having a three day fast in the church.

And he was telling me, pastor, this has been such an amazing fast. I'm not even hungry. I find that I don't have any hunger, but all the crumbs from the muffin, he just ate were all stuck in his beard.

I mean, there was, there was a lot of them. They're all stuck. And I was saying, well, if you do get hungry, just shake your beard and by God's grace, we will fast by God's grace.

We will, because this is a perilous moment in society today. And the difference will be made by God's people. Not the super Christians, but just the ordinary average people like you and me who are just sincere.

And I walk with God and said, okay, if you said to do this, I'll do this. I'll fast for a day, half a day, one meal once a week, maybe I'm going to wash my face and anoint my head and I'm not going to tell anybody about it. I'm just going to do it.

And I'm going to believe God that you're going to reward openly what I choose to do in secret. And so this is a promise that I'm challenging you tonight. Take God up on this, take him up on it.

Fast for a day, a week or a day, a month, whatever you can and do it in secret. Don't tell anybody about it and wait and see what God will begin to do. The things that you ask him for, he will give you, he will do for you.

You watch, pray for your families, pray for your children, pray for your brothers and sisters, pray for your nation. Just start to pray and watch what God will do. So father, thank you tonight, Lord, that as we come to this communion table, we are reminded that you denied yourself so that we might have life.

And so God, I'm asking you tonight for the strength, Lord, for all of us to take seriously your words, the strength, Lord, to deny our physical bodies for just short times, Lord, that we may go in secret into your presence and say, Lord, I'm here in obedience to you. I'm fasting, oh God, because you told me I should. And I'm asking you to do this thing in my life, my family, my home, my community.

And you promised that you would reward us openly. So I hold you to your promise, Lord. I believe that with all my heart, as I make the choice to fast in secret, you will reward me openly.

So father, thank you. We're reminded that it's in you that we find the strength to obey. It's in you we find the strength to go forward and to do the things that you've asked us to do.

We ask you, Lord, as a church, for an open reward in the days ahead by turning an innumerable number of people away from their sin and to the saving that you offer them in Jesus Christ. So God, we thank you and we praise you tonight in Jesus' name.

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