Fasting That God Sees

Opening

- Matthew 6:16–18 — “when ye fast”
- Not “if.” Jesus expected it.
- Done to the Father in secret, not for men.
- We stand this side of the cross. Already accepted in Christ. Not earning favor.

1. What the Bible says fasting is

- Voluntary abstinence from food for a spiritual purpose.
- Psalm 35:13 — “I humbled my soul with fasting”
- Psalm 69:10 — chastened my soul with fasting
- Ezra 8:21 — “afflict ourselves before our God”
- It humbles the soul. Puts the body under. Makes room to seek the Lord.
- Does not change God. Changes you.

2. Jesus’ clear instructions

- Matthew 6:16–18 — secret, not for show. Anoint head, wash face.
- Reward is from the Father who sees in secret.
- Matthew 9:14–15 — disciples will fast when the Bridegroom is taken.
- Mark 9:29 / Matthew 17:21 — this kind by prayer and fasting.
- Parallel to giving and praying: “when you…”

3. Old Testament pattern

- Nehemiah 1:4 — sat, wept, mourned, fasted, prayed.
- Daniel 9:3 — set face to seek with fasting, sackcloth, ashes.
- Daniel 10:2–3 — no pleasant bread (partial fast).
- 2 Chronicles 20:3 — Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast, sought the LORD.
- Esther 4:16 — three days, neither eat nor drink.
- Jonah 3:5 — Nineveh proclaimed a fast and turned.
- Purpose: seeking, repentance, direction, crisis.

4. Isaiah 58 — the fast God chooses

- Isaiah 58:3–7
- Rejected: fasting while doing wickedness, strife, exacting labor, for show.
- Chosen: loose bands of wickedness, undo heavy burdens, let oppressed go free, feed the hungry, cover the naked.
- External form without heart change and right treatment of people = worthless.
- Fasting must produce justice and mercy, not just hunger.

5. New Testament practice — this side of the cross

- Acts 13:2–3 — ministered to the Lord and fasted; Spirit spoke; fasted again to send them.
- Acts 14:23 — prayed with fasting when ordaining elders.
- 1 Corinthians 7:5 — by consent, for a time, to give yourselves to fasting and prayer.
- Luke 2:37 — Anna served with fastings and prayers.
- 2 Corinthians 6:5; 11:27 — Paul “in fastings often.”
- No standing command in the epistles “you must fast.” Led by the Spirit. Occasion arises.
- We are not under Law. Not earning standing Christ already gave.

6. What to leave behind

- Fasting does not force God or earn extra favor.
- Not a formula for power, prosperity, or guaranteed results.
- 40-day fasts of Moses, Elijah, Jesus were unique and Spirit-led — not the required pattern.
- Longest ordinary New Testament example is not presented as a standard.
- Do not announce it for applause (Matthew 6).
- Do not continue in sin while fasting (Isaiah 58; Jeremiah 14:12; Zechariah 7).

7. How Scripture shapes the practice

- Have a clear purpose before you start.
- Do it to the Father, not an audience.
- Pair it with prayer and the Word. Use the time.
- Can be total (short) or partial (Daniel style).
- Corporate when the body needs to seek together.
- End when the purpose is met or the leading lifts.
- Ongoing: keep appetite under (never eat all you want). Consistent with 1 Corinthians 9:27.

8. Closing application

- Jesus said “when you fast.”
- Do it in secret.
- Humble the soul.
- Seek the Lord.
- Expect the Father who sees in secret to reward openly — on His terms.
- We already have access. Fasting helps us use it with a quieter flesh.
- Pray. Seek. Be led. Keep it biblical.