

## Fasting for a Breakthrough

**“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”**

**Psalms 42:1-2**

There are moments in our walk with Christ when we become desperate—truly desperate—to hear the voice of God. A thirst to hear from Him is that deep, holy longing that stirs in the soul—the kind of ache nothing in this world can quench. It is the quiet restlessness that rises when life grows chaotic, when our hearts are scattered, and when we simply cannot take another step without being led beside still waters and hearing His reassuring whisper: “I have not forgotten you.” It is the humble admission that our wisdom is insufficient, our strength fleeting, and that the wall of confusion standing before us cannot be torn down by anyone but the One who rules over all things seen and unseen (Colossians 1:16). It is the cry of a heart convinced that one word from God can steady a storm-tossed soul.

But how does a person get an audience with the Almighty? If God is indivisibly present everywhere we go (Psalm 139), if He formed us in our mother’s womb and numbers every hair on our heads (Matthew 10:29–30), then why does it seem so difficult to hear His voice? Why, despite our prayers, do we sometimes receive silence? When the heavens feel quiet, we naturally turn inward and ask whether barriers exist between our hearts and our God. Scripture is honest with us: harboring unrepented sin closes our ears to God, for the psalmist declares, “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened” (Psalm 66:18). And when we stubbornly ignore His Word, Proverbs tells us that even our prayers can become “detestable” in His sight (Proverbs 28:9).

And so, like King David, we begin with a courageous prayer: “Search me, O God, and know my heart... see if there is any offensive way in me” (Psalm 139:23–24). We confess. We repent. We seek cleansing (1 John 1:9) so that our fellowship may be restored and our requests heard. But what happens when even after confession, the silence lingers? How do we quiet our anxious minds enough to hear the “still small voice” that Elijah heard in the cave? How do we cling to the Savior’s promise that those who ask will receive, those who seek will find, and those who knock will discover an open door (Matthew 7:7–8)?

It is in these places of spiritual hunger—when our hearts ache for answers and our souls thirst for clarity—that Scripture introduces us to a sacred practice: fasting. Throughout the Bible, God’s people fasted not to twist His arm, but to quiet their souls. Fasting declutters the heart and quiets the competing voices that drown out His whisper. It weakens the flesh so that the spirit may become attentive. In seasons when God seems silent, fasting becomes one of the ways we tune our hearts to heaven’s frequency, humble ourselves before the Lord, and position our souls

to hear what we could not hear in the noise. It is not a way to earn God’s voice—but a way to make room for it.

## Fasting for God’s Eyes Alone

If we truly long to hear God’s voice, then we must learn to seek Him in the way Jesus taught—quietly, humbly, and for His eyes alone. Fasting is one of the ways Scripture invites us to step away from the noise of daily life so that we might pursue God with undivided attention.<sup>1</sup> At its simplest, fasting is the voluntary setting aside of food—either partially or completely—while continuing to take water, in order to give focused time to prayer, reflection, and communion with God. Though often practiced privately, fasting can also be embraced together as a church family.<sup>2</sup> The heart behind fasting is not self-denial for its own sake, but the creation of sacred space: space for clarity, space for conviction, and space for communion with the Father. It is a way of quieting the soul, stilling the mind, and positioning ourselves in reverent submission before His presence.

If we desire to hear God, then our motives must be right as we come before Him. Because “*the human heart is deceitful above all things*” (Jeremiah 17:9), we must guard against approaching God with mixed motives or hidden agendas. Jesus warned that fasting can easily become a performance when done for human applause rather than divine attention (Matthew 6:16–18).<sup>3</sup> The Pharisees fasted twice a week, yet their fasting meant nothing because it was formal, hollow, and fueled by pride.<sup>4</sup> In the same way, we cannot come to God treating Jesus like a genie, quoting John 14:14—“*You may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it*”—as if prayer and fasting were techniques to force God’s hand. Scripture reminds us that our asking must be “*according to His will*” (1 John 5:14–15), not ours. The goal of biblical fasting is not to bend God to our desires, but to tune our hearts to His voice. It is to place ourselves in a posture of humility, ready to surrender to His will and trust that *His ways are higher than our ways* and *His thoughts than our thoughts* (Isaiah 55:8–9).

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<sup>1</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*The Sermon on the Mount: An Expositional Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 209.

<sup>2</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, [\*Matthew\*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 281.

<sup>3</sup> D. A. Carson, “[Matthew](#),” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 175.

<sup>4</sup> D. A. Carson, “[Matthew](#),” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 175.

And as we seek God with humility and purity of heart, Scripture reveals that fasting opens the door to much more—revelation, deliverance, protection, and renewal in ways we could never experience on our own.

## Fasting for Revelation

One of the first works God accomplishes through fasting is revelation, for throughout Scripture we find men and women who sought God with such intensity that He granted them clarity, direction, and understanding from His own heart. When the Lord was ready to reveal His holiness and His covenant to Israel, He invited Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu partway up the mountain, and Joshua even farther (Exodus 24:9–14). But only Moses was summoned into the very cloud where God descended in glory. There, separated from every earthly distraction, Moses remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights, miraculously sustained without food or water, while the Lord Himself wrote the commandments on tablets of stone (Exodus 32:16; 34:1). Imagine standing in Moses’ sandals—enveloped in God’s presence, speaking with the Creator of the universe, and watching His very finger carve His will into stone. What greater revelation could a human being ever receive?

But Moses wasn’t the only one who fasted to receive revelation. In chapter two, God revealed to Daniel the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Then in chapter nine, during the first year of Darius son of Xerxes, Daniel was reading the words of the prophet Jeremiah and realized that the seventy years of exile were coming to an end. In response, he turned to the Lord “with prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes” (Daniel 9:3), pleading for God to forgive His people and restore them based on His “great mercy” (Daniel 9:19). God answered by sending the angel Gabriel with the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks (9:24–27). Though Daniel received the message, he was deeply troubled—God’s people were still suffering, Jerusalem remained in ruins, and the visions concerning Messiah, a future covenant, and events of the last days were overwhelming.

So Daniel entered a twenty-one-day fast, seeking understanding. From the very first day, God heard his prayer, but spiritual forces opposed the heavenly messenger (Daniel 10:12–13). For three weeks Daniel remained in mourning and fasting, unaware of the battle taking place in the unseen realm. Yet his humility mattered. His persistence was heard. And in God’s perfect timing, the revelation came with greater clarity than he could have imagined.

Fasting does not force God to speak, but it places us in the posture where we can finally hear what He has been saying all along.

## Fasting for Deliverance

But God not only reveals truth to those who seek Him—He rescues those who cannot save themselves. When a vast coalition of Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites marched against Judah, King Jehoshaphat did not turn to military strategy or human strength; he proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah so the people might seek the Lord for protection (2 Chronicles 20:1–4). Standing in the temple courts before the gathered assembly, Jehoshaphat lifted his voice to the God of heaven—the Ruler of all nations—and appealed to the covenant promise that the land had been given “forever to the descendants of Abraham” (20:7). Now the very nations Israel had been forbidden to attack were rising against them, and Jehoshaphat confessed what every desperate heart knows: “We have no power to face this vast army... We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You” (20:12).<sup>5</sup> In response, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel with a word of deliverance: “Do not be afraid or discouraged... for the battle is not yours, but God’s.” And true to His promise, God acted—setting ambushes against their enemies until the entire invading force collapsed in defeat (20:22).

When the battle before us feels too great—whether at work, at home, or in ministry—Scripture calls us to fast and pray. When Haman, a powerful official in King Xerxes’ court, burned with hatred toward Mordecai and manipulated the king into signing an irrevocable decree that ordered the destruction of every Jew in the Persian Empire (Esther 3:8–11), the Jewish people responded with fasting, weeping, and lamenting, many lying in sackcloth and ashes (4:3). Mordecai then appealed to his cousin, Queen Esther, to intercede with the king on behalf of her people. But such a request carried deadly risk—for in those days, even the queen could be executed if she approached the king without being summoned, unless he extended his golden scepter as a sign of favor (4:11). Esther did not rely on beauty, position, or persuasive speech to win the king’s heart.<sup>6</sup> Instead, she called all the Jews in Susa to join her in a three-day fast, seeking God’s intervention (4:15–16). God honored their dependence. The king extended his favor, Haman’s plot was overturned, and God’s people were delivered.

If we too desire to be found faithful—rather than fearful or resistant<sup>7</sup>—then we must learn to fast and pray, not to manipulate God, but to seek His guidance, strength, and saving help.

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<sup>5</sup> J. A. Thompson, [1, 2 Chronicles](#), vol. 9, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 293.

<sup>6</sup> Landon Dowden, [Exalting Jesus in Esther](#), Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2019), Es 4:15–17.

<sup>7</sup> Landon Dowden, [Exalting Jesus in Esther](#), Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2019), Es 4:15–17.

## Fasting for Protection and Provision

But Scripture also shows us that fasting is not only for revelation and deliverance—it is often God’s appointed means of protection and provision for His people in times of danger and uncertainty. In the book of Ezra, God stirred the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to allow the exiled Jews to return home and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

Yet as Ezra prepared for the journey, he encountered a serious problem: the returning exiles were carrying vast amounts of gold and silver for the house of God, and the long road to Jerusalem was filled with thieves and hostile raiders. There were no “state troopers”<sup>8</sup> escorting them—only vulnerable families, priests, and Levites. Ezra was ashamed to ask the king for military protection because he had boldly declared, “The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to Him, but His great anger is against all who forsake Him” (Ezra 8:22). So, at the Ahava Canal, Ezra proclaimed a fast, calling the people to humble themselves and petition God for a safe journey. And God answered—protecting them from every enemy and bandit along the way and bringing them safely to Jerusalem with every single item entrusted to them. Their journey proved that when God’s people seek Him, no danger is too great, and no need is too impossible for His protective hand.

## Fasting for Repentance and Renewal

But Scripture also shows that fasting is not only for revelation, deliverance, and protection—sometimes fasting becomes God’s pathway to repentance, restoration, and renewal for a heart that has wandered from Him. As one theologian said, “Jesus didn’t have to die because of what we did to one another, but because of what we did to God.”<sup>9</sup> When King David committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged the death of her husband Uriah, he did not bargain, rationalize, or shift the blame. Instead, he fell before the Lord in fasting and poured out a broken and contrite heart, declaring, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart... you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

Likewise, when Jonah proclaimed God’s coming judgment, the king of Nineveh immediately “rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth,” and commanded the entire nation to fast and cry out to God (Jonah 3:5–10). They placed their hope in God’s compassion—and the Lord relented and forgave them. And when Saul, the fierce persecutor of the church, encountered the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, he was struck

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<sup>8</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr. et al., [\*Exalting Jesus in Ezra-Nehemiah\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014), 76.

<sup>9</sup> J. D. Greear and Heath A. Thomas, [\*Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 221.

blind and for three days “did not eat or drink anything” (Acts 9:8–9). In that darkness he repented, and while he never forgot his past, he rejoiced that God completely transformed his future.<sup>10</sup>

Fasting sharpens our prayers in humble repentance, reminding us that no sin is too deep, no past too dark, and no sinner too far for the renewing reach of God’s saving grace.

## Fasting for Spiritual Battles

But fasting not only restores the repentant heart—it also strengthens us for the spiritual battles that inevitably arise, as we see in the life of Jesus Himself in the wilderness. After the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert, He fasted for forty days and forty nights (Matthew 4:1–2), and it was in that weakened physical state that the devil came to tempt Him. Yet Jesus did not fight Satan with physical strength or human reasoning; He answered every attack by wielding the sword of Scripture. His dependence on the Father, His submission to the Spirit, and His use of the Word form the pattern for our own victory over sin and Satan.<sup>11</sup>

Paul reminds us that the true battles we face are not ultimately against flesh and blood, but against “the powers of this dark world” and the “spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). Peter warns us that “your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). From the moment Adam and Eve sinned in Eden, the “ruler of the kingdom of the air” has been deceiving and attacking humanity (Ephesians 2:1–3). With such relentless spiritual opposition, God calls us to fast, to pray, and to put on the full armor of God—standing firm in the promise that “the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

## Conclusion

Across Scripture, one truth is unmistakable: God draws near to those who draw near to Him. And fasting is one of the ways His people have always humbled themselves, quieted their souls, and made room to hear His voice.

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<sup>10</sup> David J. Williams, [Acts](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 169.

<sup>11</sup> David Platt, [Exalting Jesus in Matthew](#), ed. Daniel L. Akin, David Platt, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2013), 60.

From Moses on the mountain to Daniel in exile...  
from Jehoshaphat's battlefield to Esther's throne room...  
from Ezra on the long road home to David in repentance...  
and even to Jesus in the wilderness—  
fasting was the cry of hearts that needed God more than anything else.

Fasting does not move God—it moves us. It does not earn His mercy. Fasting simply creates the space for us to hear the God who is already speaking, leading, protecting, restoring, and strengthening His people.

So the question is simple:

Are we thirsty enough for God to make room for Him?

Are we willing to silence the noise, humble our hearts, and seek Him with the kind of hunger that says, “Lord, I need You more than anything else in my life”? May we be among those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, trusting that Jesus promised we will be filled (Matthew 5:6). And may the God who met Moses, Daniel, Esther, David, and Jesus in their fasting—meet us as we seek Him with all our hearts. So let us come—and drink deeply from the One who satisfies every thirsty soul.