

Objective: to enable every believer to develop the “fasting” part of their lives.

13 January 2020
NLBC a.m.

The Fasting/Prayer Life of the Believer

Matt. 6:16, 17

As we set out this new year, we look to the Lord in fasting and prayer, that His favour might come in fresh and powerful ways upon us individually, as families, and as a church family. We understand that fasting is meant to be a part of our lifestyle relationship to God. Fasting is one of those means by which we both connect with God by faith, just as prayer and financial giving are part of loving Him. (Acts 10:2-4, 31.)

Why Does Every Believer Learn To Fast?

1. Jesus **fasted** and we follow His example. Matt. 4:1,2; John 13:15; 1 Cor. 11:1.
2. Jesus taught His disciples, both in the Early Church and now, to **fast and pray**. Matt. 6:16, 17. He said, “*When you fast...not “if you fast....”*”
3. Old Testament saints **fasted and prayed**. Ezra 8:21 – Ezra called the nation of Israel to **fasting**.
4. Esther 4:16 Esther called herself and her maids and all the Jews **to fast** for three days...in her behalf
5. David **fasted in time of great trial** and appealed for God’s favour Ps. 69:10, 13
6. Joel the prophet called God’s people to a **holy fast**...Joel 1:14; 2:15-19
7. The Ninevites called a **fast** in a time of repentance... Jonah 3;5-8

8. The Scribes and Pharisees who sought to live by the Law, fasted and prayed although without effect, as it was simply an external performance with no faith or desire to obey God. Matt. 6:16-18; Isa. 55:2-8.
9. John, who baptised Jesus, fasted and taught his disciples to fast. Luke 5:33; John 9:14.

Why Does Fasting & Prayer Have Great Significance?

God never calls His people to do something that has no great significance or power. The issues connected with **fasting** started in Heaven and then in the Garden. Lucifer, became The Devil, through pride (self-exaltation and self-dependence and self-promotion). Isa. 14:12-14. He was cast out of Heaven and seduced mankind, in Adam and Eve, through offering them the same, through their *desires for food*. Gen. 3:6. Sin came into the human race by the means of *eating or consuming* the **wrong food**—the “food” that Satan offered them that he had been eating. Six times in Gen. 3 speaks of **eating** in the Fall of Mankind into sin. They yielded to Satan, as they rebelled in **eating**. Eating food, not forbidden, sustains, in part, your biological life. 1 Tim. 4:1-5 ESV. The “legitimate,” (consuming food for living), outside of God’s command, was a deception and a rebellion against the One Who Sustains life as He is the Creator. Matt. 4:4. Eating anything that is forbidden by God, brings death.

Fasting, a form of submission to God, that is, submitting the very appetite for living to His authority, is a sign of **humility**. When you fast, you are placing your great and legitimate desire for food, under your authority and His authority. When you fast, you place the desire for sexual relations in marriage, under your control, as you abstain from sexual relations during the fasting time. You resume sexual relations after the fast, just as you resume eating. 1 Cor. 7:5.

The primary essence of fasting is the equation:

Humbling yourself through fasting and prayer brings favour – James 4:6, 7. “But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but **gives grace to the humble.**” Submit yourselves, then, to God.

James 4:10

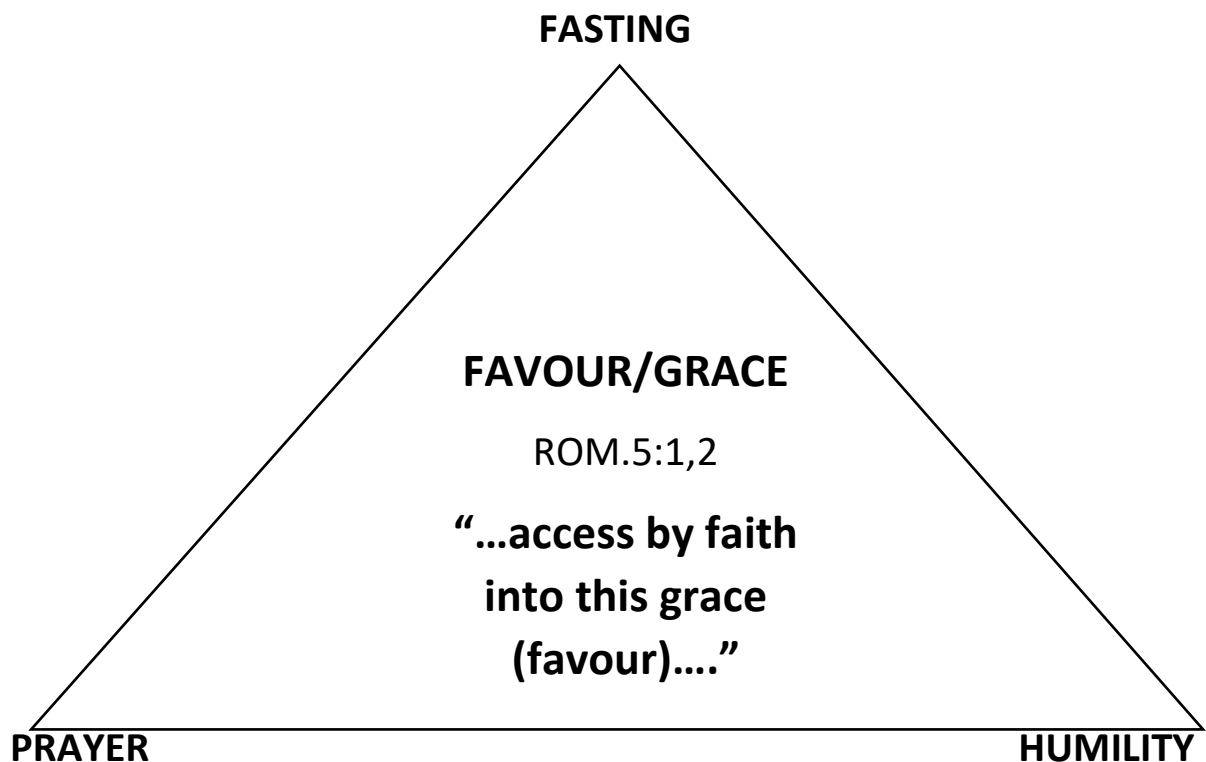
“**Humble yourselves** before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”

Isa. 58:3

“Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have **we humbled ourselves....**”

What Does Fasting and Prayer Produce In Our Lives?

Fasting has to do with **favour**, or the unmerited, unearned grace of God being poured into our lives.



Matt. 6:16-18 Fasting and prayer, done in faith, to humble yourselves and connect more deeply with God produces the **reward** that God desires to give. Heb. 11:6. God rewards those who *diligently* seek Him.

Ezra 8:21

“I proclaimed a **fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him** for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions.” Fasting and prayer...a sign of humility.

Humility and Humbling Yourself – Eph. 4:2

What does it mean to “humble yourself?”

Definition of **humble**: Believing that you have no special importance that makes you better than others. Having a correct (biblical) opinion of yourself. Being kind, gentle, willing to serve anyone and everyone at any time.

There are two sides of humility—what we are in ourselves apart from Christ and what we are and Who we are ‘in Christ.’

Who you are apart from Christ, living and moving within you and from you:

- a. you are finite not infinite
- b. you are the created, not The Creator
- c. you are dependent totally upon God, not yourself or your abilities
- d. your sufficiency is of Christ, not yourself – 2 Cor. 3:5 NKJV
- e. in comparison to Almighty God, you are a ‘worm’ and a ‘maggot’ Job. 25:6; Isa. 41:14 Without God, your life is ‘slimy and vulnerable’ and you ‘consume’ dead things.
- f. even at your best, doing great and marvellous things, you are enabled by Him. Isa. 26:12.
- g. your life and breath and ability and strength are all sustained by Him, not you – Heb. 1:3
- h. you didn’t choose when you would be born and you don’t choose when you die (except by suicide—not a great accomplishment)
- i. you didn’t choose what family you would be born into – He did
- j. all of your gifts, talents, and capacity were given to you by Him – 2 Cor. 4:7.

k. all of your life's work will be tested by fire – what is not eternal, will be turned into ashes --

Humility is the opposite of *pride*. Ps. 18:27; Dan. 4:37. Our world is full of the *pride of self-exaltation and self-promotion and self-sufficiency and self-dependence*, not surprisingly, is it is 'infected' by the disease, The Proud One, injected into mankind, in the original 'snake bite' in the Garden of Eden. Isa. 13:11.

No one else can humble you—you must 'humble yourself' or 'be humiliated.' 2 Chron. 33:23; 2 Chron. 36:12; Num. 12:3; Deut. 8:2, 16-18; 2 Sam. 22:28; 2 Chron. 7:14; Job 8:7-9; Ps. 25:9; Ps. 147:6; Ps. 149:4-9; Isa. 66:2.

Fasting, is saying to God, "I place my whole life into your hands, biologically, mentally, emotionally, vocationally, financially, familiarly, relationally, spiritually and eternally...above all earthly things, opportunities, successes, failures, accomplishments, purposes, ideas, and my own opinion, I want you absolutely most of all and I set aside my desire for food and focus intensely on You because I want you, I need you, I depend on you, I seek you, I love you, and I know you want to meet with me in this 'special place.'

Fasting & Prayer

Zeph. 2:3 "Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility;...."