



CHRISTIAN
UNION

Seven Keys to Kingdom Advancement

KEY THREE: SEEKING GOD LIFESTYLE: HUMILITY WITH HELP OF FASTING



May God's Kingdom Come



Matthew 6:9-10 - Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Sermon on the Mount, 1877
Carl H. Bloch



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

We live in the church age, and it's our role to hasten the day of Christ's return by deepening and expanding the kingdom of God.

Humbling ourselves with the help of fasting is a powerful means of seeking God, which pleases Him, attracts His presence, yielding outpourings of His Spirit for advancement of the kingdom of light.



Seven Keys to Kingdom Advancement

1. Aspiration and Desperation
2. Theological Foundations
3. **Seeking God Wholeheartedly**
4. Spiritual Practices
5. Supernatural Aspects
6. Impacting the Three Spheres
7. Leadership



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

Deep humbling of oneself, which cannot happen at its maximum apart from fasting, begins the effort of seeking God wholeheartedly. When God becomes pleased with our seeking, He responds with great outpourings of His Spirit providing power for radical positive change in the personal, territorial and cultural spheres.



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

Seeking God Lifestyle

- 1. Humility with Help of Fasting**
2. Fervent and Frequent Prayer
3. Massive Intake of Scripture
4. Deep and Ongoing Repentance
5. Faithful Obedience
6. Strong Community
7. Relentless Perseverance



Extraordinary Spiritual Power of Humility

Psalm 147:6 - The LORD **lifts up the humble**; he casts the wicked to the ground.

Proverbs 22:4 - The reward for **humility and fear of the LORD** is riches and honor and life.

Isaiah 66:1, 2 - Thus says the LORD: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? ² All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. **But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.**”



Extraordinary Spiritual Power of Humility

Zephaniah 2:3 - Seek the LORD, **all you humble of the land**, who do his just commands; seek righteousness; **seek humility**; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the LORD.

1 Peter 5:5, 6 - Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for **“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”** **6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,**

Extraordinary Spiritual Power of Humility



Philippians 2:5-11 - Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, **he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

Christ on the Cross, 1632
Diego Velazquez



Extraordinary Spiritual Power of Humility



Philippians 2:5-11 (cont'd) - ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Christ on the Cross, 1632
Diego Velazquez



Humility with Help of Fasting

1. Deep Grieving Accompanies Humility
2. Fasting As Self-Humbling
3. Fasting Doctrines
4. Fasting Practicalities
5. Regular and Breakthrough Fasting
6. Costs of Fasting
7. End



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

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3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

For our humbling before God to be genuine, it must reach the deep emotional core of our lives. The disparity between God's righteousness and love contrasted with humanity's rebellion and wickedness must strike us in the heart.

It should cause agony. It leads to desperation and to zeal.



True Humbling of Ourselves Entails Deep Grieving

Genesis 6:5, 6 - The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it **grieved him to his heart**.

James 4:6-10 - But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the **humble**.” ⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ **Draw near to God**, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ **Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.** ¹⁰ **Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.**



A Mark for all Who Grieve and Lament



Ezekiel 9:1-11 -
Then he cried in my ears with a loud voice, saying, “Bring near the executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand.”



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

A Mark for all Who Grieve and Lament

Ezekiel 9:1-11 (cont'd) - ² And behold, six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his weapon for slaughter in his hand, and with them was a man clothed in linen, with a writing case at his waist. And they went in and stood beside the bronze altar. ³ Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his waist. ⁴ And the LORD said to him, **“Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan [NIV - “grieve and lament”] over all the abominations that are committed in it.”**



A Mark for all Who Grieve and Lament

Ezekiel 9:1-11 (cont'd) - ⁵ And to the others he said in my hearing, “**Pass through the city after him, and strike. Your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity. ⁶ Kill old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, but touch no one on whom is the mark. And begin at my sanctuary.**” So they began with the elders who were before the house. ⁷ Then he said to them, “Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. Go out.” So they went out and struck in the city. ⁸ And while they were striking, and I was left alone, I fell upon my face, and cried, “Ah, Lord GOD! Will you destroy all the remnant of Israel in the outpouring of your wrath on Jerusalem?”



A Mark for all Who Grieve and Lament

Ezekiel 9:1-11 (cont'd) - ⁹ Then he said to me, “The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great. The land is full of blood, and the city full of injustice. For they say, ‘The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see.’ ¹⁰ As for me, my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; **I will bring their deeds upon their heads.**” ¹¹ And behold, the man clothed in linen, with the writing case at his waist, brought back word, saying, “I have done as you commanded me.”



Lot Tormented Over Lawless Deeds

2 Peter 2:6-8 - if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;
⁷ and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked
⁸ (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, **he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard**)



Grieve and Lament Over the Abominations

Amos 6:1-7- “**Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria**, the notable men of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel comes! ² Pass over to Calneh, and see, and from there go to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory greater than your territory, ³ O you who put far away the day of disaster and bring near the seat of violence?



Grieve and Lament Over the Abominations

Amos 6:1-7 (cont'd) - ⁴ “Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall,
⁵ who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp and like David invent for themselves instruments of music,⁶ who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils, **but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!** ⁷ Therefore they shall now be the first of those who go into exile, and the revelry of those who stretch themselves out shall pass away.”



Humility with Help of Fasting

1. Deep Grieving Accompanies Humility
2. **Fasting As Self-Humbling**
3. Fasting Doctrines
4. Fasting Practicalities
5. Regular and Breakthrough Fasting
6. Costs of Fasting



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

How Do Christians Humble Themselves?

- **Toward God**
 - Fasting (Psalm 35:13; 69:10, Ezra 8:21, 1 Kings 21:28, 29)
 - Repenting of and Mourning Over Sin (2 Kings 22:19, 1 Cor 5:1-2, Ja 4:1-10) including self-righteousness (Luke 18:9-14)
 - Prayer (1 Peter 5:6, 7)
 - Examining Our Motives and Actions (Galatians 6:4)
 - Having Childlike Faith in God's Commands (Mt 18:4)
 - Giving God Glory and Credit for Everything (Deut 8:17, 18)
 - Casting anxious burdens on God (1 Peter 5:6,7)

- **Toward Others (Philippians 2:1-11)**
 - Refraining from Prematurely Assuming a Prominent Position
 - Apologizing to Others
 - Submitting to Proper Authority
 - Not assuming One's Always right.



Fasting is “To Go Without Food to Self-Humble Before God”

- Fasting Literally Means “Hunger” in Hebrew: $\text{\textcircled{צום}}$ ($\text{\textcircled{צום}}$) and Greek: $\text{\textcircled{νηστεύω}}$ ($\text{\textcircled{νηστεύω}}$)
- Biblical Fasting Does Not Mean “Refraining”.
- Biblical Fasting Does Not Mean Selective Eating, even though God may require it and there is spiritual benefit (e.g. Numbers 6:1-21 (Nazarite Vow), Daniel 10).



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

Purpose of Fasting is Self Humbling

Isaiah 58:3 - “Why have we **fasted**, and you see it not? Why have we **humbled** ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?” Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers.

Psalms 69:9, 10 - For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. ¹⁰ **When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting**, it became my reproach.



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

Purpose of Fasting is Self Humbling

Ezra 8:21 - Then I proclaimed a **fast** there, at the river Ahava, that we might **humble** ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods.

1 Kings 21:27-29 - And when Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh and **fasted and lay in sackcloth and went about dejectedly**.²⁸ And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,²⁹ “Have you seen how Ahab has **humbled** himself before me? Because he has **humbled** himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son's days I will bring the disaster upon his house.”



How and Why Fasting Helps with Self-Humbling



Deuteronomy 8:3 - And **he humbled you and let you hunger** and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, **that he might make you know** that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.
(see also Psalm 35:13)

Moses Leading the Jews out of Egypt and into the Wilderness



How and Why Fasting Helps with Self-Humbling

- **Deprivation Needed** - Deprivation of needs causes a person to understand in a deeper way his dependence on God for everything.
- **Continued Satisfaction Can Damage** - Always having one's needs fully met makes it harder for a person to know in a deep way his dependence on God for everything. This leads to an entitlement mindset, and lack of thanksgiving and praise.
- **God Has a Solution!** Christians who deprive themselves, according to God's will, of otherwise admissible pleasures can expect to be more humble, and more joyful.



How and Why Affliction Helps with Self-Humbling

2 Corinthians 1:9 - Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. **But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God** who raises the dead.

- **Physical Affliction** - Paul and Timothy had suffered extreme physical affliction that took them to death's door.
- **Afflictions Increase Reliance** - This level of affliction had a spiritual effect on them, increasing their reliance on God.



Fasting Commanded but not Guaranteed to Help Self-Humble

- **Hypocrisy and Proud Hearts Negate Benefits** - Isaiah 58:1-14; Zechariah 7:1-14; Luke 18:10-12 (tax collector and Pharisee). Pharisees fasted but had proud hearts. Fasting is a powerful aid for those truly seeking to humble themselves.
- **Humble Yourself!** - Often in the Scriptures, people are commanded to humble themselves. Nowhere is there an example of a person asking God to humble them. Christians are to take action to humble themselves, and not ask God to do for them that He's asked them to do.



Fasting with True Heart for God and His Ways

Isaiah 58:2-4 - “Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God. [3] ‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’ Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. [4] Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. **Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.**”



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

Fasting with True Heart for God and His Ways

Zechariah 7:5-10 - Say to all the people of the land and the priests, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, **was it for me that you fasted?**’⁶ And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves?’⁷ Were not these the words that the LORD proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous, with her cities around her, and the South and the lowland were inhabited?’⁸ And the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying,⁹ Thus says the LORD of hosts, “**Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, ¹⁰ do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.**”



Fasting is Indeed a Godly Endeavor

Luke 18:10-12 - “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. **I fast twice a week**; I give tithes of all that I get.’”

- **Humility is Paramount** - The parable teaches that humble repentance is valued by God even more than these acts of righteousness.
- **Fasting and Generosity Are Still Important** - It does not teach that these acts of righteousness are unimportant. Fasting and financial generosity were and still are hallmarks of godly devotion.



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

Importance of Fasting in the West

Relative Little Affliction - Because there are few afflictions or persecution in the West for being a Christian, and almost no physical abuse, fasting is more essential than ever.

Relative Few Deprivations - Because in general Westerners have enough food, healthcare, shelter and political peace, they don't have deprivations to cultivate self humbling, and therefore need to be all the more faithful in fasting.



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God Loves When We Aggressively Humble Ourselves and Fast



1 Kings 21:17-29 - ¹⁷ Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ¹⁸ “Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession.

King Ahab Coveting, 1879
Thomas Matthews Rooke



God Loves When We Aggressively Humble Ourselves and Fast

1 Kings 21:17-29 (cont'd) - ¹⁹ And you shall say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Have you killed and also taken possession?”’ And you shall say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD: “In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood.”’”

²⁰ Ahab said to Elijah, “Have you found me, O my enemy?” He answered, “I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD. ²¹ Behold, I will bring disaster upon you. I will utterly burn you up, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel.



God Loves When We Aggressively Humble Ourselves and Fast

1 Kings 21:17-29 (cont'd) - ²² And I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the anger to which you have provoked me, and because you have made Israel to sin. ²³ And of Jezebel the LORD also said, ‘The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel.’ ²⁴ Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat.” ²⁵ (There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited. ²⁶ He acted very abominably in going after idols, as the Amorites had done, whom the LORD cast out before the people of Israel.)



God Loves When We Aggressively Humble Ourselves and Fast

1 Kings 21:17-29 (cont'd) - ²⁷ And **when Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh and fasted and lay in sackcloth and went about dejectedly.** ²⁸ And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ²⁹ “**Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son’s days I will bring the disaster upon his house.**”



God Loves When We Aggressively Humble Ourselves and Fast

1 Kings 21:17-29 - King Ahab humbled himself with fasting.

- God Took Notice! (v. 29)
- God Loves When We Humble Ourselves with Fasting
- God Rewarded King Ahab by Delaying Judgment (v.29)
- Knowing What God is Like: He's a God Who is Pleased and Loves When Humanity Draws Near to Him in Humility and Fasting
- We are commanded in the New Testament to seek out and do what's pleasing to the LORD. It's pleasing to the Lord to humble ourselves through fasting to draw close to Him and seek His blessing.



Fasting is Expected of Christians

Matthew 6:1 “Beware of **practicing your righteousness** before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.”
(referencing giving, prayer, fasting)

Fasting is Expected of Christians



Matthew 6:16-18, “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. **But when you fast**, anoint your head and wash your face, **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.”

Salvator Mundi, 1510
Leonardo Da Vinci



Fasting is Expected of Christians

- **Matthew 9:14, 15** - Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and **then they will fast.**”
- **Post Ascension Fasting** - Acts 9:8, 9; 13:1-3, 14: 23, 1 Corinthians 4:11, 2 Corinthians 6:5, 11:27 (The Corinthian passages are ambiguous.)
- There is no fasting in heaven!



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Cautions

Eating Disorders - If a person has a history of eating disorders, it's good to be cautious about fasting and best to consult a professional counselor before starting to fast.

Health Concerns - A person may have other health concerns, such as pregnancy, which should give pause before fasting. In these cases, it's important to consult one's doctor before commencing. In the last five to ten years much research has shown the health benefits of fasting. While the Christian's purpose in fasting is spiritual and not necessarily health related, fasting can be very beneficial for one's health.

Coming Off a Fast - Food is to be introduced slowly, otherwise damage results.



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

Types of Fasting

Liquid Fast - The intention is to feel hungry, so if liquids besides water are ingested, they should generally be clear liquids such as broth, coffee, tea or maybe juice. Caution should be used with juice because a large amount of concentrated fructose can cause fatty liver, high insulin and other health problems.

One Meal a Day - Generally, scholars believe that unless the text says otherwise, on extended fasts, participants ate one meal per day (probably in the evening). For instance, Nehemiah's 120 day fast in Nehemiah 1 was this way it's believed. (see also Judges 20:26, 2 Samuel 1:12)



Challenges of Fasting

- **Keto Flu** - Flu-like symptoms can sometimes present themselves when a person first starts fasting, and can recede when becoming fat adapted and metabolically flexible.
- **Unfriendly Environment** - One's environment can greatly help or hinder the fasting lifestyle. Is one's spouse supportive? Are there temptations in plain sight that can be distracting? Many find it's helpful to attend family dinner even when fasting, and having a beverage instead. It teaches kids about fasting and provides family social connection time.
- **Overcoming Sin of Gluttony** - Though not discussed much, gluttony is indeed a sin. Addressing this is challenging, but can help foster success in fasting.



Secondary Benefits of Fasting

- **Physical Health** - Scientific studies have demonstrated multiple physical benefits of intermittent fasting. Intermittent fasting improves metabolism, lowers blood sugar, decreases risk of diabetes, reduces blood pressure, improves cholesterol, helps lose weight and visceral fat, and reduces inflammation.
- **Aids Self-Control** - Mastering excessive food cravings strengthens a person's ability to crucify other sinful desires of the flesh.



Gluttony: Forbidden by God

Deuteronomy 21:18-21 - “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them,¹⁹ then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives,²⁰ and they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; **he is a glutton** and a drunkard.’²¹ Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear.”



Gluttony: Forbidden by God

Isaiah 56:10-12 - His watchmen are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs; they cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. **The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough.** But they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all. “Come,” they say, “let me get wine; let us fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow will be like this day, great beyond measure.”



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

Gluttony: Forbidden by God

Matthew 23:25 - “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside **they are full of greed and self-indulgence.**”



Campbell's Soup Cans, 1962
Andy Warhol



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

Gluttony: Forbidden by God - Why?

Proverbs 23:20-21 - Be not among drunkards or **among gluttonous eaters of meat**, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags.

Philippians 3:18-19 - For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction, **their god is their belly**, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

Romans 16:18 - For **such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites**, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.



Gluttony: Forbidden by God

Luke 6:25 - **Woe to you who are full now**, for you shall be hungry.

James 5:5 - You have lived on the earth in **luxury and in self-indulgence**. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

Titus 1:12-13 - “One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, ‘**Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.**’ **This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.**”



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

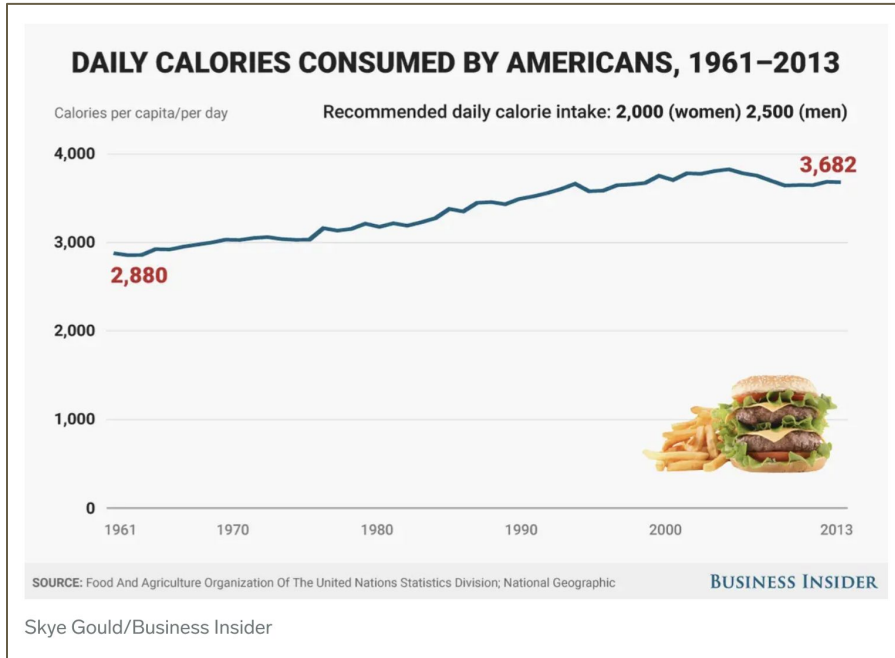
Gluttony: Forbidden by God

2 Timothy 3:1-5 - But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be **lovers of self**, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, **without self-control**, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, **lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God**, ⁵ **having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power**. Avoid such people.



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

Gluttony: Increasing Consumption of Calories



Pervasive Sin - Americans consume far more calories each day than recommended (daily intake of about 2,000 for women and 2,500 for men). Food is consumed as entertainment.



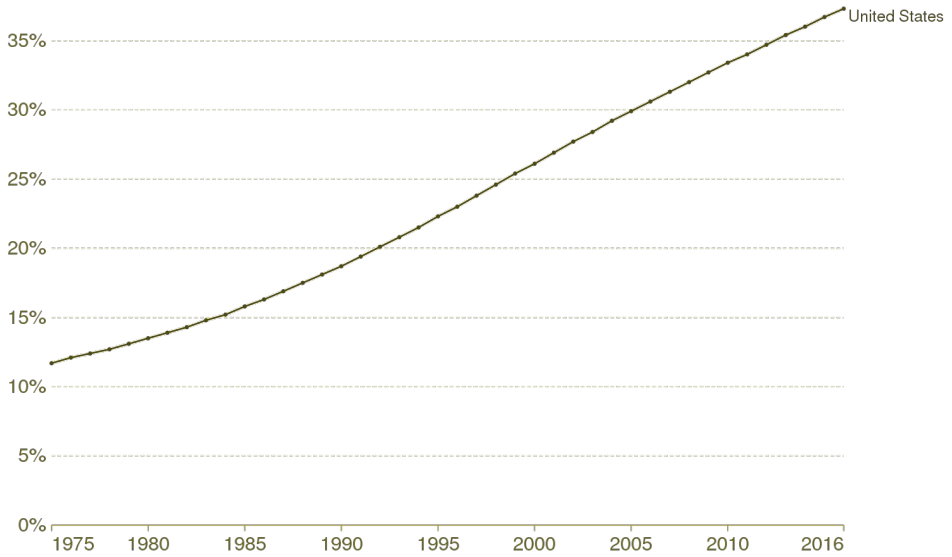
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Gluttony: Rising Obesity

Pervasive Sin - Obesity rates have risen steadily the the US. Gluttony is a pervasive sin in America that Christians should combat. Fasting helps address gluttony, and refusing gluttony helps promote fasting.

Share of adults that are obese, 1975 to 2016

Obesity is defined as having a body-mass index (BMI) equal to, or greater than, 30. BMI is a person's weight (in kilograms) divided by their height (in meters) squared.



Source: WHO, Global Health Observatory



Gluttony: BMI as a Measure of Excess

BMI stands for Body Mass Index. It is a measure commonly used to assess an individual's body weight in relation to their height. It is calculated by dividing a person's weight in kilograms by the square of their height in meters. The resulting number provides an indication of whether the person is underweight, normal weight, overweight, or obese based on standard ranges. However, it's important to note that BMI is a general indicator and doesn't take into account factors such as muscle mass.

- 18.5 to 25 is considered healthy
- Over 25 is overweight, and over 30 is obese



Gluttony: Sugar Increases Caloric Intake

- **Addictive Nature of Refined Sugar** - Studies have shown in lab rats that sucrose is more addictive than cocaine (Magalie Lenoir, et al, “Intense Sweetness Surpasses Cocaine Reward,” 2007).
- **Leading to Overeating** - Several studies demonstrate the connection between sugar and binge-eating and obesity (e.g., Bart Hoebel and Samir Faruque).
- **New Development** - Refined sugar was not a common part of the human diet until recent history. The introduction of sugar and its prevalence in the human diet seems to be a major factor in the rise of obesity.
- **Natural Alternatives** - Minimize sugar and choose no-calorie natural sweeteners like stevia, erythritol, and monk fruit.



Gluttony: Processed Carbs Don't Satisfy Hunger

- **Protein** - per calorie is the most filling of the three macronutrients - protein, carbs, and fats.
- **Fiber** - fiber is non-caloric and is very filling, being found in fruits and vegetables (not-juiced).
- **Carbs** - especially processed carbs are not very filling yet comprise a large percentage of Americans' diet.



Humility with Help of Fasting

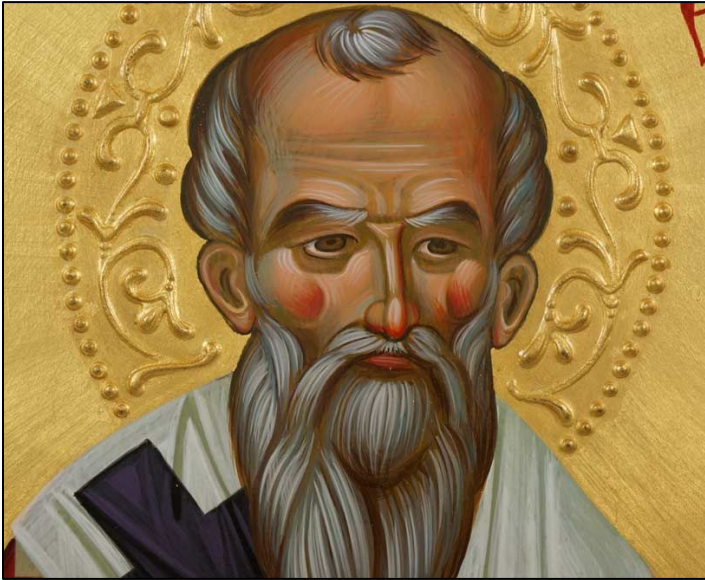
1. Deep Grieving Accompanies Humility
2. Fasting As Self-Humbling
3. Fasting Doctrines
4. Fasting Practicalities
- 5. Regular and Breakthrough Fasting**
6. Costs of Fasting



The Enduring Practice of Fasting Wednesday and Friday

Didache (c. 75AD) Chapter 8 - Let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on Mondays and Thursdays, but **do your fast on Wednesdays and Fridays**. And do not pray as the hypocrites, but as the Lord commanded in his Gospel, pray thus: “Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, as in Heaven so also upon earth; give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debt as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into trial, but deliver us from the Evil One, for thine is the power and the glory for ever.” Pray thus three times a day.

The Enduring Practice of Fasting Wednesday and Friday



“Who does not know that the fast of the fourth and sixth days of the week are observed by Christians throughout the world?”

Epiphanius (310AD - 403AD)
Italian Bishop in the Fourth Century



The Enduring Practice of Fasting Wednesday and Friday



John Wesley would not ordain to ministry any man who did not fast Wednesdays and Fridays. Whitefield, Edwards and others fasted according to this pattern and even more frequently.

John Wesley (1703 - 1791)
Founder of Methodism



The Enduring Practice of Fasting Wednesday and Friday

Until 3:00pm or 4:00pm - Many today follow the pattern of the first century Christians who fasted until 3pm twice weekly (In a culture more reliant on daylight they generally rose before dawn. 3pm was a good ending time because it coincided with 1) the “evening” temple offering and prayer, and 2) the ringing of the town bells



God's Response to Breakthrough Fasting

- Answers to Requests
 - Ezra Received Safe Passage (Ezra 8:21-23)
 - King Ahab Received Mercy (1 Kings 21:27-29)
 - Esther Saved the Jews (Esther 4:16)
 - But not Always! (David fasting for His son's life - 2 Sam 12:16-24)
 - Provision to rebuild the wall (Nehemiah 1)
- Reception of More Revelation (Acts 13:1-3; Joel 1:13; 2:28, 29)
- Power in Ministry and Strength to Resist Temptation (Luke 4:1 (led by Spirit), v 14 (power of the Spirit))
- More of God's Presence (Luke 5:35)



Lengths of Breakthrough Fasting



Three-Day Fasts - Ezra (Ezra 8:21-23; 10:1-15),
Esther (Esther 4:15-17 - dry fast) and Paul (Acts
9:1-19 - dry fast)

Scenes from the Life of Queen Esther
Dura-Europos Synagogue, Syria



Lengths of Breakthrough Fasting

- **Seven-Day Fast** - King David (2 Samuel 12:15-23)
- **21-Day Fast** - Daniel (Daniel 10:1-21)
- **40-Day Fast** - Jesus, Elijah (1 Kings 19:4-8), Moses (Deut 9:6-12, 18, 25, 26; 10:10 - twice dry fast)
- **70-Day Fast** - All Jews in Persia (Esther 3:12; 4:1-3; 8:9, 15-17)
- **120-Day Fast** - Nehemiah (Neh 1:1-2:1)



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

Humility with Help of Fasting

1. Deep Grieving Accompanies Humility
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5. Regular and Breakthrough Fasting
6. **Costs of Fasting**



Agony of Breakthrough Fasting

- **David** - “fasted and went in and **lay all night on the ground.**”
- **Ezra** - “prayed and made confession, **weeping and casting himself down...** neither eating bread nor drinking water, for he was **mourning** over the faithlessness of the exiles”
- **Ezra** - “So we fasted and **implored our God** for this, and he listened to our entreaty.”



Agony of Breakthrough Fasting

- **Moses** - “Then I **lay prostrate** before the LORD as before, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water..”
- **Esther** - “put on **sackcloth and ashes**, and **cried out with a loud and bitter cry**...there was great **mourning** among the Jews, with fasting and **weeping and lamenting**, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.”
- **Nehemiah** - “**wept and mourned** for days...confessing the sins of the people”



Agony of Breakthrough Fasting



The King and People of Nineveh Repent at the Preaching of Jonah

King of Nineveh - “removed his robe, **covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes...**Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.”



Practical Challenges of Fasting

- Self-denial is indeed self denial!
- Christian friends and family may not be supportive.
- Can limit participation in social events. And can feel very out of sorts.
- May be looked down on.
- Can disrupt regular family patterns.

Pleasing God by seeking Him wholeheartedly comes at a cost and every person must decide whether they are going to pay the price. Self satisfaction and self-indulgence are to be mastered for the sake of the kingdom.



Humility with Help of Fasting

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Authority and Responsibility to Call a Fast

Who has this Authority? Christian Leaders in voluntary organizations (whether members are employees or volunteers) Savi, “So, if a pastor calls his church to a 40 day fast, they won’t do it?”

What Circumstances? - Leadership calling members to fast on occasion should be normal for every church and Christian agency.



3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 1 Humility with Help of Fasting

Culture of Aggressive Fasting Needed

Revival Depends on It - There will be no powerful outpourings of the Holy Spirit and meaningful advances of the kingdom of light in the personal, territorial and social spheres without a culture of aggressive fasting.

A Godly Leader Makes it Happen - It takes a leader who leads by example, and who teaches, casts vision, and by sheer persistence sees other leaders get on board with a culture of aggressive fasting.



Christian Leaders Set the Pace

- **Moses** - Moses fasted twice for 40 days for the Israelites.
- **Nehemiah** - Nehemiah fasted 120 days for the grace, strength and favor of God to rebuild the wall.
- **Leaders Take the Lead!** - Leaders cannot outsource this. Those desirous of giving leadership in evangelism and spiritual impact must set the example.



Seeking God wholeheartedly necessitates humbling ourselves which entails regular and breakthrough fasting. As Christians practice this, it pleases the Lord and He draws near!



We live in the church age, and it's our role to hasten the day of Christ's return by deepening and expanding the kingdom of God.

As Christians seek God wholeheartedly, He gives grace, power and direction to be used as His instruments in our families, communities and nation.

**Help America Return to God by Becoming a Cornerstone Partner
with Christian Union: christianunion.org/cornerstone**

**Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!**

Psalm 33:12



**CHRISTIAN
UNION**