

The Connection

Messages of Hope



HOPE
CHURCH | RALEIGH
WORSHIP. GROW. SERVE.

A Weekly Online Newsletter: Edition 827

March 19, 2025

“Spiritual Discipline 7 - Fasting”

In the Bible, fasting is seen as a spiritual discipline used to deepen one’s relationship with God, seek His guidance, and repent from sin. From a Reformed perspective, fasting is not a means to manipulate God, earn His favor, or display religious superiority but rather to demonstrate humility, dependence on God, and a desire for spiritual growth. Below are several biblical reasons why a person would fast, along with corresponding Scriptures that reflect these principles:

1. To Seek God's Guidance

Fasting is often practiced in the Bible when individuals or communities sought God's direction in times of decision-making or crisis.

- **Acts 13:2-3** – The early church fasted and prayed when they needed guidance for setting apart Barnabas and Saul for the work to which God had called them.
“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”
- **Ezra 8:21-23** – Ezra proclaimed a fast to seek God's protection on their journey.
“There, by the Ahava Canal, 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...So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.”

2. To Demonstrate Repentance and Humility

Fasting is closely linked with repentance in Scripture, where individuals humble themselves before God, acknowledging their sinfulness and seeking His forgiveness.

- **Joel 2:12-13** – The prophet Joel calls the people to fast in response to their sin.
“Even now, declares the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.”

- *Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.”*
- **Daniel 9:3-5** – Daniel fasted and prayed for the forgiveness of the people of Israel.
“So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed...We have sinned and done wrong.”
- **Jonah 3:5-10** – The people of Nineveh fasted as a sign of repentance when Jonah proclaimed God's judgment.
“The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth...When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.”

3. To Seek God in Times of Crisis

Fasting is used during times of crisis, as a way to focus on God and demonstrate a deep dependence on Him.

- **2 Chronicles 20:3-4** – Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast when Israel faced an overwhelming military threat.
“Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.”
- **Nehemiah 1:4** – Nehemiah fasted upon hearing about the destruction of Jerusalem.
“When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.”

HOPE Calendar

Wednesday, March 19
Supper, Study and Prayer
Supper @ 6pm
Bible Study @ 7pm
Prayer @ 7:45

Thursday, March 20
Worship Team Rehearsal @ 7:00

Sunday, March 23
Worship Team Run Through
@ 8:00 a.m.
Worship @ 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, March 26
Wednesday Night Supper @ 6pm
Study & Prayer @ 7:00

Thursday, March 27
Worship Team Rehearsal @ 7:00

Helping Hands for MARCH 23, 2024

ProPresenter
Dianne Reinoso
Soundboard

Live Streaming
Diane Williams
Communion
Elizabeth Floyd
Greeter
Diane Mack

Scripture Text and Sermon
This Coming Sunday
Spiritual Disciplines for the
Christian Life:
"Silence and Solitude"
Ecclesiastes 3:7
Matthew 14:23

Prophecies O.T.

Revealed....	N.T.
Mar 16	Gal. 3:10-11
Mar 17	Josh 5:14-15
Mar 18	Heb 2:10
Mar 19	Ruth 4:4-10
Mar 20	Eph 1:3-7
Mar 21	1 Sam 2:35

GROW

Women of HOPE
Saturdays at 10a.m. at HOPE

3/22/25

**Time Management: How Do You
Do It ALL**

Wednesday Night
Supper, Study, and Prayer
Supper at 6:00 p.m.
Email Attendance to Pastor
Donations appreciated.
Study at 7:00 p.m.
Prayer Time at 7:45 p.m.

For those who cannot join us in person, a Zoom Link will be provided

"Food of the Month"
for the Raleigh Dream Center
Food Pantry
Boxed Cereal
We have a collection bin in the foyer

HOPE Meal Ministry
Take a meal from the freezer if
needed for you or someone else.

SERVE

TLC Devotion
4th Wednesday each month
@ 11:00 a.m.
5124 Departure Dr # 101, Raleigh

"This is the essence of Christian fasting: We ache and yearn - and fast - to know more and more of all God has for us in Jesus. But only because He has already laid hold of us and is drawing us ever forward and upward into 'all the fullness of God.'"
John Piper

Prayer Requests:

Dave Rendall, Gene & Becky Hale, Sam and Rachael, Krishana, Joan Rollinson, Ron Clifton, Will Floyd's Fiancé's Mother: Jennifer, Jerry & Alice Kinard, Dianne Reinoso, Janice Worthington, Cindy (Elizabeth), Nancy Hutchens (Positive Cancer), Pastor Search Committee, Barbara(81) Stroke, Joey(18) Crohn's, Ebo (Glioblastoma #3/4)-family has 4 children, Youth Ministry, Kathy Jo and her family, Donna Williams & Family, Peggy Karpenske, Claudia in Idaho (Kathy H), Patty Moyer's son Brandon, Dave & Dot Geil, Corbin Broome, The Mallory family, Carol & Colin (Kathy H), Loretta (Sandi U), Joan Summers, Shelley Riggelman (Bruce), Jordan Stevens (Lynn J.), Ellie Tappan, Carlyle and Cynthia Franklin, our Military, Police, Fire, and EMS, Missionaries, our Nation.

WARNING:

"Those who eat too much or intentionally too little are looking for satisfaction in something other than God."

UPCOMING
WOMEN OF HOPE
Saturdays at 10 a.m. at HOPE

4/12/25

It's never too late to make things
right

4/26/25

Why do you call one day good and
another day bad?

HOPE Church Raleigh
An Evangelical Presbyterian Church
4911 Green Rd
Raleigh, NC 27616
919-508-6827
Worship Time: 9:30 AM

www.HopeChurchRaleigh.org
www.facebook.com/HOPEChurchRaleigh
Twitter: @HopeChRaleigh
YouTube.com (type "HOPE Church Raleigh" in the search box)

4. To Increase Spiritual Discipline

Fasting is seen as a way to devote oneself to prayer and increase spiritual focus. It helps to discipline the body and focus on spiritual matters, placing a greater priority on God.

- **Matthew 6:16-18** – Jesus teaches that fasting should be done in private as a discipline for God, not for public recognition. *“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*
- **Luke 5:33-35** – Jesus explains that fasting is a spiritual practice that will have its place after His departure. *“Jesus answered, ‘Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.’”*

5. To Demonstrate Total Dependence on God

Fasting highlights the believer's dependence on God, symbolizing that spiritual nourishment is more important than physical sustenance.

- **Matthew 4:2-4** – Jesus fasted for 40 days and nights to emphasize that man's true sustenance comes from God's Word. *“After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’ Jesus answered, ‘It is written: Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”*
- **Deuteronomy 8:3** – God humbled the Israelites during their time in the wilderness by allowing them to hunger and then providing them with manna, teaching them to rely on Him. *“He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”*

6. To Express Worship and Devotion

Fasting can be a way to dedicate oneself to God and demonstrate total devotion to Him.

- **Luke 2:37** – Anna the prophetess fasted and prayed as a way to worship God. *“And then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.”*
- **Mark 2:18-20** – Jesus speaks about fasting in the context of devotion to God, with the implication that fasting is part of the broader pursuit of honoring Him. *“Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, ‘How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?’ Jesus answered, ‘How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them.’”*

Conclusion

In Reformed theology, fasting is understood as a means of drawing closer to God and acknowledging His sovereignty. It is not seen as a way to earn favor or manipulate God, but rather as an expression of humility, repentance, and devotion. Fasting should be done in the right spirit—without self-righteousness or for public display—and should focus on deepening one's relationship with God, seeking His will, and trusting in His provision. As Jesus emphasized, the focus should always be on God's kingdom and His righteousness, not on outward actions that might seek to impress others.