

A Brief History of Fasting

Medieval or The Middle Ages (from A.D. 500- 1500) writings on fasting are relatively scarce.

Since the church was forming people had an eager desire for the supernatural and fasting along with other forms of self-denial increased. The obligatory fasting which marked this era was unprecedented in the Christian church.

The Second Council of Orleans (A.D. 541) made fasting obligatory.

During the eighth century, fasting was considered meritorious and offenders were excommunicated. Days and periods of fasting increased. Fasts were kept every Friday in commemoration of the Crucifixion.

During The **Dark Ages** (until around A.D.1500) fasting had taken root in the church and abuses were everywhere.

During the **Reformation** Martin Luther and others tried to change this by bringing fasting back to its biblical foundation.

Martin Luther taught “[that genuine Christian fasting is a fruit of repentance, that it helps keep the flesh in check and is a fine outward training in preparing to better receive God’s grace.](#)”

He fasted intermittently while translating the Bible. At one point in his life, friends thought his health was endangered due to much fasting.

Italian reformer **Girolamo Savonarola** (1452–1498) grew so weak from fasting that he had to be assisted to remain in the pulpit. His powerful sermons were so effective that his audience wept while beating their chests and crying for God’s mercy. His sermons caused such fear that the streets of Florence were silent.

By the late 1600s, **Matthew Henry** (1662–1714) was expressing regret that fasting was generally neglected among Christians of his day. He assumed that it was a duty required of believers. The pastor and scholar listed four reasons why fasting is important: it secures God’s power to assist us; it sharpens prayer; it demonstrates humiliation before God; it controls the body.

The founder of Methodism, **John Wesley** (1703–1791), preached and practiced fasting. The members of the Holy Club of Oxford, which he founded fasted each Wednesday and Friday.

He later encouraged all Methodists to observe the same days, because he believed that the early church kept these days. He refused to ordain a man into the Methodist ministry who would not fast until 4 P.M. every Wednesday and Friday.

Men of the nineteenth-century who were given to fasting were **Charles G. Finney** (1792–1875), **Andrew Murray** (1828–1917), and **Charles H. Spurgeon** (1834–1892). *When Finney felt devoid of the power of God, he would fast and pray for a day.*

[When he had humbled himself and begged God for help, the power was restored.](#)

In 1947-1952 the great healing revival broke out through the ministries of **William Branham**, **Oral Roberts**, **T. L. Osborne** and a host of others who began to experience gifts of the Holy Spirit.

They began to see extraordinary miracles in their ministries and thousands were converted and healed. Most of these itinerant evangelists followed **Franklin Hall** wrote several popular books on the practice of fasting.

Instructions are given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:16-18)

“When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”

Jesus didn't say “**if you fast**” He said “**when you fast**” implying there will be seasons when it is necessary to fast and pray!

This is further understood when we look at the time a man brought his son to the disciples who was possessed with a “**lunatic spirit**” today it might be referred to as epilepsy, but it actually means one who is “**moonstruck**”!

^{KJV} Matthew 17:15 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

*20 And Jesus said unto them, **Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.***

*21 **Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.***

Apparently, prayer and fasting increases our faith & removes levels of unbelief! As well as takes us to a higher level of spiritual authority to address **another kind** (genos a different group or type of spirit)!

^{KJV} Psalm 121:5 The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.

6 *The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.*

7 *The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.*

This psalm was a prayer during the captivity for protection from **demons of the day and demons of the night!**

The early Greek worshipped Selene and Romans Luna the goddesses of the moon; it was believed she had the ability to affect the brains of mortals making them mad.

This boy was thrown into the fire or into water—or he goes from one extreme to the next!

There was no balance in his life, he was under the control of a demon's whims!

Today it might be called "**Bipolar disorder**" living with **extreme** mood swings!

On this night of Holy Week was when **Judas betrays Jesus**—what a mood swing, he went from loving and following Jesus to hating and wanting Him dead!

Jesus said the disciples could not cast the demon out because of **the degree it was in control of this boy's life. **The level it buried** itself in the boy's soul!**

They had cast out devils before, but **this kind** goes deeper! It had been in control of this boy since he was a child—the father said!

The boy wasn't born this way, it happen at some point when he was a child!

This demon had literally grown up with the boy!

Some devils or demons can live so long in/with a person they literally claim that person's body as their own!

KJV Matthew 12:43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

*44 Then he saith, **I will return into my house** from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.*

At this point it takes **fasting & prayer** to break the control the demon has on that person.

That takes more authority in the spirit realm that **only** fasting prayer brings!

As we deny our physical bodies we tap into the power and glory of The Body of Christ!

2 Timothy 2:13b... "God cannot deny himself."

Fasting and prayer disconnects the believer from **the body of sin** (the world) and strengthens our connection to **The Body of Christ** where the power is!

God will not reject His own body, once we reestablish the fact this boy was created by God, Jesus paid the price for his redemption and his body doesn't belong to the demon they have to release it!

KJV Matthew 7:8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Luke says The Holy Spirit in place of good things!

GWN Isaiah 58:6 This is the kind of fasting I have chosen: Loosen the chains of wickedness, untie the straps of the yoke, let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke.