EMMANUEL BIBLE CHURCH

EBC Fasting Bible Study

Fasting — Seeking God With Greater Focus

Main Scripture: Matthew 6:16–18
Supporting Scriptures: Isaiah 58:3–9 · Joel 2:12–13 · Ezra 8:21–23 · Acts 13:2–3

LESSON OBJECTIVE

Why We Study Fasting

To understand the biblical purpose of fasting, how fasting strengthens our spiritual lives, and how believers should fast with the right motives.

What Is Biblical Fasting?

Voluntarily giving up food — or another legitimate comfort — for a specific period to devote greater attention to prayer, repentance, worship, and seeking God.

> *If we remove food but do not increase our prayer and attention toward God, we are dieting — not spiritually fasting.*

NOTES

POINT 1

Fasting Brings Our Focus Back to God

"When ye fast…" — Matthew 6:16

- Jesus said "When you fast," not "If you fast." He expected fasting to be part of a believer's spiritual life.
- Fasting does not make God love us more. It helps quiet our flesh so we become more attentive to God.

KEY TRUTH **Fasting does not change who God is — it changes our posture before God.**

DISCUSSION: What things regularly distract us from hearing God clearly?

NOTES

POINT 2

Fasting Must Have the Right Motive

Read Matthew 6:16–18. The religious leaders fasted to impress people. Jesus warned His disciples not to make fasting a public performance.

We should never fast:

- To appear more spiritual than others
- To receive praise or attention
- To manipulate God
- To compete with other believers
- To cover ongoing disobedience

Fasting should flow from sincerity, humility, and a genuine desire for God.

> *"And thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." — Matthew 6:18*

NOTES

POINT 3

Fasting Should Be Connected to Prayer

Read Ezra 8:21–23

Ezra declared a fast because the people needed God's protection and direction. They humbled themselves, prayed, fasted, and God answered them.

Prayer gives fasting its spiritual purpose. During the time normally used for eating or another activity, pray, read Scripture, worship, and listen for God's direction.

KEY TRUTH **Fasting without prayer leaves us hungry; fasting with prayer draws us closer to God.**

NOTES

POINT 4

Biblical Reasons to Fast

Repentance & Renewal

“Turn ye even to me with all your heart…” — Joel 2:12

Guidance & Decisions

The church fasted before sending Barnabas and Saul. — Acts 13:2–3

Protection & Deliverance

Esther called the Jews to fast before approaching the king. — Esther 4:15–16

Spiritual Warfare

Jesus fasted before facing temptation. — Matthew 4:1–11

Concern for Others

Prayer with fasting for family, church, community, and those needing healing.

NOTES

POINT 5

God Desires More Than an Empty Stomach

Read Isaiah 58:3–9. Israel fasted outwardly while continuing to mistreat people. God rejected their religious activity because their behavior did not reflect His heart.

A true fast should produce:

- Humility
- Compassion
- Generosity
- Greater obedience to God
- Repentance
- Justice
- Reconciliation

If we fast but remain bitter, selfish, unforgiving, or unjust, we have missed the purpose.

KEY TRUTH **God is not only concerned about what we give up; He is concerned about what we become.**

NOTES

SCRIPTURE SURVEY

Types of Fasts in Scripture

Normal Fast	Abstaining from food while continuing to drink water. *Example: Matthew 4:2*
Partial Fast	Limiting certain foods rather than completely abstaining. *Example: Daniel 10:2–3*
Corporate Fast	A church, community, or nation fasting together for a shared spiritual purpose. *Example: Joel 2:15–16; Acts 13:2–3*
Complete Fast	Abstaining from food and water for a brief period under extraordinary circumstances. *Example: Esther 4:16*

A complete fast can be medically dangerous and should not be undertaken casually.

NOTES

APPLICATION

Practical Steps for Fasting

1. **Choose a spiritual purpose.**
   Identify what you are seeking God about.

2. **Select the type and length of fast.**
   Begin with one meal, part of a day, or a partial fast.

3. **Prepare spiritually.**
   Confess sin, forgive others, and approach God humbly.

4. **Replace eating with prayer.**
   Pray, worship, read Scripture, and listen.

5. **Limit unnecessary distractions.**
   Reduce television, social media, or entertainment.

6. **Keep your fast private when appropriate.**
   Avoid seeking recognition from people.

7. **End the fast wisely.**
   Resume eating gradually, especially after an extended fast.

Anyone who is pregnant, diabetic, taking medication, has an eating-disorder history, or another medical condition should consult a qualified healthcare professional before fasting from food — or may instead fast from a nonessential activity and dedicate that time to God.

NOTES

GROUP TIME

Discussion Questions

1 What is the difference between biblical fasting and simply not eating?

2 Why does our motive matter when we fast?

3 What distractions could you temporarily surrender to focus on God?

4 According to Isaiah 58, what changes should genuine fasting produce?

5 Is there an area where you currently need God’s direction, strength, or intervention?

THIS WEEK

Weekly Challenge

Choose one meal or a specific block of time this week to fast.

During that time:

- Pray for personal spiritual renewal.
- Pray for your family.
- Pray for Emmanuel Bible Church.
- Pray that EBC will continue to love God, love people, and make disciples.
- Read Isaiah 58 and write down what God places on your heart.

EBC Fast · September 21–27 · A stronger church through prayer

WHAT GOD PLACED ON MY HEART

CLOSING THOUGHT

Fasting is not about proving how spiritual we are. It is about admitting how desperately we need God.