

## April

- **Pray** before you read, asking God to help you understand
- **Read** the Bible passage more than once
- **Reflect** on the passage
- **Apply** what God teaches you
- **Pray** again, asking God to help you live out His Word

Choose the day in April you intend to fast and mark it here \_\_\_\_\_

Take a little quiz on the subject of fasting:

1. Who was the first person to fast in the Bible?
2. What was the longest length of time of a fast?
3. Who were the three people who fasted for 40 days each?
4. Do you fast on a periodic basis?

Moses was the first recorded “faster” in the Bible. The longest time of fasting was for 40 days. The following fasted for 40 days each: Moses (3 times – Deut. 9:9, 18; Ex. 34:28), Elijah (once -- 1 Kings 19:8), and Jesus (once – Matt. 4:2).

But the last question is a bit different from the first three. This question is a little disconcerting, because it involves an evaluation of our life - not just head knowledge of Biblical facts. If you are like me, I would try and squirm out of it by asking what you mean by "a periodic basis." But we should not avoid the question. Fasting has been out of vogue for at least 150 years. In the twentieth century church, the idea seems alien to us. God's Word assumes fasting will be a regular part of a Christian's life. Yet for most of us, fasting is not a regular part of our lives. If we were to make a study of fasting in the Bible, most of us would find ourselves very challenged about this neglected area of Christian discipline. I'd like to encourage you to do something about that problem.

## April Passages

1	History	Joshua 1 – 5
2	Psalms	Psalms 1-2
3	Poetry	Job 1 – 2
4	Prophecy	Isaiah 1 – 6
5	Gospels	Matthew 1 – 2
6	Epistles	Romans 1 – 2
7	The Law	Genesis 1 – 3
8	History	Joshua 6 – 10
9	Psalms	Psalms 3 – 5
10	Poetry	Job 3 – 4
11	Prophecy	Isaiah 7 – 11
12	Gospels	Matthew 3 – 4
13	Epistles	Romans 3 – 4
14	The Law	Genesis 4 – 7
15	History	Joshua 11 – 15
16	Psalms	Psalms 6 – 8
17	Poetry	Job 5 – 6
18	Prophecy	Isaiah 12 – 17
19	Gospels	Matthew 5 – 7
20	Epistles	Roman 5 – 6
21	The Law	Genesis 8 – 11
22	History	Joshua 16 – 20
23	Psalms	Psalms 9 – 11
24	Poetry	Job 7 – 8
25	Prophecy	Isaiah 18 – 22
26	Gospels	Matthew 8 – 10
27	Epistles	Romans 7 – 8
28	The Law	Genesis 12 – 15
29	History	Joshua 21 – 24
30	Psalms	Psalms 12 – 14

## May

Choose the day in May you intend to fast and mark it here \_\_\_\_\_

Remember what fasting is NOT—

**Fasting is not a physical or psychological discipline.** God always has spiritual goals in mind when we consider fasting, something very different than popular weight control diets.

**Fasting is not a spiritual smokescreen for other problems/eating disorders.** We must be careful not to “spiritualize” what is really a need for emotional healing. Can fasting help me with weight control? Yes. But I fast to seek God.

**Fasting is not an attempt to twist God’s arm or win His approval.** God does not respond to pressure. One group of people in the book of Acts tried to get God on their side by manipulative fasting. Read Acts 23:12, 14. Their plan did not work.

**Fasting is not a hypocritical religious exercise.** Based on Lk. 18:12a, we know the Pharisees fasted twice a week. Sources tell us they fasted on the 2nd and 5th day (Monday and Thursday). Why those days? According to the Pharisees it was because Moses went up on Mt. Sinai to get the Law on the 5th day and returned on the 2nd. There is another possible reason for the Pharisees fasting on these days. Market day in the city of Jerusalem was on the 2nd and 5th day. On these days when many came to Jerusalem, the Pharisees could be seen walking through the streets with their hair disheveled, putting on old clothes and covering themselves with dirt. They would cover their faces with white chalk in order to look pale and they would dump ashes over their heads as a sign of humility. Fasting had become a “look-at-how-spiritual-I-am” exercise. It was hypocrisy. Biblical fasting honors God, not man.

## May Passages

1	Poetry	Job 9 – 10
2	Prophecy	Isaiah 23 – 28
3	Gospels	Matthew 11 – 13
4	Epistles	Romans 9 – 10
5	The Law	Genesis 16 – 19
6	History	Judges 1 – 6
7	Psalms	Psalms 15 – 17
8	Poetry	Job 11 – 12
9	Prophecy	Isaiah 29 – 33
10	Gospels	Matthew 14 – 16
11	Epistles	Romans 11 – 12
12	The Law	Genesis 20 – 23
13	History	Judges 7 – 11
14	Psalms	Psalms 18 – 20
15	Poetry	Job 13 – 14
16	Prophecy	Isaiah 34 – 39
17	Gospels	Matthew 17 – 19
18	Epistles	Romans 13 – 14
19	The Law	Genesis 24 – 27
20	History	Judges 12 – 16
21	Psalms	Psalms 21 – 23
22	Poetry	Job 15 – 16
23	Prophecy	Isaiah 40 – 44
24	Gospels	Matthew 20 – 22
25	Epistles	Romans 15 – 16
26	The Law	Genesis 28 -31
27	History	Judges 17 – 21
28	Psalms	Psalms 24 – 26
29	Poetry	Job 17 – 18
30	Prophecy	Isaiah 45 – 50
31	Gospels	Matthew 23 - 25

## June

Choose the day in June you intend to fast and mark it here \_\_\_\_\_

Some Biblical principles about fasting—

**Fasting is Assumed by the New Testament.** When Jesus spoke about fasting, he didn't say "if you fast," but "when you fast" (Matt. 6:16).

**The Occasion for a Fast is Voluntary.** Fasting can easily become legalistic and burdensome. A particular day for fasting was commanded in Scripture only once—the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). No other passage mentions a specific time or occasion. So when should a Christian fast? When he or she feels the Spirit of God leading them to fast.

**The Length of a Fast is Voluntary.** As mentioned above, the only required fast in the Bible was for one day. In addition to the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:32) you can see examples of one day fasts in Judg. 20:26; 1 Sam. 14:24; 2 Sam. 1:12; 3:35. Of course, some fasts were longer (1 Sam. 31:13). The Biblical principle here is that the length of time you fast is determined by your own desires and the occasion or purpose of the fast. The more common duration of a "normal fast" appears to be one day.

**Fasting and Prayer go together.** While carrying out your daily activities, make your fast a constant prayer to God. A periodic pang of hunger can become a good reminder to send up a short "arrow prayer" for the particular thing about which you are fasting.

Jesus assumes that we will fast, yet he leaves the choice of when to fast, the length of our fast, and the decision of how we will spend our time while fasting completely up to us.

## June Passages

1	Epistles	1 Corinthians 1 - 2
2	The Law	Genesis 32 – 35
3	History	Ruth
4	Psalms	Psalms 27 – 29
5	Poetry	Job 19 – 20
6	Prophecy	Isaiah 51 – 55
7	Gospels	Matthew 26 – 28
8	Epistles	1 Corinthians 3 – 4
9	The Law	Genesis 36 – 39
10	History	1 Samuel 1 – 5
11	Psalms	Psalms 30 – 32
12	Poetry	Job 21 – 22
13	Prophecy	Isaiah 56 – 61
14	Gospels	Mark 1 – 2
15	Epistles	1 Corinthians 5 – 6
16	The Law	Genesis 40 – 43
17	History	1 Samuel 6 – 10
18	Psalms	Psalms 33 – 35
19	Poetry	Job 23 – 24
20	Prophecy	Isaiah 62 – 66
21	Gospels	Mark 3 – 4
22	Epistles	1 Corinthians 7 – 8
23	The Law	Genesis 44 – 47
24	History	1 Samuel 11 – 15
25	Psalms	Psalms 36 – 38
26	Poetry	Job 25 – 26
27	Prophecy	Jeremiah 1 – 6
28	Gospels	Mark 5 – 6
29	Epistles	1 Corinthians 9 – 10
30	The Law	Genesis 48 - 50