

Kingdom Fasting
Dr. John Carmichael

[Mat 9:14-17 NASB95] 14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, asking, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" 15 And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. 16 "But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results. 17 "Nor do [people] put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

- In Matthew 9, Jesus is questioned not about doctrine but about devotion.
- "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"
- The question assumes fasting is proof of spirituality.
- Jesus' answer reveals that spiritual practices without spiritual alignment can actually resist God's move.
- Jesus does not abolish fasting. He redefines it.
- And in doing so, He introduces one of the most important principles for renewal: God's new work requires new capacity.

What does this passage reveal to us about Kingdom fasting?

Here are four powerful revelations about Kingdom fasting.

I. Fasting Is Relational Before It Is Ritual - (The Bridegroom Principle)

- a. Matthew 9:15
- b. Fasting in Scripture is often connected to longing, grief, and anticipation.
- c. Jesus reframes fasting as a response to relationship, not a requirement of religion.
- d. When the Bridegroom is present, fasting gives way to joy. When the Bridegroom is absent, fasting becomes an expression of desire
- e. [Joe 2:12 NASB95] 12 "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning;
- f. [Psa 42:1-2 NASB95] 1 For the choir director. A Maskil of the sons of Korah. As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?
- g. Jack Hayford often summarized fasting this way: "It's about a 'proclamation of love and dedication to Him' and a personal commitment, not gaining favor, with an emphasis on the heart's true desire for God over physical satisfaction."
- h. Application: Ask: Why am I fasting? To be seen? To earn favor? Or to express hunger for God's presence?
- i. Kingdom fasting flows out of love, not law

II. Old Cloth Cannot Sustain New Life - (The Patch Principle)

- a. Matthew 9:16
- b. Old religious systems cannot simply be "improved" by Jesus.
- c. Trying to add Kingdom life to unrenewed frameworks causes tearing. Jesus is confronting unchanged motivations, not changed behavior.
- d. Gordon Fee (Pentecostal scholar) emphasized: "The Spirit does not come to enhance religion but to replace it with life."
- e. [Isa 58:3-6 NASB95] 3 "Why have we fasted and You do not see? [Why] have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?" Behold, on the day of your fast you find

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[your] desire, And drive hard all your workers. 4 "Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like [you do] today to make your voice heard on high. 5 "Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one's head like a reed And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the LORD? 6 "Is this not the fast which I choose, To loosen the bonds of wickedness, To undo the bands of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free And break every yoke?

- f. [Col 2:20-23 NASB95] 20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 21 "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" 22 (which all [refer] [to] things destined to perish with use) in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? 23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, [but are] of no value against fleshly indulgence.
- g. Application: Beware of fasting that does not seek to change you.
- h. Ask God not just to bless your fast, but to expose outdated frameworks.

III. New Wine Requires New Wineskins - (The Capacity Principle)

- a. Matthew 9:17
- b. New wine = Kingdom life, Spirit movement, divine activity
- c. Wineskins = the inner capacity of the person
- d. Old wineskins are rigid; new wineskins are flexible
- e. The issue is not the wine; it's the container
- f. [Eze 36:26-27 NASB95] 26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.
- g. [2Co 3:6 NASB95] 6 who also made us adequate [as] servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
- h. Smith Wigglesworth famously said: "God can so fill a man with His Spirit that he is literally on fire for God." (That fire requires a vessel that can hold it.)
- i. Application: Fasting does not produce new wine; it prepares the wineskin. That is you and me. Fasting can help to produce flexibility, obedience, & sensitivity to the Spirit.
- j. Pray: Lord, make me capable of carrying what You are pouring out now

IV. Fasting Pneumatologically: Making Room for the Spirit - (The Alignment Principle)

- a. Pentecostal Theology of Fasting
 - i. Fasting does not: increase the Spirit's presence, earn power, manipulate God
 - ii. Fasting does: quiet the flesh, reorder authority (spirit → soul → body), heighten spiritual discernment
- b. [Act 13:2-3 NASB95] 2 While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.
- c. [Gal 5:16 NASB95] 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.
- d. A.W. Tozer (often embraced in Pentecostal spirituality): "The Holy Spirit never fills an unyielded heart."
- e. Application: Fast not to force God to speak, but to hear when He does. Expect: direction, conviction, clarification, and empowered obedience

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- **Kingdom fasting is not about religious discipline alone, but about becoming a new wineskin: flexible, yielded, and responsive to the Holy Spirit.**
- Jesus did not reject fasting. He redeemed it. He did not condemn discipline. He demanded renewal.
- The real question is not: Are you fasting?
- But: Are you becoming a new wineskin?
- The invitation is not to try harder, but to yield deeper.