

Prayer:

Slide # 1

Theme: *Christ the King*

Outline:

Chps. 1-2 The Advent of the King. (Proving His LEGAL right to the throne by His genealogy.)

Chp. 3 The Forerunner of the King and the King’s baptism.

Chp. 4 The Test of the King. (Proving His MORAL right to the throne by not yielding to temptation; and exhibiting His kingdom resume.)

Chps. 5-7 The Pronouncements of the King. (Proving His JUDICIAL right to the throne as seen in the wisdom of His kingdom teaching.)

Chps. 8-10 The Power of the King. (Proving His PROPHETICAL right to the throne by fulfilling prophecy.)

Chps. 11-12 The Rejection of the King.

Chp. 13 The Parables of the King.

Chps. 14-16 The Revelations of the King.

Chps. 17-20 The Instructions of the King.

Chps. 21-23 Formal Rejection of the King.

Chps. 24-25 The Predictions of the King.

Chps. 26-27 The Passion of the King.

Chp. 28 The Resurrection of the King.

Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah/King. He came calling people to repentance. The way into the kingdom is through repentance (cf. Mt. 4:17). True repentance results in an inside out righteousness. What is on the inside works its way out in the life. In contrast the Pharisees taught an outside in righteousness. They thought that through outward legalistic rituals they worked their way to righteousness. That is backwards.

The ultimate issue before God is the heart! It is with the heart that one believes unto righteousness (cf. Rom. 10:9-10). Being comes before doing. As we are right in our heart before God it then demonstrates itself in the life. And this is where maturity and spiritual growth come in.

Jesus taught that unless a person’s “righteousness” exceeds that of the outward legalistic righteousness of the Pharisees they will by no means enter the kingdom (Mt. 5:20).

In Matthew 6 Jesus dealt with 3 forms of piety common to the Jewish religion.

Slide # 2

Three forms of Piety

- 1) Almsgiving – Matt. 6:2-4
- 2) Prayer – Matt. 6:5-15
- 3) Fasting – Matt. 6:16-18

In each case Jesus emphasized practicing these things in a God-ward way instead of in an outwardly showy way indicative of hypocrisy (cf. v. 2, 5, 16). In Matt. 6:1-8 Jesus addressed the issues of proper almsgiving and prayer. In Matthew 6:5-8 He emphasized how NOT to pray – now in 9-15 He teaches us how TO pray.

This is commonly called “The Lord’s Prayer” but in truth this is a prayer Christ could never have prayed because it includes asking forgiveness for sin – and Jesus never sinned. More properly this should be called “The Disciples’ Prayer”. This is Jesus teaching them how THEY should pray. The real Lord’s Prayer is found in John 17.

Matthew 6:9–18 (NKJV)

9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

There is no indication that Jesus ever intended this to be prayed in the form of a mindless mantra – simply quoting it by rote as if that somehow has significance. In fact, such a practice is contrary to what Jesus just said in verse 7 where He said in praying “do not use vain repetitions”. It is okay to repeat – just don’t do so in a mindless vain manner.

When Jesus says, “***In this manner***” pray it indicates He is giving us a sample way of praying and not a ritualistic formula. As taught by Christ we should keep these themes and emphases in view as we pray. And certainly it is fine to literally pray through this model prayer as long as we do so sincerely and thoughtfully.

Footnote: A very similar prayer to that seen here Matt. 6:9-13 is found in Luke 11:1-4. They are similar and yet also have a few differences. Evidently Christ emphasized this model prayer on more than one occasion. There are a few differences but with much overlap.

Prayer as taught by Jesus begins with an emphasis on God as our Father. Only believers can really pray because only they have God as their Father.

Prayer begins with recognition of God as our Father. On a few select occasions God was recognized as “Father” in the OT, and then mostly in connection with the nation of Israel. Personally, recognizing God as “Father” was essentially introduced by Jesus.

“Father” (Gk. pater) corresponds to “Abba” in Aramaic the common language spoken by Jesus. It is a very tender word in nuance sort of like the affectionate “Papa” in today's world (cf. Mk. 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

The term “Father” speaks of a relationship of sovereign care. As “Father” God provides, protects, and disciplines. He is the ultimate authority figure.

He is our “**Father**” and yet note the emphasis here on Him being “**in heaven**”. God is omnipresent, but the emphasis on Him being in heaven emphasizes His transcendence. He is exalted over all. He is our Father (relational) but He is also HIGH and EXALTED in heaven (transcendent).

After recognizing God as “Father” the first emphasis is for God's name to be hallowed. This expresses a “**worshipful desire**”. The desire is for God to be properly honored – and of course that starts with SELF.

The term “**name**” represents God for WHO He is. His name is His person and all that He is. It represents His very being and character. Hallowed is the idea of holy, so the prayerful desire is that God be treated as holy.

Prior to the time of the kingdom God's name has often been profaned and not hallowed. This prayer that God's name be hallowed (honored as holy) has application for now, but will really only see proper fulfillment in the kingdom.

Slide # 3

Ezekiel 36:23 (NKJV)

23 And **I will sanctify My great name**, which has been **profaned** among the nations, which you have **profaned** in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD,” says the Lord GOD, “when I am **hallowed** in you before their eyes.

Because of Israel's sinfulness God's name (Person) was profaned among the nations. The Second Coming is going to change all that.

Slide # 4**Malachi 1:11 (NKJV)**

11 For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, **My name shall be great** among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For **My name shall be great** among the nations,” Says the LORD of hosts.

This is what “Hallowed be Your name” is praying for – that God’s name would be honored and revered as GREAT among the nations.

By the way, its not enough just to mouth these words. An honest earnest prayer for God’s name to be hallowed seeks to live accordingly.

Fittingly, the prayer for God’s name to be hallowed segues into prayer for the kingdom.

10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

One thing is very obvious – the kingdom had not yet come because Jesus instructs His disciples to pray that it would come. The kingdom is yet future – that is the kingdom reign of the Messiah. There are actually 3 kingdom aspects seen in the Scripture.

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- 1) ***The Universal Kingdom*** (Ps. 103:19).
- 2) ***Intermediate Kingdom*** (After present age – before Eternal State) (Matt. 6:10). [Also called Millennial Kingdom or Mediatorial Kingdom]
- 3) ***Eternal Kingdom*** (Rev. 21 – 22:5).

The dominant “kingdom emphasis” in Scripture is that which relates to the coming Intermediate/Millennial Kingdom. The Rabbis in their literature called this “***the coming age***.” This is the Messianic kingdom looked forward to by the prophets and which was presented by Christ at His first coming.

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It is the Millennial form of the kingdom that we are praying for. We are praying for Jesus to come and set up His kingdom. It is this kingdom emphasis that is mentioned 8 times in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. 5:3, 10, 19, 20; 6:10, 33; 7:21).

The idea of the kingdom relates to Messiah's rule where He will exercise absolute undisputed dominion. And so, Christ tells us to pray, ***"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*** This will be fulfilled in the kingdom. And we are to be praying to that end.

In the absolute sense this will be perfectly fulfilled in the eternal state of the kingdom where there will never again be any more sin.

God-honoring prayer begins with an emphasis on God. "It's all about Him!" It's all about His name being hallowed; it's all about submission to Him. The focus in verses 9-10 are on God's program involving His name, His kingdom, and His will. This is our first priority in prayer – God's name, kingdom, and will. We willingly submit to His person, His plan, and His purpose.

Verses 9 and 10 focus on God and His program; while verses 11-13 focus on the needs of people. Balanced praying involves both. The first emphasis is God, but we also pray about human need.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

Our daily bread corresponds to our daily need. This is a recognition that we are dependent upon God. Day by day we are to depend upon God to meet our ongoing needs. In thought it corresponds to God's daily provision of manna in the OT (cf. Ex. 15:14-15). God provided for them one day at a time.

The idea of praying for God's daily provision in no way diminishes the responsibility to work. Even though God provided daily manna they still had to go out and collect it. We are to be prayerfully dependent upon God and then act to see those prayers answered. God often answers prayer by way of human responsibility.

12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

Remember this is the prayer of a child of God who already knows God as "Father". In the Bible there is what is called "penal" forgiveness" and there is what is called "parental" forgiveness. In view here is parental forgiveness.

In salvation we are forgiven the penalty of sin once and for all. This is the believers FOREVER position in Christ. It never changes. We are forever forgiven.

Slide # 7

Colossians 1:14 (NKJV)

14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, **the forgiveness of sins.**

Hebrews 10:14 (NKJV)

14 For by one offering He has **perfected forever** those who are being sanctified.

Hebrews 10:17 (NKJV)

17 then He adds, **“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”**

So, the POSITION of the believer as forgiven is forever settled; but our WALK with God still needs maintenance. When we mess up in our walk we still need to get right with our Father. We still need to be forgiven in the sense of “parental fellowship”.

Let me illustrate. I have four children. They are forever my child. They will always be my child. There is zero danger of them being kicked out of the family. However, as children sometimes they would do things wrong and things there would be a “fellowship” problem between father and child. That is the picture here. This is a problem between Father God and His child.

The child has sinned and needs to get right with the Father. God is still their Father. They are still forgiven in the penal sense. But they are not right in their walk. They need parental forgiveness to restore unhindered fellowship. Their salvation is unaffected; but their fellowship is.

Slide # 8

Psalm 66:18 (NKJV)

18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will **not hear.**

1 Peter 3:7 (NKJV)

7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your **prayers may not be hindered.**

1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

This is all about maintenance – being right in our walk with God. The prayer asking God to forgive our debts refers to our “*moral debts*” which is to say our sins. In the cross reference of Luke 11 it is stated as sins.

Slide # 9**Luke 11:4 (NKJV)**

4 And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.”

But before you pray this prayer think about what it is saying: Jesus is telling us to ask God to forgive us just as we have forgiven others. It assumes that we have forgiven those who sinned against us and on that basis, we are asking God to forgive us.

It is saying, “***God in the same way I have forgiven others, I am now asking you to forgive me.***” (cf. Mt. 18:21-35). But what if you haven’t forgiven others? Then you are stopped right in your tracks. Don’t expect God to forgive you if you are not willing to forgive others.

It is impossible for one to be in fellowship with God as long as he harbors ill will in his heart. – ***Stanley Toussaint***

If you refuse to forgive others, then you cannot be forgiven by God – in the sense of being right in your walk. It’s kind of scary to think about how many believers walk around never being really right with God because they are not willing to forgive others.

This prayer is conditional. It asks God to forgive you on the basis that you are willing to forgive others. That deserves some serious contemplation. Often we want to claim 1 John 1:9 saying we have confessed sin; but what about Matt. 6:12 which requires that we forgive in order to be forgiven.

Slide # 10

Forgiven People Are Forgiving People!

A believer who refuses to be reconciled to a brother is living in a state of sin; his refusal to make things right is itself a sin. – **Howard Vos**

I have seen believers get in a fight and then miserably carry on in that state until they die! It truly is a pitiful thing to behold. The sin of UNFORGIVENESS is huge!

Looking at it from another angle – the POSITIONAL angle – we should be willing to forgive all because we have been forgiven all in the penal sense.

Slide # 11

Ephesians 4:32 (NKJV)

32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

From whatever angle you want to look at it we as God's people are to be a forgiving people. As those POSITIONALLY forgiven we should forgive. As those seeking MAINTENANCE forgiveness in our walk we must forgive.

The Christian already forgiven judicially should not expect restoration in the family relationship unless he, himself, is forgiving.

– **John Walvoord**

13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

People have struggled with this prayer through the years. The problem is that James 1:13 plainly says God does not tempt anyone. He allows people to be "tested" but He doesn't directly tempt anyone (cf. Ja. 1:3). So, if God does not tempt anyone why would we ask Him to not lead us into temptation.

Here is a case where you back up and think about this through the entire lens of Scripture. It is true that God does not directly tempt us, but it is also true that God is sovereignly in control of all circumstances involving the whole of life. This prayer is actually asking God to help us avoid falling into temptation. It is a recognition of dependence upon God and the need for His guidance to help us avoid falling into temptation.

When it comes to temptation, we are no match for Satan. We need God's help. This prayer recognizes our need for God's leading to avoid the pitfalls of temptation. These sense is: ***"Lead us in such a way that we don't fall prey to temptation. Lead us away from it. Help us to avoid it!"***

Just as we are dependent upon God to meet our daily physical needs so we are also dependent upon Him for our spiritual needs. We are a very needy and dependent people. Wisdom prayerfully recognizes this truth.

Slide # 12

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV)

13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but **God is faithful**, who will **not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able**, but with the **temptation will also make the way of escape**, that you may be able to bear it.

Hebrews 4:15–16 (NKJV)

15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points **tempted** as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore **come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help** in time of need.

To show you all the more that the prayer is for divine help in avoiding the snares of temptation, the remainder of the verse says, “***But deliver us from the evil one.***” Right there is the problem. The devil is looking to ensnare us in sin (cf. Job 1-2; Lk. 22:31-32). He constantly goes about seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). One of the titles for the devil is “the tempter” (Mt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5). ***To deliver*** from means to “rescue” or “to save from”.

This prayer is a plea for God to help in the midst of Satanic temptation. We need to rely on God. We are dependent upon Him to rescue us out of these perilous situations. We need His delivering power.

How should we then pray? What should our pattern of prayer involve?

Slide # 13

How we should then pray....

- v. 9 – Worship
- v. 10 – Submission
- v. 11 – Physical Dependence
- v. 12 – Spiritual Maintenance
- v. 13 – Spiritual Dependence

Footnote: The doxology of verse 13, “***For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen***” is not in the older manuscripts.

It is a beautiful way to end the so-called Lord's prayer, but evidently was a scribal insert. It is biblical in the sense that it is in effect a quote from 1 Chron. 29:11. It is therefore called "***a liturgical interpolation.***"

Slide # 14

1 Chronicles 29:11 (NKJV)

11 Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, **The power** and **the glory**, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is **the kingdom**, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all.

We tend to end the Lord's instructions on prayer at the end of verse 13 but in truth His thought in verses 14-15 on forgiveness carries through from verse 12. Thus, verse 12-15 are really a unit dealing with the KEY issue of FORGIVENESS. In our spiritual lives this is a KEY issue as emphasized by the Lord.

In this vein note that verse 13 is not to be understood in isolation. The KEY issue in context is temptation related to forgiveness or better stated the temptation to not be forgiving. We all feel this pull. Someone does something and we are tempted to NOT FORGIVE them. We don't want to let it go. We need God's help with this.

Slide # 15

2 Corinthians 2:10–11 (NKJV)

10 Now whom you **forgive** anything, I also **forgive**. For if indeed I have **forgiven** anything, I have **forgiven** that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ,

11 lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are **not ignorant of his devices**.

How does Satan seek to tempt us? What are his devices? Well, in context they are his temptation strategies to influence us to be UNFORGIVING! When we are unforgiving Satan has his way. And this is a KEY play that he runs time and time and time again. It never ceases to be effective. This is right out of Satan's play book – the sin of UNFORGIVENESS! This is why Eph. 4:26-27 says to not let the sun go down on your wrath lest you give place to the devil. If we are not quick to forgive it quickly turns into bitterness and resentment which can destroy us.

And we all struggle with this. It's easy to preach forgiveness – just not so easy to practice.

Slide # 16

And so, Jesus is not quite done making the emphasis on the need for forgiveness. It is not optional. If you are going to truly be right with God you have to forgive!

An unforgiving spirit is sin, and any continued sin affects the relationship between God and His children. -**Ed Glasscock**

14 “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Jesus states it both positively and negatively. He states it both ways so that there is no way we can miss the emphasis.

Notice that the only point the Lord emphasizes in the prayer is the necessity for forgiving one another. – **Charles Ryrie**

A trespass is an offense or a wrong doing of some kind. This person has wronged you – it wasn't right. So what should you do. Worldly wisdom says:

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That's not what Jesus says: Jesus says forgive men their trespasses and your heavenly Father will also forgive you. Again, note this is speaking to those who know God as their Father. This is spiritual maintenance in the life of a believer.

God expects you to forgive – not retaliate. Yes, they wronged you. Now how should you respond? With forgiveness. You want God to forgive you – right? Then you should be willing to forgive those who trespass against you? That is God-like. That is becoming of those that are God's children and know Him as Father.

But what if you refuse to forgive? Well, Jesus is very clear: ***“But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”*** If you aren't willing to forgive then you will wander outside the will of God in the wearisome never never land of unforgiveness.

That is a miserable place to be. The joy is gone. The peace is gone. The blessing of God is gone. The sweet fellowship with God is gone. There are few things more miserable than a Christian who is unforgiving and out of fellowship with God.

Such people become bitter – not better. They are spiritual cranks who waste away in the barrenness of unforgiveness ever reliving how they have been mistreated. They refuse to let it go and therefore it never lets them go.

Forgiveness is one of the most God-like things we ever do.

Slide # 18

1 Peter 4:8 (NKJV)

8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”

I went to Bible school with a gal named Susan. Her mom recently passed away and she recounted this memory. *“Whenever Mom played the game Sorry with my girls, anytime they'd say “Sorry” and move her player back to home, Mom would always say....“I forgive you!”* Isn't that precious?

What a great illustration for life. Whenever someone wrongs us what should our response be? ***“I forgive you!”*** That is precious before God. And those quick to forgive are also forgiven by God when they ask. I don't know about you, but I regularly need God's maintenance forgiveness; therefore, I must be quick to forgive. Happy is the person who can go to sleep every night saying, *“All is forgiven! I bear no grudges against anyone.”*

Slide # 19

The voice of
sin is loud,
but the voice of
forgiveness
is louder.

D.L. MOODY



Footnote: What about accountability? Mart De Haan wrote: “*With a few well-chosen words, the tables are turned. Like a wrestler doing an escape and reverse, an offender regains the upper hand. His victims are now expected to forgive and forget.*” As we consider the whole counsel of God, we need to recognize the place of accountability. In Matt. 18 Jesus said if a brother refuses to repent then a process of confrontation and Church Discipline is to be applied.

It is true that until there is repentance, fellowship cannot be truly restored as it should be. And you can't help what the other person does. However, you are responsible for your own attitude and should always seek to have a spirit of “forgiveness”. Remember the example of Jesus on the cross, when He prayed, “Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” (Lk. 23:34).

Thus, we too should continually have a spirit of forgiveness, while at the same time recognize that unless there is biblical repentance there can be no real reconciliation.

As believers we should constantly have a spirit that desires to forgive and desires that people be forgiven. However, we also realize that unless there is REPENTANCE people are never really right with God or with those whom they have wronged.

Romans 12:18 (NKJV)

18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

And then Jesus goes on to address the subject of fasting in verses 16-18. Fasting and prayer often go together, but not always. Fasting is never commanded in the NT, but neither is it forbidden. It is never commanded but on some level it is assumed.

Fasting is a little bit of a misnomer. As a matter of playing on words, instead of “**fast**” I think we should call it “**slow**” because the idea of fasting is essentially the idea of giving up food for a period of time in order to focus on God. So, the normal routine of life is SLOWED to focus on God. Fasting is indicative of setting aside the normal routine of life, including eating, to intensely seek after God.

16 “Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

Jesus warns that fasting is not to be done with hypocritical showmanship. Spiritual hypocrites do everything for SHOW. It’s all about them. Recall, Jesus made this same emphasis regarding giving and praying earlier in the chapter in verse 2 and 5.

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Likewise in the matter of fasting Jesus says don’t be a play-actor. Don’t be a phony hypocrite who puts on a show like you are all pious when in reality you are not. Jesus really calls out these hypocrites.

They made themselves look all sad and disfigured their faces to be sure and make it obvious to everyone around that they were fasting. How perverse. True fasting is all about intensely seeking God, but these people were making it all about the promotion of SELF.

This [disfiguring their faces] was often done with dust and ashes (cf. Isa. 61:3; [cf. 2 Sam. 13:19]) and is similar to the modern Roman Catholic concept of Ash Wednesday. – ***Liberty Bible Commentary***

Jesus said, “Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.” That’s it! That is all they are ever going to get. Before God this counts for NOTHING. They have no lasting reward.

In contrast Jesus says...

**17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,
18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.**

Note Jesus assumes that His disciples may at times fast saying, **“when you fast”** (cf. Mt. 9:14-15). They are to go about like normal applying their regular hygiene regiment. They are not to seek attention. God knows. Keep it between you and God and God will reward you.

Fasting is to be done unto God which of course is the whole point anyway. Make it a matter of worship between you and God.

In verse 18 we have the tenth use of the word **“Father”** in verses 1-18. This is all about how God’s children are to carry on in the matter of pious living regarding almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. Our focus is to be on God and God alone. We are to live for an audience of ONE – namely God Himself.

Briefly, let us consider the theology of fasting and make application for today. In the OT there was only one time where fasting was commanded and that was on the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 16:29-31; 23:27-32; Num. 29:7). It is described in these terms: In Lev. 16:29 and 31 it says regarding fasting, **“you shall afflict your souls”** (cf. Lev. 23:27). Thus, they were to humble themselves before the Lord. However, there is no parallel prescribed self-humiliating emphasis related to fasting in the NT.

In addition, the Jews had added other times of fasting to their calendar in the OT (cf. Zech. 7:3-5; 8:19). Even so God rebuked them for not having God-oriented fasts in Zech. 7:5.

Slide # 21

Zechariah 7:5 (NKJV)

5 “Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, **did you really fast for Me—for Me?**’

In the NT we see that some of the Pharisees fasted twice a week as a means of promoting their own self-righteousness (cf. Lk. 18:12). But there are not many verses related to the Church that specifically address “fasting”.

However, there are a number of verses where inferior manuscripts have inserted the word “fasting” such as in Mt. 17:21; Mk. 9:29; Acts 10:30; and 1 Cor. 7:5.

In the Church Age there have been many assertions about fasting that are not really borne out in the text of Scripture. There are no examples of “**religious fasting**” in the epistles and only two examples in the book of Acts (cf. Acts 13:1-3; 14:23). In Acts 13:1-3 the Church was fasting prior to sending out the first missionaries, but no instructions are given. It is a general statement. In Acts 14:23 elders were appointed with prayer and fasting, but again no instruction is given.

Perhaps one reason fasting is acknowledged but not elaborated on is because of the persistent danger of ascetism, ritualism, and mysticism (cf. 1 Tim. 4:3). In the early second century a Christian instruction book called the Didache said, “Let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on Mondays and Thursdays [the practice of pious Jews], but do you fast on Wednesdays and Fridays” (Didache 8:1). That was to completely miss the point as it just exchanged one set of days for another.

In recent times fasting has become a big emphasis in relationship to the Spiritual Formation Movement. There is lots of hype promoting it as important part of sanctification. There is lots of hype but not much Scripture that rightly divides the Word.

Slide # 22

Matthew 9:14–15 (NKJV)

14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?”

15 And Jesus said to them, “**Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.**

Consider that Jesus had promised His disciples that when He went away He would send the Holy Spirit ([John 14:16](#), [17](#); [16:7](#)) who would be another helper (Gk: Paraclete) – just like Him. As a matter of fact Jesus said that it would be to their advantage for Him to leave and send the Holy Spirit to them ([John 16:7](#)). It seems to me that the period of time between the crucifixion and the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell the believers best fits Jesus’ description of a time of mourning that would require fasting.

The issue is this: since the Holy Spirit has come and since we are again in the presence of the Bridegroom (in the form of the Holy Spirit) should not Christians rather rejoice than fast today? If Jesus' disciples avoided fasting and feasted instead in the presence of the Bridegroom why should not the Christian do the same now that the Holy Spirit indwells him, especially in light of Jesus' promise that it was to our advantage that He go away and send the Spirit?

There are strong opinions on both sides of this issue. Some believe that fasting is the missing ingredient in the spiritual life of Christians today. If we would but fast as the Old Testament saints fasted we would know God's power in ways that we do not now. But as we examine Scripture pertaining to the church age we discover some interesting things. While fasting is never prohibited in the epistles, neither is it ever promoted. There is no instruction to fast and there are no prescribed fasts for the church.

We must conclude, in the absence of either command or instruction in the New Testament concerning this subject, that fasting is not prohibited and therefore a believer is free to fast if he chooses. But since it is never commanded or even recommended for the church age we must assume that it is not a necessary ingredient for the Christian walk. As a matter of fact, fasting seems to be one of the areas specifically addressed by Paul to be a matter of personal conviction ([Rom 14:5-9](#); [Col 2:16-23](#)). If you want to fast do so. But don't require it of others, or make it a test of spirituality, or expect it to aid in your sanctification. Jesus' emphasis was not on fasting, but on the joy of His presence. In the presence of Jesus, through the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who could not be joyful?

-Pastor Gary Gilley

Slide # 23

To imply, as some do, that fasting is an essential ingredient in effective prayer cannot be substantiated biblically. In the New Testament much is said about prayer but very little about fasting. Prayer is commanded but fasting is not. The Book of Acts refers to many instances of prayer where no indication of fasting is mentioned.

– Curtis C. Mitchell

Slide # 24

The theology of fasting is a theology of priorities in which believers are given the opportunity to express themselves in an undivided and intensive devotion to the Lord and to the concerns of spiritual life.

– ***Gotquestions.org***

Thus, we see that sometimes fasting is coupled with prayer signifying an intense time of focused prayer being in view. But as Jesus taught this is never to be done for show. There are two examples of the Church fasting and praying, but that is it. There are many more examples of praying such as the dramatic prayer meeting in Acts 4:23-31 where there is no hint of fasting.

I take it there may well be intense times of fasting and prayer, but it is not the norm, and there are no formulas given in the NT for how specifically you should carry out a fast. It is up to you – really between you and God. As you intensely seek God in this way – keep it between you and Him and He will reward you accordingly.

Someone has well said, *“If you want to put the average Christian to shame, just ask him or her about their prayer life.”*

Someone else has written: *“Prayer. Is any other practice so universally extolled, yet so often left undone by Christians? And in an age when true followers of Christ increasingly are marginalized, mocked and despised, can we continue to act as if we don’t need to cry out for God’s help?”*

Fellow Christian: How is it with your prayer life? Let us pray as Jesus instructed but whether or not to pray is not an option. Jesus said, ***“In this manner pray”***. Pray in the right manner, but by all means let us pray!

We all need prayer, and we all need to pray!