

Reflections for Lent - Fasting

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In this meeting, on the eve of Lent, we look back to the accounts recorded in scripture following Christ's baptism when He entered the wilderness and will focus our reflections on one aspect of this event - fasting.

JESUS TESTED IN THE WILDERNESS

[Matthew 4:1-11](#)

¹ Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.

⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

⁷ Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.

⁹ "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

See also [Mark 1:12-13](#), [Luke 4:1-13](#)

Note: The order of temptations 2 and 3 are reversed in the Gospel of Luke.

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DISCUSSION THOUGHTS:

The Gospel readings describe the events immediately following our Lord's baptism and before the commencement of His ministry.

1. Why did Jesus fast for forty days after entering the wilderness ?
2. A few examples of fasting recorded in scripture
 - **To seek God's wisdom.** Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted for the elders of the churches before committing them to the Lord for His service [Acts 14:21-23](#)
 - **3. To show grief.** Nehemiah mourned, fasted, and prayed when he learned Jerusalem's walls had been broken down, leaving the Israelites vulnerable and disgraced [Nehemiah 1:1-4](#)
 - **To seek deliverance or protection.** Ezra declared a corporate fast and prayed for a safe journey for the Israelites as they made the nine-hundred-mile trek to Jerusalem from Babylon [Ezra 8:21-23](#)
 - **To repent.** After Jonah pronounced judgment against the city of Nineveh, the king covered himself with sackcloth and sat in the dust. He then ordered the people to fast and pray. [Jonah 3:1-5](#) says, "When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He relented and did not bring on them the destruction He had threatened." [Jonah 3:10](#)
 - **To gain victory.** After losing forty thousand men in battle in two days, the Israelites cried out to God for help. [Judges 20:26](#) says all the people went up to Bethel and "sat weeping before the Lord." They also "fasted that day until evening." The next day the Lord gave them victory over the Benjamites.
 - **To worship God.** Luke tells the story of an eighty-four-year-old prophetess named Anna. [Luke 2:37](#) says, "She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying." Anna was devoted to God, and fasting was one expression of her love for Him.
3. What is fasting ?
 - Should we fast ? Are we commanded to fast ? Are we expected to fast ?
 - How are we to fast ? [Matthew 6:16-18](#) How long should we fast ?
4. What is true fasting ? [Isaiah 58](#)