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Mighty Prevailing Prayer: Experiencing the Power of Answered Prayer

30. Jesus Said We Would Fast (Level Four: Fasting)

This chapter presents fasting as the fourth and highest level of intensifying prayer, after asking, seeking, and knocking. Jesus expects His followers to fast, set the example Himself, and the great figures of church history practiced it. The chapter explains what fasting is, why it works, and how to guard your motive.

Key takeaways

- Jesus assumed His people would fast ("then they will fast"); it is a normal part of obedient discipleship, not an optional extra reserved for emotional moments.
- Fasting adds power to prayer, especially for urgent or resistant needs, by pressing spiritual priorities over physical ones.
- Church history backs this up: the early church fasted twice weekly, and Luther, Calvin, Knox, Edwards, and Finney all fasted regularly.
- Fasting is God-ordained self-denial — a deliberate way to take up your cross. It can extend beyond food to sleep, media, or other enjoyments that hinder prayer.

- Fasting can be partial. Like Daniel, eat only essentials if health or duties require it; God is not a slave driver.
- Watch your motive: fasting does not earn God's favor, bypass obedience, guarantee a miracle, or store up power to show off. Keep it hidden — known only to God.

Passages worth keeping

"Prayer is the one hand with which we grasp the Invisible; fasting the other, with which we let loose and cast away the visible."

Andrew Murray's summary of how fasting complements prayer

"He does not say, "Fast," but "when you fast.""

Jesus takes fasting for granted as normal practice

How it connects

Fasting ties self-denial (taking up the cross) directly to prayer, making it one of the most concrete, always-available ways to obey Matthew 16:24.

Scripture referenced

- **Matt. 9:15** -- Jesus foretells His followers will fast
- **Matt. 6:16-18** -- "when you fast" — fast secretly, and God rewards
- **Matt. 16:24** -- deny yourself and take up your cross
- **Dan. 10:3** -- model of a partial fast amid heavy responsibilities

- **Luke 2:37** -- Anna the prophetess as a life of fasting devotion
- **Acts 13:2** -- fasting joined to worship and intercession