# **Vision - New Beginnings - Pt 10 Prayer and Fasting**

Pastor Carl Van Vliet

New Beginnings / Fasting; Prayer; Repentance / Ezra 7:10; Ezra 8:15–23; Ezra 8:21–23; Ezra 10:6–14

### Prepare our Hearts - Study the Word - Do what it says - Teach others

Last week we saw from [Ezra 8](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Ezr8) and [Ezra 2](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Ezr2) how God drew family who had not returned in the days of Zerubbabel to now return with Ezra and how there is hope for our lost loved ones, those who are not worshipping with us today.

This week we are going to be looking at another aspect of Revival we see from Ezra: Prayer and Fasting

[Ezra 8:21-23](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Ezr8.21-23) “21 Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. 22 For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, “The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him.” 23 So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.”

What is Fasting? There is probably quite a bit of confusion around this very thing, and often it is that confusion that causes many not to fast.

Fasting is a **temporary renunciation** of something **that is in itself good, like food**, in order to intensify our expression of need for something greater — namely, God and his work in our lives. - John Piper

Between now and Easter many liturgical faith traditions, Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist observe Lent. Lent is somewhat of a 40 day fast where one puts aside something to focus on the coming Easter and what Christ came to do. Its 40 days symbolically of Christs 40 fast in the wilderness after His baptism: [Matthew 4:1-2](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Mt4.1-2) “1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.”

Nowadays we give up things like recreational activities, social media, entertainment for a fast and while I think those things are very good to step away from for a season, a Biblical fast was to abstain from food and drink.

During Lent the observers will “Fast” from meat on Fridays and abstain from some pleasure during the whole 40 days.

Here in Ezra we find Ezra declaring a fast for a specific purpose:

[Ezra 8:21](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Ezr8.21) “21 Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, **to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions.**”

### To SEEK from God the RIGHT WAY for us, for our little ones and all our possessions.

In the natural this was a literal way to travel that would bring safety and security to their journey. and the purpose was to NOT dishonor the testimony of their faith in God and their statement of God’s faithfulness by asking for protection from the king of Assyria for Ezra had declared to the king: [Ezra 8:22](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Ezr8.22) ... “**The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him.””**

**There is a Spiritual side to the heart of this fast found in the same language: “**that we might humble ourselves before our God, **to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions.**”

Last week we talked about revival and I asked this question: What are we willing to sacrifice for the sake of the next generation, our children, our grandchildren, those youth and children God has seen fit to bring into our church?

Ezra declares a fast so that the people would humble themselves and seek God for how to lead their little ones, in safety and security to the end goal of worshipping the living God!

You want revival - Fast and seek God for it. You want God to move and touch a generation? Fast and Seek God for it!

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in [Matthew 5-7](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Mt5-7) in the beatitudes said this: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” ([Matthew 5:6](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Mt5.6))

I often wonder - Can we even know what it feels like to hunger and thirst after righteousness when we live in a world full of abundance. many sitting in our churches this morning have never experienced hunger. How can we hunger and thirst for righteousness when we don't even truly know and understand physical hunger that cannot be satisfied?

Fasting reveals this hunger. We fast, subject ourselves to physical hunger so that we can turn our hearts in that hunger towards God and His desires, His purposes.

Jesus continues on in this sermon on the mount in chapter 6 three key **“WHEN”** statements:

1. When you Give ([Matthew 6:2-3](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Mt6.2-3))

a. Jesus Expected that we would be generous people. He did not say “if you give” He said “When you give”

2. When you Pray ([Matthew 6:5-14](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Mt6.5-14), [Luke 11:2](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Lk11.2))

a. Christ expected His followers to have a consistent prayer life

3. When you Fast - [Matthew 6: 15-18](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Mt6.15-18) “15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. 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. 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.”

Ezra Fasted for Guidance and direction in [Ezra 8](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Ezr8), But he also fasted for repentance after he arrived in Jerusalem and found the sin in their lives:

 [Ezra 9:5](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Ezr9.5) “5 At the evening sacrifice I arose from my fasting; and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God.”

Ezra fasted again for repentance, mourning the sin of all the people

[Ezra 10:6](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Ezr10.6) “6 Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib; and when he came there, **he ate no bread and drank no water**, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity.”

Nehemiah Fasted heartbroken over the condition of the community in Jerusalem [Nehemiah 1:4](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Ne1.4) “4 So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.”

First, let fasting be done unto the Lord with our eye singly fixed on Him. Let our intention herein be this, and this alone, to glorify our Father which is in heaven.

**John Wesley**

Fasting, and Prayer should be a regular part of our lives.