

# A Mother's Story of Prayer and Fasting for Her Prodigal

Caroline Newheiser

## I. **Introduction.**

- A. Grief over a prodigal can be overwhelming.
  - 1. The world can look black.
  - 2. It can become difficult to worship.
  
- B. Fearfulness can take over.
  - 1. Panic can set in, which leads to unreasonable control.
  - 2. Fear for the other children in the family.
  - 3. You might blame your spouse.
  
- C. We have different ways of dealing with grief and fear.
  - 1. Some eat to deal with sadness.
  - 2. Some become angry and blame-shift.
  
- D. Remember that our children do not belong to us. Luke 2:23
  
- E. The focus should be on our personal relationship with God. Romans 8:28  
So many things can take us from a love for God. Luke 14:18-20

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## II. A look at prayer.

- A. The Lord tells us to pray about our needs. Psalm 142:1-3a 1 Peter 5:6
  
- B. Prayer in Matthew 6:5-15.
  1. Under the heading of not "practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them." V. 1
  
  2. There will be "no reward from your Father who is in heaven."
  
  3. Prayer is not practiced in order to be seen by others.
  
  4. Jesus is not speaking against public prayer. Matt 14:19, 15:36 Luke 3:21, 11:1 John 11:41
  
  5. Mindless repetition is forbidden.
  
  6. Prayer is also done in secret.
  
  7. "Your Father who sees in secret will reward you."
  
  8. Do not "heap up empty phrases."
  
  9. "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

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## III. A look at fasting.

- A. Fasting is a practice in other religions.
  
- B. Fasting is practiced to provoke change in culture.
  
- C. Fasting in the Old Testament. Lev. 16:19-31 Ex. 34:28 2 Samuel 12:16 Psalm 35:13 I Sam. 7:5-6 Joel 1:14; 2:12,15 2 Chronicles 20:3-4 Nehemiah 1:4 Esther 4:16
  
- D. Fasting in the NT. Luke 2:36-38 Matt 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-4 Matt. 11:18-19 Matt. 9:15 Acts 13:1-3 Acts 14:23 Acts. 23:21
  
- E. Fasting in Matthew 6:16-18.
  1. In secret, as is prayer.
    - a. Not to be noticed.
    - b. Your Father who is in secret sees you.
    - c. He will reward you.
    - d. Not only in secret. Acts. 13:3 Matt. 6:1 Matt. 5:16
  2. It seems that Jesus assumes his disciples will fast.
  
- F. Negative portrayals of fasting.
  1. Some have made up rules about fasting. 1 Tim. 4:1-3 Col. 2:20-21
  2. Food is not an issue with God. 1 Cor. 8:8
  3. Fasting can become a point of pride. Luke 18:10-14
  4. Fasting can be misused by becoming an issue of control.
  5. We are not meant to be dominated by food: either eating or fasting. 1 Cor. 6:12-13a
  6. God does not value fasting for the wrong reasons. Jer. 14:12 Zechariah 7:5 Isaiah 58:3

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G. What about fasting for health reasons?

H. What if my health precludes fasting?

1. Talk to your doctor.
2. Fasting is not recommended for those with Type 1 Diabetes, those recovering from surgery, suffering from malnutrition, or pregnant and lactating women.

## IV. The purpose of our prayers and fasting.

A. Prayer is only offered through Jesus Christ. Heb. 4:14-16, 10:19-22a John 14:6

B. The Spirit helps us pray.

C. All prayers submit to the will and glory of God. Matt. 6:9-10 John 8:29b  
1 John 5:14-15

D. We must pray with the right motives. 1 John 3:22

E. We pray without wavering. James 1:5-8, 5:16b-18

F. Fasting is a demonstration of Matthew 4:4. Hebrews 12:1-4

G. We do not fast in to bargain with God.

H. There IS a sense in which God rewards us. Matt. 6: 18b Matt. 6:9-13 Luke 22:42

## V. My story. Romans 12:1-2 Phil. 4:6-7 Matthew 5:16

## VI. Conclusion.

Resources:

Praying the Bible by Donald S. Whitney

A Hunger for God by John Piper

Prayer by Timothy Keller