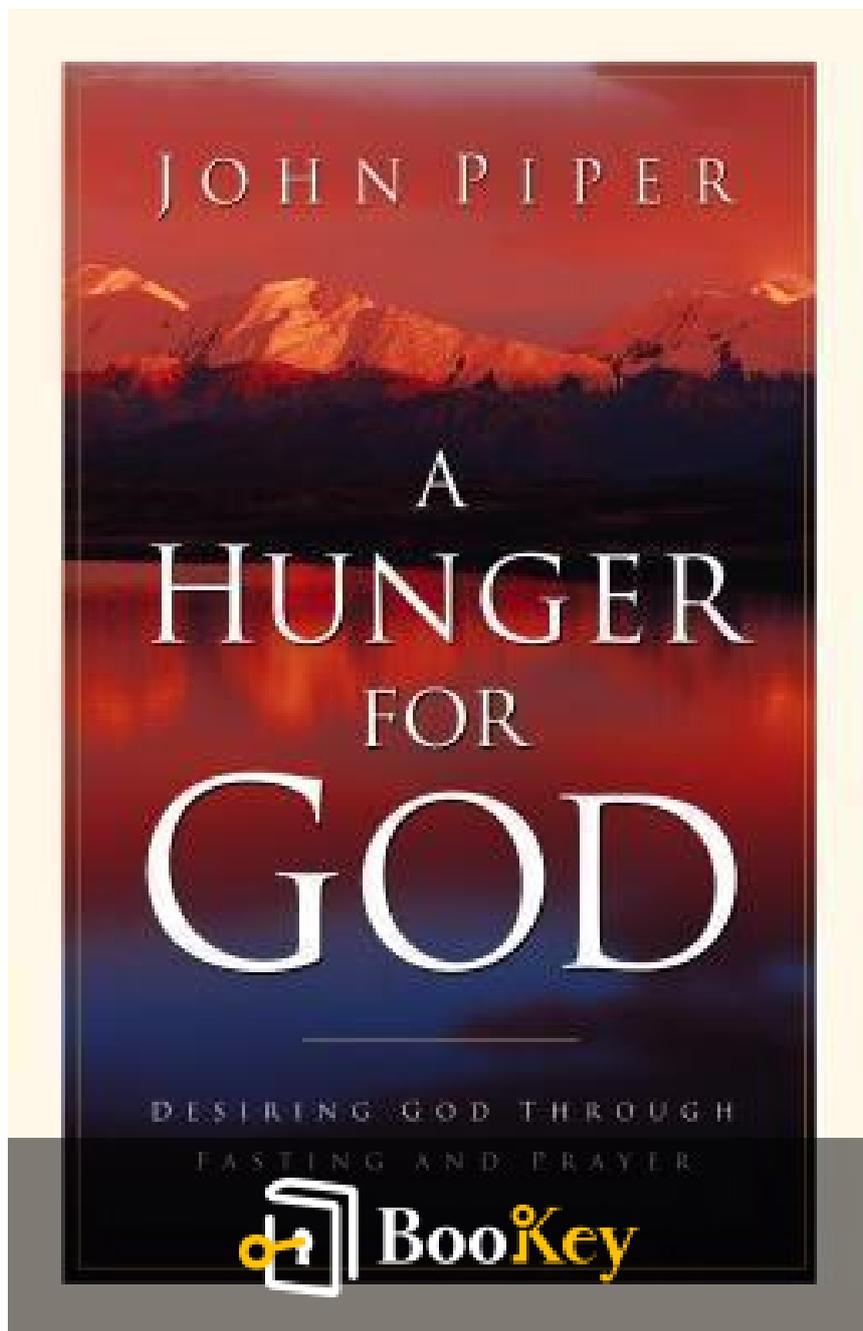


A Hunger For God PDF (Limited Copy)

John Piper



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A Hunger For God Summary
Desiring God Through Fasting and Prayer
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About the book

In "A Hunger for God," John Piper invites readers to explore the profound connection between fasting and spiritual vitality, arguing that true hunger for God transcends mere physical deprivation. Piper eloquently articulates how fasting can deepen our desire for the divine, awaken our senses to the presence of God, and catalyze spiritual renewal. By weaving together biblical insights, personal anecdotes, and theological reflections, he challenges us to view fasting not as a ritual burden but as a joyful pursuit that aligns our hearts with God's purposes. As you turn the pages, you will discover how cultivating a deeper longing for God can transform your life, reignite your faith, and enhance your relationship with Him in ways you have yet to imagine.

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About the author

John Piper is a prominent American pastor, theologian, and author known for his deep commitment to the intersection of theology and practical living. He served as the pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for over 30 years and is the founder of Desiring God, a ministry focused on promoting Christian hedonism, which emphasizes that the pursuit of joy in God is at the heart of true worship. Piper has authored more than fifty books, including bestsellers like "Desiring God" and "Don't Waste Your Life," and is recognized for his passionate preaching and teaching on the sovereignty of God, the importance of Scripture, and the necessity of global missions. His work encourages Christians to cultivate a deeper relationship with God, aiming to awaken a hunger for His presence in their lives.

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Chapter 1 Summary: 1 Is Fasting Christian?

Chapter 1 Summary: Is Fasting Christian?

This chapter delves into the complex nature of fasting within Christianity, highlighting its historical, religious, cultural, and personal significance. It opens with a reference to the early Christian document, the Didache, which advises followers to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays rather than on traditional Jewish days. This shift symbolizes a new identity for Christians—a departure from Jewish customs towards a new spiritual experience linked to the resurrection of Jesus, a pivotal event that signals the formation of a distinct Christian community.

The author poses critical questions regarding the validity and relevance of fasting in Christianity, encompassing four main objections:

- 1. The Universal Nature of Fasting:** Fasting is a practice seen across various cultures and religions, suggesting that it might not be uniquely Christian.
- 2. Obsolescence in Light of Christ:** With the establishment of the kingdom of God and Jesus' redemptive work, does fasting still hold significance, or has it become an outdated practice?

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3. **Celebration Over Mortification:** Given Christ's victory and the joy of the Holy Spirit, should the focus shift from fasting (often seen as a mark of mourning) to celebration?

4. **The Risk of Pride and Self-Reliance:** The act of fasting can lead to prideful behavior, contrasting with the notion of humility found within Christian teachings.

The author underscores the notion that fasting is not inherently anti-Christian, but that with the arrival of the kingdom of God through Christ's ministry, fasting must evolve into a "new fasting."

The Nature of Fasting

Fasting has existed globally in various forms, serving religious, political, and health-related purposes. For instance, from Jewish Yom Kippur to the fasting associated with Gandhi's political activism, fasting can mobilize communities toward spiritual and social goals. Additionally, modern health movements advocate for fasting as a means of physical renewal.

Given its widespread practice, the question arises: should Christians engage in fasting? Historically, fasting was prominent in the Old Testament but ambiguities regarding its relevance surface in light of New Testament

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teachings, where fasting appears less frequently.

Fasting in the New Testament

The chapter introduces Jesus' perspective on fasting, primarily articulated in Matthew 9:14-17. Here, Jesus illustrates that fasting is not fitting during a time of celebration, comparing his presence to that of a bridegroom. His disciples do not fast while he is with them, highlighting the joyfulness of his ministry. However, Jesus implies that a time will come—post-resurrection—when his followers will fast again. This prophetic statement signals a transformation of fasting aligned with a new understanding of faith.

New Wine, New Fasting

The analogy of new wine requiring new wineskins serves as a powerful metaphor. Old fasting practices might not contain the new spiritual realities Jesus introduces. Instead, a new form of fasting develops, rooted in the understanding of God's completed work through Christ.

This "new fasting" is characterized by joyful anticipation rather than despair; it acknowledges both the present experience of Christ and the hopeful longing for fulfillment in the future. The distinction lies in that Christian fasting arises from a place of satisfaction in Christ—motivated by a longing

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for more of his presence rather than a sense of lack.

The Essence of Christian Fasting

Christian fasting is a means of expressing a deep, holy hunger for God born from a place of contentment in His presence. It serves as a form of worship, enhancing one's relationship with God and affirming the goodness of His gifts while recognizing that, ultimately, the Giver surpasses the gifts themselves. The author's insights connect fasting with a transformative faith that seeks God earnestly while enjoying the blessings received.

In conclusion, fasting remains relevant in the Christian context—not as a mere ritual or ascetic practice—but as an act of faith seeking deeper communion with God. It embodies the believer's desire for spiritual growth, rooted in the assurance of Christ's completed work on the cross, with the ultimate goal of glorifying God through both feasting and fasting. As Christians develop a renewed hunger for God, they reflect the ongoing tension between spiritual contentment and yearning for deeper communion with Him.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Christian fasting stems from a place of satisfaction in Christ

Critical Interpretation: Imagine awakening every morning with a profound sense of fulfillment, where your desire for God transcends the material world. This new understanding of fasting redefines your hunger—not as a longing born from emptiness, but as an eager pursuit of deeper communion with Him. Each time you choose to fast, you're not merely abstaining from food; you're intentionally stepping into an experience of joy and anticipation, knowing that it is in the moments of hunger you will find a more profound satisfaction in God's presence. This perspective invites you to view fasting as an exhilarating act of devotion, a celebration of your relationship with the Giver rather than a mere ritual of denial, ultimately drawing you closer to the heart of God.

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Chapter 2 Summary: 2 Man Shall Not Live By Bread Alone

Chapter 2: Man Shall Not Live by Bread Alone - The Desert Feast of Fasting

The opening of Jesus' ministry is marked by a profound act of self-denial: a forty-day fast in the wilderness. This period of fasting raises essential questions, particularly for those of us entering ministry. Jesus, as the Son of God, engaged in this spiritual preparation, indicating its necessity not just for himself but for all who seek to face life's challenges. His calling to serve—that is, to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19)—echoes in our own callings, drawing us to consider the vital practice of fasting.

Fasting becomes a spiritual discipline that reveals our deep hunger for God, just as Jesus exemplified. This longing extends to seeing "all the fullness of God" manifested in the lives of believers. Charles Spurgeon believed that fasting and prayer brought divine favor and opened heaven itself. If Jesus—a beacon of light—struggled with fasting to cultivate spiritual presence, how much more do we need to immerse ourselves in similar practices?

As Jesus emerged from baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove (Matthew 3:16). This event was a public endorsement of His mission and divine sonship, with God affirming, "This is my beloved Son, with

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whom I am well pleased.” This divine approval set the stage for what would be an unparalleled journey, one involving immense suffering for the sake of humanity's salvation.

Immediately after receiving this endorsement, the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1). This first act of the Spirit points to the gravity of Jesus' mission; faced with significant temptations, Jesus chose to fast—a significant spiritual weapon in His fight against the adversary. His fasting was not arbitrary but instead a crucial part of how He would respond to the challenges of temptation.

Through fasting, Jesus reenacted Israel's own wilderness experience—a time of testing and reliance on God. He drew from Deuteronomy, echoing Israel's scriptural history to counter Satan's temptations. For instance, when urged to turn stones into bread, Jesus replied, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3). In doing this, Jesus illustrated that true sustenance comes from God's word, not mere physical nourishment.

The parallels between Jesus' experiences and Israel's journey are intentional. Just as Israel was tested and humbled in the wilderness, Jesus underwent similar trials but succeeded where they faltered. He embraced fasting not just as a means of preparation but as an act of solidarity with His people, thereby embodying their struggles and victories.

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Fasting reveals what truly governs our hearts, making it a testing ground for our faith. It challenges us to confront our deepest longings and commitments—are we more drawn to earthly provisions or to the pursuit of God? In this light, fasting becomes both a declaration of our dependence on God and an assertion against the desires of the flesh.

The temptation that Jesus faced was not about physical hunger alone; it was a pivotal moment where he had to choose between the path of immediate gratification and the arduous journey of sacrificial love for humanity. By steadfastly refusing to create “miracle bread”, He demonstrated that trust in God surpasses even the most profound earthly needs.

Moreover, Jesus’ fasting was a testament to His superior appetite for God’s presence and will, rather than a mere preparation for future trials. This moment served as a launching point for a ministry that would eventually culminate in His sacrificial death, triumphing over sin and Satan through unwavering faith and love for His Father.

The chapter closes with a reflection on our own spiritual journeys. It challenges us to consider whether we, like Jesus, truly hunger for God above all else. Can we fast, not as an expression of self-denial for its own sake, but as a means to deepen our dependence on God? Fasting, portrayed here as the “hungry handmaid of faith,” empowers us to confront distraction and seek

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God's glory, cultivating resilience against worldly temptations.

In summary, Jesus' experience with fasting in the wilderness is not merely an account of self-denial but a compelling invitation to embrace our spiritual hunger for God. It calls us to declare that we would rather feast at God's eternal table than indulge in the temporary pleasures of this world—a truth that resonates deeply with our faith journey today.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: True sustenance comes from God's word, not mere physical nourishment

Critical Interpretation: Imagine stepping into each day with a resolve that transcends your basic needs, a conscious choice to turn away from the noise of the world and seek God's presence more eagerly than your next meal. Fasting serves as a profound reminder that while we often hunger for physical sustenance, our true vitality lies in the richness of God's word. By embracing this spiritual discipline, you align your heart with a deeper craving for God, pushing aside distractions and acknowledging that your ultimate fulfillment comes from His truth and love, empowering you to face life's challenges with steadfast faith.

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Chapter 3 Summary: 3 Fasting for the Reward of the Fathers

Chapter 3: Fasting for the Reward of the Father

In this chapter, Carl Lundquist, former president of Bethel College and Seminary, explores the significance of fasting as a spiritual discipline through personal anecdotes and scriptural insights. He emphasizes Jesus' radical God-orientation in fasting, highlighting that the act is not merely about abstaining from food but about deepening one's relationship with God.

The Journey to Fasting

Lundquist reflects on his own transformative experience following a visit to Dr. Joon Gon Kim, who had undertaken a profound 40-day fast prior to a major evangelistic event in politically turbulent Korea. This monumental act of faith resulted in the police granting permission for the crusade that was initially denied. Lundquist acknowledges his own lack of similar commitment, prompting him to reconsider the role of fasting in his spiritual life. He shares how he adapted his lunch breaks to the Flame Room at Bethel Seminary, finding nourishment in prayer and fellowship with God rather than in physical food.

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Jesus' Assumption About Fasting

The crux of Lundquist's exploration is captured in Matthew 6:16-18. Here, Jesus instructs His followers to fast, implying a presumption: not if, but when they fast. Lundquist notes that Jesus envisioned fasting as an essential aspect of discipleship, focused on seeking a deeper relationship with God, rather than as an optional practice.

The Dangers of Hypocrisy

Lundquist addresses the potential pitfalls of fasting. Jesus warns against hypocrisy—the act of seeking human admiration rather than fostering a sincere connection with God. Some individuals, characterized as hypocrites, visibly display their fasting to garner praise, thus completely missing the spiritual purpose of the discipline. The allure of human praise can lead to spiritual emptiness, as the reward sought is merely temporary and superficial.

Intent and Heart in Fasting

Jesus' teachings push for a shift from outward appearances to internal motives, urging believers to fast with a heart focused on God. Lundquist argues that the root of hypocrisy lies in fasting for human approval instead

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of for divine connection. True fasting, as Jesus teaches, should elicit a desire for spiritual closeness to God without being influenced by the opinions of others.

The Nature of Corporate Fasting

Lundquist continues by acknowledging that public fasting does occur within biblical contexts, noting that acts such as communal fasting encouraged by the early church can align with Jesus' teachings, provided the intent remains pure. The focus should always be on why one fasts—whether it is to glorify God or to gain prestige among others.

Seeking God's Reward

In the later verses of Matthew 6, Jesus reassures that God, who sees in secret, will reward those who fast with sincere hearts. Lundquist clarifies that this reward should not be misconstrued as a transactional arrangement but rather as a genuine response from God to a heartfelt longing for communion. The essence of fasting becomes an exploration of one's devotion to God, expressing a deep yearning for a closer relationship with Him.

The Ultimate Pursuit

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The chapter concludes with a powerful challenge: fasting should ultimately reflect a desire for God's presence and glory. Lundquist implores readers to evaluate their motivations, urging that true fulfillment arises not from seeking worldly accolades but from a relationship with God that transcends earthly recognition. He stresses that fasting must be rooted in a quest for God's supremacy, aligning all other desires toward glorifying Him.

Through poignant anecdotes, scriptural teachings, and profound reflections, Lundquist elucidates the transformative power of fasting when undertaken with a pure heart aimed solely at God. The chapter encourages readers to approach fasting as an occasion to deepen their relationship with the Divine, ultimately recognizing God as the greatest reward.

Section	Summary
Introduction	Chapter 3 explores fasting as a spiritual discipline, emphasizing its role in deepening one's relationship with God rather than merely abstaining from food.
The Journey to Fasting	Lundquist shares his transformative experience inspired by Dr. Kim's 40-day fast, leading him to reevaluate the significance of fasting in his own spiritual life.
Jesus' Assumption About Fasting	Jesus presumes fasting as essential for discipleship, urging followers to seek a deeper relationship with God through the practice.
The Dangers of Hypocrisy	Lundquist warns against hypocrisy in fasting, where individuals seek human praise instead of a sincere connection with God, leading to spiritual emptiness.

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Section	Summary
Intent and Heart in Fasting	True fasting should focus on internal motives and a desire for closeness with God, rather than seeking approval from others.
The Nature of Corporate Fasting	While acknowledging public fasting in biblical contexts, the emphasis remains on the pure intent behind fasting to glorify God.
Seeking God's Reward	Fasting should be understood as a heartfelt longing for communion with God, receiving genuine rewards from Him rather than a transactional exchange.
The Ultimate Pursuit	Lundquist encourages readers to view fasting as a pursuit of God's presence, urging motivations to align with glorifying Him rather than seeking worldly accolades.
Conclusion	The chapter highlights the transformative power of fasting with a pure heart aimed at God, emphasizing His presence as the ultimate reward.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Fasting as a pursuit for God's presence

Critical Interpretation: Imagine transforming your approach to fasting by viewing it not as a mere act of self-denial, but as a profound journey towards deepening your relationship with the Divine. This chapter prompts you to consider how each moment spent in prayer and reflection, instead of indulging in physical sustenance, can lead to a richer connection with God. By focusing your heart solely on seeking divine intimacy rather than external recognition, you cultivate a life where the fleeting nature of earthly accolades pales in comparison to the everlasting fulfillment found in God's presence. Such a shift in perspective inspires you to prioritize your spiritual nourishment, inviting a transformative closeness that fills your soul with purpose and joy.

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Chapter 4: 4 Fasting for the King's Coming

Chapter 4: Fasting for the King's Coming: How Much Do We Miss Him?

This chapter explores the concept of fasting as an expression of our hunger for the return of Jesus Christ, whom the Bible depicts as the Bridegroom of the Church. Citing Matthew 9:15, the author notes Jesus's teaching that his followers do not fast while he is present; however, a time will come when he departs, prompting them to fast out of longing for his return.

Fasting serves as a future-oriented counterpart to the Lord's Supper, which commemorates Jesus's past sacrifices – his death, resurrection, and the subsequent reconciliation between humanity and God. The act of fasting embodies the inner ache and yearning of Christians for the Bridegroom's return, affirming their heartfelt awareness of his absence and the pain it brings.

The chapter emphasizes the urgency and sincerity of fasting as a spiritual discipline. The absence of fasting among contemporary Christians signifies a troubling contentment with the world rather than a longing for Christ's return. Drawing from Luke 18:7-8, the author questions whether believers truly yearn for justice from God and highlights the need for a community that cries out in prayer and fasting for the coming of their King.

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A key element of the early church's fervor was their cry, “Come, Lord Jesus!” This response is echoed in Revelation 22:20, denoting an unending desire for Christ’s return, encapsulating the essence of Christian hope. The chapter introduces the Aramaic term “Maranatha,” meaning “Our Lord, come,” commonly invoked by early believers to express their deep longing for Jesus. The text draws parallels between this ancient longing and today’s expectations, urging contemporary Christians to share in the same desire and indeed to act on it through prayer and fasting.

The chapter delves into the Biblical figure of Anna, a prophetess who devoted her life to fasting and prayer as she awaited the arrival of the Messiah. Her extreme dedication and the joy she experienced upon seeing the infant Jesus serve as a model for today's believers, who have the added benefit of witnessing the full revelation of Christ.

The author's argument continues by stressing that modern Christians—having experienced Christ through scripture, his death, and resurrection—should have even greater urgency and desire for his return than Anna did. The text challenges readers to reflect on their own spiritual hunger, encouraging self-examination regarding the intensity of their longing for Christ.

Fasting is portrayed as a means to awaken spiritual appetites dulled by

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physical comforts and distractions. As the author quotes John Wesley, excessive focus on physical desires hampers the soul's yearning for God. Fasting can thus serve to elevate the spirit, sharpening believers' awareness of their spiritual needs.

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Chapter 5 Summary: 5 Fasting and the Course of History

Chapter 5: Fasting and the Course of History

A Call for Discernment and Desire

In this chapter, we are cautioned against idolizing individuals or ministries as paradigms of fasting, as such veneration can lead to disillusionment. Every individual, regardless of their spiritual triumphs, carries hidden imperfections, reflecting the truth that no one is without sin. Our admiration should be tempered with humility, recognizing that such unknown faults can taint the perceived righteousness of others (1 Corinthians 4:4). We must anchor our faith in the unchanging Word of God, rather than the fluctuating accounts of contemporary spiritual movements. The essence of our steadfastness relies on focusing on God's immutable nature.

Nevertheless, the Bible encourages learning from the faithful who inspire through their actions. Saints of history have experienced God's grace through fasting, and their stories serve both as guidance and inspiration pointing to God's remarkable responses to prayer and fasting, although these should not be seen as universal formulas for spiritual life.

Fasting and Imperfections

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The case of Charles Finney exemplifies the complexities surrounding fasting. Finney's powerful conversion led to a life marked by moments of divine empowerment through fasting. While many have interpreted his experiences as pathways to revival, the true lesson lies in humility. Finney himself sought God's power multiple times through fasting, yet experiences vary among believers, and God's workings differ according to His sovereign will. What is evident is that blessings reflected in an individual's life should not be mistaken for endorsements of their doctrine or behavior; God can render results despite human deficiencies.

Illustrating this, we see examples like Apollos, who preached with zeal yet required the guidance of Priscilla and Aquila to clarify his understanding of the gospel (Acts 18:24–26). Similarly, the New Testament warns that not all who perform miracles in Jesus' name are known by Him (Matthew 7:22-23), indicating that divine power does not necessarily equate to doctrinal truth.

Fasting in Korean History

Moving beyond individual examples, the chapter highlights fasting's historical significance, particularly within the context of South Korea's rapid church growth. The Protestant church's establishment in Korea dates to 1884, eventually leading to the rise of thousands of congregations, propelled by a culture of prayer and fasting. This illustrates how collective fasting can

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lead to drastic transformations in spiritual landscapes, provoking a desire within the contemporary church to seek renewal through similar practices in the face of stagnation in other regions like America and Europe.

The Impact of Fasting at Antioch

Acts 13:1–3 provides a striking biblical reference for fasting as a catalyst for historical change. Here, the church leaders in Antioch, engaged in worship and fasting, sought direction from the Holy Spirit regarding their missionary efforts. Their earnestness exemplified a profound hunger for divine guidance, culminating in the Holy Spirit's call to set apart Barnabas and Saul for a monumental mission that would significantly influence the spread of Christianity.

Fasting in this context is shown not only as a personal discipline but as a communal act that underpins vital collective decision-making in the church. The transformative effects of their fast extended beyond that moment, setting the stage for the burgeoning of Christian faith throughout the ancient world.

Historical Accounts of Fasting's Impact

The chapter continues by noting instances in the Old Testament, such as King Jehoshaphat's nationwide fast in response to military threats, which led

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to divine intervention and miraculous victory (2 Chronicles 20). Similar stories of fasting, from Moses receiving the Law to Esther's intercession for her people, underscore fasting's role as a means through which God's people seek divine assistance and direction.

Contemplating Contemporary Awakening

In today's context, a resurgence in worship and prayer has been observed, yet fasting remains less emphasized. The author emphasizes fasting's capacity as a physical expression of desperate longing for God's presence, akin to fervent prayer. In times of revival, figures like Jonathan Edwards have called for prayer and fasting as vital tools for personal and collective awakening.

While Edwards advocated for fasting, he prudently cautioned against elevating it to sole means of revival, recognizing God's sovereign freedom. He attributed periods of awakening not merely to fasting but to God's invitational grace working in unexpected ways.

Modern Perspectives on Fasting

Edwards' reflections on fasting remind us that genuine obedience must extend beyond just the act of fasting; our hearts must align with humility and sincerity toward God. The chapter highlights notable historical figures like David Brainerd, who sought divine guidance through fasting, demonstrating

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a practical example of how this discipline can foster spiritual sensitivity and effectiveness in ministry.

Furthermore, early New England minister Thomas Shepard exemplified fasting's significance in maintaining spiritual vigor and usefulness in ministry, emphasizing that such practices have deep roots in the church's history and can ignite future movements.

Concluding Thoughts

The chapter closes with a hopeful narrative, echoing Cotton Mather's anticipation of revival and awakening. Despite differing eschatological views within the church, there is an underlying unity in the desire for prayer and fasting to invoke God's transformative power in contemporary society.

Ultimately, as believers today, we are encouraged to draw from the lessons of history and the lives of faithful practitioners, shaping a thoughtful, discerning approach toward fasting and its potential to impact the course of our spiritual journey and that of the church at large. Through collective humility, earnest seeking, and genuine acts of fasting, believers can express their profound hunger for divine presence and guidance in an increasingly secular world.

Section	Summary
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Section	Summary
A Call for Discernment and Desire	Individuals and ministries should not be idolized; humility is essential. Learning from faithful lives is encouraged, but reliance should be on God's Word.
Fasting and Imperfections	Charles Finney's experiences with fasting illustrate the need for humility; God's working is sovereign and not necessarily tied to individual doctrine.
Fasting in Korean History	South Korea's church growth is linked to collective fasting practices, highlighting its potential for spiritual renewal.
The Impact of Fasting at Antioch	The church in Antioch engaged in fasting to receive divine direction, showing fasting as a communal decision-making act.
Historical Accounts of Fasting's Impact	Examples from the Old Testament demonstrate fasting's role in seeking divine assistance and intervention during crises.
Contemplating Contemporary Awakening	A modern revival in prayer exists, but fasting is underemphasized. Historical figures endorsed it as essential for spiritual awakening.
Modern Perspectives on Fasting	True obedience in fasting requires humility. Historical figures show fasting can enhance spiritual sensitivity and vigor in ministry.
Concluding Thoughts	Hope for revival persists; believers should seek God earnestly through fasting as a response to a secular world.

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Chapter 6 Summary: 6 Finding God in the Garden of Pain

Chapter 6: Finding God in the Garden of Pain

In this chapter, the author explores fasting as a spiritual discipline, highlighting its profound significance and potential dangers. The influence of John Chrysostom, a revered preacher from the fourth century, is prominent. He exemplified asceticism in a time of luxury and emphasized fasting as a means of spiritual improvement, a practice that helps one align with the divine and foster inner peace. Chrysostom articulated that fasting isn't merely abstaining from food; it embodies a multitude of spiritual benefits, including enhanced clarity of mind and emotional calm. However, the author acknowledges that fasting can also yield discomfort and headaches for some, and its success is attributed to intention and sincerity rather than ritual alone.

The Dangers of Fasting

Emphasizing spiritual peril over physical risk, the author cautions against fasting with the wrong motives, referencing teachings from Jesus. Fasting observed to gain recognition or reward from others distorts its sacred purpose. True fasting, the author argues, should seek God's approval rather

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than human validation.

Fasting and Urban Suffering

The author emphasizes the relevance of Isaiah 58, a passage that reverberates with urgency for believers living amidst urban struggles. This scripture urges a true fast, one not just about prayer and abstinence, but about active engagement with the suffering of society. It calls for liberation of the oppressed and sharing provisions with the needy, positioning care for the marginalized as a spiritual imperative. The author reflects on personal encounters with this text, including stories from members of their church, which invigorated their commitment to aid those in dire circumstances.

Testimonies of Impact

The chapter recounts a testimony from Bill Leslie, a former pastor who faced burnout yet found revival in Isaiah 58's clarion call to self-giving. His story is paralleled with Doug Nichols, whose relentless dedication to serving street children did not waver even when battling cancer. These accounts illustrate the transformative power of serving others, validated by the biblical call to seek justice and compassion.

Jesus' Connection to Isaiah

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The author draws connections between Isaiah's teachings and Jesus' ministry, reflecting the continuity of God's desire to uplift the downtrodden. Both convey essential truths about authentic spirituality: true worship is intertwined with active compassion, ensuring that believers' lives reflect their devotion.

Authenticity in Worship

The stark disparity between external religious practices and genuine ethics is scrutinized. Many engage in rituals like fasting and worship, but fail to embody the spirit of love and justice. The author warns against the pitfall of equating emotional worship experiences with authentic faith, suggesting a critical reflection on the relationship between daily actions and spiritual claims.

The Test of True Fasting

Scripture articulates that authentic fasting must lead to a change in lifestyle, urging believers to confront their own injustices while alleviating the suffering of others. The adoption of a lifestyle that prioritizes service over self-indulgence is presented as a profound redefinition of what it means to fast. The text further emphasizes that true fasting is only valuable when it ignites a desire for righteousness.

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Engaging with Consumerism

The chapter delves into the conflict between modern consumer culture and biblical fasting. The author argues that contemporary society often prioritizes possessions and self-gratification. In stark contrast, the fast that God desires involves renouncing consumerism to genuinely meet the needs of others, even when such a lifestyle challenges societal norms.

God's Prescriptive Fast

The specifics of God's prescription for fasting are articulated through Isaiah 58:6-12 as an active demonstration of faith. This includes acts like freeing the oppressed, sharing food, providing shelter, and showing compassion to those in need. The author stresses that such fasts are not merely transactions for divine favor but paths toward healing and regeneration for both the giver and the receiver.

Promises from God

In exchange for genuine fasting, God promises profound and transformative rewards: spiritual guidance, physical renewal, protection, and restoration of communities. The author conveys that selfless service not only brings fulfillment but also aligns believers with God's work in the world, reinforcing the idea that true satisfaction stems from pouring oneself out for

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others.

In conclusion, the author encourages readers to embrace this radical understanding of fasting, urging them to view their spiritual journeys not merely as individual pursuits but as collective efforts addressing the frailty and injustice present within society. Ultimately, the chapter encapsulates the idea that true fasting fuels genuine connection with God and others, blossoming into a life that overflows with grace and compassion.

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Chapter 7 Summary: 7 Fasting for the Little Ones

Chapter 7: Fasting for the Little Ones: Abortion and the Sovereignty of God Over False Worldviews

In the beginning of this chapter, the author poignantly reflects on humanity's diminished hunger for God, attributing it to both a weakened capacity for desire and a failure to engage deeply with the Scriptures—the "telescope" that reveals the vastness of God's majesty. Citing various Psalms and Philippians, he emphasizes that our desires should be aligned with seeking God above all else. Yet, many of us settle for lesser pursuits, which dilutes our potential for true desire.

The chapter transitions into the exploration of God's public glory, asserting that the desire for God should extend beyond personal experiences to encompass a yearning for His visible actions in the world, particularly in the face of societal issues like abortion. The author argues that fasting can be a powerful expression of this desire, serving as a radical call to God for His glory to be made manifest in society.

The narrative draws on the influential work of Francis Schaeffer, who played a pivotal role in shaping evangelical thought regarding abortion and societal morality. Schaeffer's insights, which connected deeply with the evangelical movement, highlighted the necessity of recognizing the unique value of

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every human life as made in the image of God. He warned that without scriptural understanding, society could slide into grave moral compromises, such as infanticide and euthanasia.

The author references the current landscape of abortion laws in America, emphasizing that the U.S. stands as the most permissive nation regarding abortion, largely due to judicial mandates rather than public consensus. This situation poses a theological and moral challenge, prompting discussions around the legitimacy of a regime that appears to disregard the sanctity of life. Schaeffer's recognition of abortion as a "hinge issue" for the culture emerges here as a rallying call for Christians to confront this moral crisis.

The chapter explores the societal implications of abortion, positing that the normalization of such acts leads to erosion in the moral fabric of society. Notable figures like Mother Teresa have articulated this perspective, asserting that the acceptance of abortion undermines the very foundations of love, responsibility, and civil order. Schaeffer's worldview perspective is introduced: the need to address deep-rooted philosophical beliefs about existence and humanity, particularly against the backdrop of a materialistic worldview that fails to uphold the uniqueness of life.

As the chapter progresses, there is a strong emphasis on a collective response of prayer and fasting to combat the prevailing cultural narratives. The author suggests taking cues from the biblical figure Ezra, who sought

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God through fasting before embarking on a mission that meant restoring lives and rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. Ezra's prayerful dependence on God underscores the understanding that human efforts are futile without divine intervention.

The chapter culminates with a call to action, urging believers to fast and pray not merely as acts of desperation but as profound acknowledgments of the need for God's power to transform hearts, minds, and societies that have strayed far from His ways. The author encourages Christians to engage actively in the world while remaining rooted in prayer, believing that through humility, desire for God, and corporate fasting, change can occur.

In conclusion, the chapter reiterates the importance of maintaining a both/and posture: engaging intellectually and politically while seeking God's mercy and intervention through prayer and fasting. This dual approach is posited not only as a response to the immediate issues of abortion and morality but as a broader commitment to restoring a worldview that celebrates the dignity of life and honors God's sovereignty. The message resonates with a sense of urgency for believers to act, pray, and fast to seek a culture where the sanctity of all human life is protected and cherished.

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Chapter 8: Conclusion: Why Does God Reward Fasting?

Conclusion: Why Does God Reward Fasting?

The question arises: why does God reward fasting? The Bible consistently affirms that God does respond to fasting, as evidenced in scriptures like Matthew 6:18, where Jesus assures us that "Your Father who sees [your fasting] in secret will reward you." Understanding the nature of this reward is paramount because an erroneous interpretation can dishonor God and mislead us.

Honoring God vs. Earning Rewards

A harmful view suggests that fasting earns God's favor by demonstrating our merit. This perspective transforms God's grace into a transactional relationship, implying that our actions gain God's approval. Such thinking undermines God's sovereignty, as it appropriates His grace for human effort. The result is a relationship based on justice rather than grace, contradicting the essence of salvation described in Ephesians 2:8, which states we are saved by grace through faith, not by works.

Moreover, this mindset leads us to expect retributive justice rather than divine grace. As Paul clarifies in Romans 4:4, if we conceive of God

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rewarding fasting as a matter of merit, then we reduce God to merely settling debts with us, further detaching us from the true nature of grace.

The Divine Source of Fasting

Fasting cannot earn God's favor because it originates from God himself. It is a gift where God enables our obedience and devotion. In Ephesians 2:10, we learn that we are God's handiwork, created to do good works He prepared in advance for us to pursue. Fasting, then, is not first an offering to God to gain something but a response to His work within us aimed at glorifying Him.

King David exemplified this attitude in 1 Chronicles 29:14 when he humbly acknowledged that all contributions, including sacrifices like fasting, are gifts from God. Thus, when we fast, it should contain an understanding of our inherent helplessness and reliance on God's sustaining power.

Seeking God in Helplessness

Fasting is fundamentally an expression of human need and a desperate hope in God. God promises to supply the needs of those who acknowledge their thirst for Him. This is documented in Isaiah 55:1-3, where He invites those who thirst to come and receive sustenance without payment, emphasizing the gift of His grace. The reward comes not from our ability to "purchase" God's blessing but from the heartfelt recognition that He alone can satisfy

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our deepest needs.

The Beatitudes further reinforce this notion; the "poor in spirit" are blessed because they recognize their spiritual bankruptcy and dependence on God. The focus here is on humility and reliance, not on the act of fasting itself.

God's Glory and Our Lowly Hearts

Ultimately, God rewards those acts that signal recognition of human weakness and a turn towards Him as the only source of fulfillment. This is evident in 1 Peter 4:11, noting that service done in God's strength magnifies His glory. God's glory remains central; every act of obedience or expression of need acknowledges His power and grace.

Fasting should be seen as an offering of emptiness, reflecting our dependence on God as the "Bread of Heaven" and the source of life. Such an act calls attention to God's all-sufficiency and His promises, allowing His grace to flow into our lives. Thus, as individuals fast, they articulate the soul's need for God, affirming that true satisfaction comes from Him alone.

In conclusion, God rewards fasting not as a transaction meriting payment but as an expression of our recognition of His sufficiency and grace. Fasting, when viewed correctly, reinforces our relationship with God, aligning our hearts with His desire for glory and our need for Him. When we are most

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satisfied in Him, He is most glorified through our lives.

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