**PRAYER AND FASTING**

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**Concerned** about their inability to heal a case, the disciples asked the Master why they were unsuccessful. Jesus replied that it was because of their unbelief. Then he added ([Matt. 17:21](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Howbeit+this+kind+goeth+not+out+but+by+prayer+and+fasting.&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)), "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

It is generally recognized that prayer has to do with spiritualization of thought. That fasting relates to dematerialization of thought is not, however, so generally recognized. All our woes stem from the falsity which assigns to matter what really belongs to Spirit. The hopes of mankind are rooted in Christian Science, which rejects such falsity.

If to pray righteously is to identify oneself with Spirit, to fast effectively is to cease identifying oneself with matter. Prayer and fasting constitute oneness. They dispose of every suggestion of dualism—the mixture of that which is not with that which is.

Spirit is infinite. The admission that there is such a thing as matter is a denial of this fact. Such admission would not only be error; it would be evil. Spirit is infinite good, eternal Life, pure intelligence, incorruptible power. Every bit of good, of life, of intelligence, of power claimed by or attributed to matter, is a denial of Spirit's allness. It is because of the prevalence of such negation that fasting is so important in healing.

Every quality, every capacity, every facility of one's true being, including health, freedom, action, is derived from Spirit and remains forever in Spirit and belongs to man by reflection. Attributing to Spirit what belongs to Spirit is prayer. Refusing to assign to matter what belongs to Spirit is fasting. Disappointment in healing is often the result of ineffective fasting.

In the long night watches, which were a familiar part of his work, Jesus prayed and fasted to the point where he was assured of the success of his God-assigned mission and convinced that nothing could interfere with its fulfillment. He knew what he had to do and was aware of his ability to do it. His forty days and nights in the wilderness prepared him to meet by prompt and effective denial every attempt of the carnal mind to confuse or divert his thought from the work he was appointed of God to accomplish. That is why Jesus' instruction to his disciples regarding fasting as well as praying can become a promise to us, a promise upon which we may confidently rely in our healing work.

Prayer has to do with discerning the operation of divine Principle. Fasting involves unseeing what material sense presents as physical processes. Prayer has to do with recognizing man's inseparability from God. Fasting enables us to reject the belief that we are mortal. The realities of being are revealed in prayer. The belief that we live under subjection to material laws is denied in fasting.

Prayer lifts thought above the testimony of the material senses, strengthening human consciousness with faith and understanding. Prayer enables us to understand our true status as a child of God and to accept the divine government as supreme. Through prayer, we realize the spiritual wholeness of the one who believes that he is ill, and healing follows.

There is more to prayer than supplication, as there is more to fasting than merely abstaining from certain foods at certain times. The disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus ([Matt. 9:14](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Why+do+we+and+the+Pharisees+fast+oft%2C+but+thy+disciples+fast+not%3F&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)), "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?"

Mary Baker Eddy tells us in her book "The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany" that Jesus answered John's disciples in substance ([p. 339](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=My+disciples+rejoice+in+their+present+Christianity+and+have+no+cause+to+mourn%3B+only+those+who+have+not+the+Christ%2C+Truth%2C+within+them+should+wear+sackcloth.)), "My disciples rejoice in their present Christianity and have no cause to mourn; only those who have not the Christ, Truth, within them should wear sackcloth." And she continues: "Jesus said to his disciples, 'This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting,' but he did not appoint a fast. Merely to abstain from eating was not sufficient to meet his demand. The animus of his saying was: Silence appetites, passion, and all that wars against Spirit and spiritual power. The fact that he healed the sick man without the observance of a material fast confirms this conclusion."

We fast effectively when we really handle, that is, dispose of the claims of animal magnetism or evil. Such handling annuls mental malpractice in a scientific way. We fast when we follow the example of Jesus, of whom our Leader says (*ibid.,* p. 294), "He would mightily rebuke a single doubt of the ever-present power of divine Spirit to control all the conditions of man and the universe."