“One day the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked him, “Why don’t your disciples fast like we and the Pharisees do?’ Jesus replied, “Do wedding guests mourn while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. But some day the groom will be taken away from them and then they will fast.” Matthew 9:14,15

**Why do I fast?**

I fast because I love God. I want to know Him, love Him, and trust Him more. Fasting invites me into a feast of communion with God that is intimate, personal and real. I see Him in new ways; I soak in His love; I ponder His majesty and I worship. He shows me who He is and who I am. He quiets me-centered desires and exchanges them with His desires. I discover He loves me, and He loves people. Through fasting, God satisfies my soul more than my body longs for food.

**What about my motives?**

I know that I can fast with wrong motives. Just as with prayer, I ask God to teach me how to fast. He teaches me that fasting is far more than asking God what I want Him to do. Fasting is not a bargaining chip I use to manipulate God but is all about seeking Him, trusting Him, surrendering to Him. As I seek, trust and surrender, He aligns my desires with His desires. He ignites my love for Him and those I pray for. He moves me to loving action. Prayer becomes a love language between me and God, resulting in a feast for my soul.

**Ponder:** God’s response to religious ritual:

“We have fasted before you!’ they say. ‘Why aren’t you impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don’t even notice it!’ “I will tell you why” I respond. “It’s because you are fasting to please yourselves. Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers. What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like reeds bending in the wind. You dress in burlap and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the Lord? No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help. Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind. Then when you call, the Lord will answer. ‘Yes, I am here,’ he will quickly reply.” Isaiah 58:3-9 NLT

Dr. Alicia Britt Chole, who, for decades, has incorporated a day of fasting into her week, writes, “Fasts that are acceptable to God are fueled by love for God and manifest in love for humankind. Think of fasting as a campfire on a cold night: Self-denial is the wood; love for God is the fire; and God, his people, and the lost are those warmed by the offering.” *A Different Kind of Fasting*

Jesus invites,

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” Matthew 6:16-18

“Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!” Psalm 34:8