

5 Breakthroughs Fasting Can Unleash in Your Life

Why fast? Is it required? Is it beneficial? Is it an antiquated practice that is no longer valid for Christians? Many today believe that fasting is a religious work of the flesh that only speaks of bondage since Jesus finished the work at Calvary. Some do indeed approach fasting with legalistic religious vigor and place their confidence in their discipline rather than in the power of God. Others view fasting as a valuable tool in weight reduction but of no significant spiritual value. What does the Bible say?

The Preacher in Ecclesiastes wrote, “A threefold cord is not quickly broken” (4:12c). Jesus gave His disciples (I hope that includes you) the formula of a threefold cord for our lives. Matthew records where Jesus said, “When you give ... when you pray ... when you fast ...” Matt. 6:2,5,12 NLT). Notice that Jesus didn’t make these three acts optional for a believer. His instruction wasn’t if, but when. So, giving, praying and fasting for the believer is not optional. Neither does God treat them like extra credit. They are core elements of the Christian life.

There is an assumption that disciples will have periods of fasting in their journey of following Christ. In fact, when you look at the New Testament believers, it is easy to see that fasting is a standard practice. Paul, the great apostle, said that he was “in fastings often” (2 Cor. 11:27b). So the New Testament positively affirms fasting is a regular part of life for believers. But it is important to note that the New Testament doesn’t give specific instruction regarding how long someone must fast or how often. These things are left up to the local church and the individual as the Holy Spirit leads.

What Is Fasting?

What exactly is fasting? The word specifically means to do without food for a spiritual reason. It is more than dieting. People almost always lose weight as a result, but the goal of fasting is first and foremost to make the soul and spirit trim and fit, not the body. So, the focus of any true fast must be spiritual, not natural. You may undoubtedly fast social media or any number of things other than food, but fasting is first and foremost doing without food for a spiritual reason.

Fasting dethrones king stomach and further enthrones King Jesus in our lives. Ed Cole said it this way, "A fast is not a hunger strike. Fasting submits to God's commands. A hunger strike makes God submit to our demands." We fast to offer ourselves to God not to force Him to move.

What you fast depends on the leading of the Spirit in your life. Whatever you give up be assured, if it matters to you, it will matter to God. But don't use this liberty as an opportunity for spiritual laziness. My beautiful daughter, Isabella, told me last year during a fast that she would be fasting "water" since she doesn't like it anyway. I laughed and instructed her that true fasting doesn't work that way. What you give up needs to cost you something, or else stomach is never dethroned.

Why Fast?

Of course, we fast because it is part of the Christian life. But then we must ask ourselves what the purpose of our fasting is? What do we hope the outcome of this time will be? The Bible includes many examples of powerful results that come from fasting. Following are five that we believe will be released in us individually and corporately during this season of fasting:

Greater Intimacy With God

First and foremost, we are fasting and believing God for greater intimacy and a deepening of our relationship with the

Lord. David in a season of fasting wrote these words, "As the deer pants after the water brooks, So my soul pants after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When will I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they always say to me, "Where is your God?" (Ps. 42:1-3). Like David, we long to experience God's presence like never before. We long to come and appear before and with God. There is so much I don't know. But I am so thankful that I do know the presence of God and the real anointing. All I need, I find in His presence.

God's Help

Secondly, we are fasting for divine intervention in our circumstances. 2 Chronicles 20 tells the amazing story of God's people under attack. They didn't have the resources necessary to meet the invading armies on the field of battle. Jehoshaphat made this statement, "For we have not strength enough to stand before this great army that is coming against us. And we do not know what we should do, but our eyes are on You" (2 Chron. 20:12). So they fasted, and God responded with a prophetic word and a dramatic deliverance. I believe that there are circumstances that we are dealing with right now that are about to change wonderfully! "Do not fear, nor be dismayed because of this great army, for the battle is not yours, but God's" (2 Chron. 20:15b).

Understanding

The third thing the Lord challenged me to believe Him for during this fast is divine wisdom and understanding. Daniel fasted for 21 days to gain understanding. God responded by sending the Angel Gabriel, who said to Daniel, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. For from the first day that you set your heart to understand this and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come because of your I have come to make you understand" (Dan. 10:12, 14a). As you fast, believe for wisdom to be yours in every area of your living.

You will not live in the fog of confusion any longer but in the clarity of understanding.

Authority

The fourth area we are targeting as we fast is a greater release of authority in our lives over the activity of demons. In Mark 9 and Matthew 17 we read the account of a young man who is under the control of a demonic entity. His dad brings him to the disciples, and they try to cast the demon out but were unsuccessful in doing so. Of course, when Jesus enters the camp, He easily brings healing freedom with just a word to the demonic. The boy is gloriously and wonderfully made free. The disciples who had cast demons out of others before were perplexed as to their inability to free this child. So, they asked Jesus, "Why could we not cast it out?" He replied, "Because of your unbelief. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'move from here to there' and it will move. And nothing will be impossible for you" (Matt. 17:20). Then he also said, "This kind cannot come out except by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29). So there is a level of faith and authority that we only access through prayer and fasting. Faith and authority do not come from fasting. No! Fasting just enables you to step into the fullness of what Jesus has already made available to you by His victory! Take it as your own!

Heaven's Perspective

The fifth area we are stepping into during our fasting season is the ability to see from God's perspective and get involved in God's plan! Isaiah 58 records God's response to people who were fasting but missing Him by a thousand miles. God rebukes them for the religiosity of having the outer right while the motives of their hearts were self-centered. So He says to them, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the

oppressed go free, and break every yoke? Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry and bring the poor who are outcasts into your house?" [Isaiah 58:6-7a] God isn't interested in us just doing without food. He is concerned with a new level of openness in our hearts that fills us with His compassion and moves us to be involved in His plan. When we do it God's way, look at just one aspect of the results, "Then your light shall break forth as the morning, and your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your reward. Then you shall call, and the Lord shall answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, Here I am" (Isa. 58:8-9).

Andrew Murray said, "Prayer is reaching out after the unseen; fasting is letting go of all that is seen and temporal. Fasting helps express, deepen, confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God." During our season of fasting, let's purpose to let go of natural things and grab the spiritual treasure that Jesus gives.

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