

Fasting Can Be a Game Changer for This

The late Dr. Myles Munroe was ministering on “The Power of Fasting” when he opened his suit jacket to the audience. He wanted the crowd to view his physical frame.

Keep in mind he was finely dressed for that meeting wearing a dark colored suit, a classy maroon colored tie against a light pink shirt, with gold cuff links that slightly peeked under his coat sleeves. Once he opened his jacket, however, you could see his clothes hanging quite loosely on him. He explained saying, “My church, my wife and myself have been on a 21-day fast.”

He added, “This is what you look like after 21 days of no food. I’m here to tell you that YOU WON’T DIE!”

Stories like this are inspiring and intimidating all at the same time. I love the idea of going on an extended fast, but I’m pretty sure that I will die if I do! Fasting is something I struggle with. I just happen to be one of those kind, loving individuals who turns into a monster if they do not eat regularly. Hopefully you hear my humor in that statement, but to a certain extent, it’s true. People with a sensitive physiology and low-blood sugar problems can take on a certain form of crazy when they haven’t eaten on time.

Even so, I still fast on a regular basis. I just don’t fast nearly as long as others, or I do partial fasts, meaning that I skip a meal or two each day for a set period of time. Even so, people who did long and extended fasts used to challenge my confidence. That is, until I understood the heart of God concerning this discipline.

In the Bible, we find a story about a widow who dropped her last two pennies into the offering box. She did this in front

of the wealthier givers and was observed by Jesus in doing so. In response, Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, *"Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything"* (Mark 12:43-44).

If you struggle with fasting, too, I want to assure you that Jesus sees the little you do and counts it as being a lot. We do what we can do instead of what we cannot do. Our confidence then rests in knowing the heart of Jesus toward us, rather than in comparing ourselves to others.

We Are Meant to Fast

When Jesus introduced the Lord's Prayer to His disciples, He began by saying, *"When you pray"* (Matt. 6:6). Notice that prayer is not an *if* but a *when* matter. The same is true of fasting, as Jesus said in that same teaching, *"When you fast"* (v. 16). Jesus taught prayer with fasting, and this was a regular practice of the early church. It ought to be the same for us.

Accordingly, our church enters each year with either a 21- or 40-day fast. We encourage congregants to fast from food as God leads them to do so. Some fast a few days each week. Some fast a meal each day. Others fast the entire time.

Our church also gathers to pray during that time for specific ministry targets for the next year. In addition, individuals are encouraged to pray for their personal goals and needs. We have discovered that fasting contains a real turnaround element. We've seen turnarounds in regards to those with serious health and financial issues, salvations of difficult family members and much, much more.

The truth is, fasting is a game changer when it comes to unanswered prayer. Add fasting to your prayers, and your answers will come speedily (Is. 58:8). Fasting purifies our

bodies, yes, but it also purifies our hearts. It empties us of unbelief and aligns our faith in such a way that we gain triumph over our enemies. We are expected to fast! Fasting is a *when*, not an *if*, matter.

There Is a Reward to Fasting

In 2011, during our annual 40 days of prayer and fasting, I began having terrible nightmares of death that made modern-day horror films look like children's play. I would wake up with a clear sense of death around me, and it would not lift.

One night, I woke up again with a strong feeling of death and began feeling desperate. I decided to go to our church's prayer chapel and stay there until I was free of it. As I prayed, the Lord spoke clearly to my heart, saying, "This battle is about life."

It was a powerful word to my heart. I messaged my husband and shared what the Lord had spoken to me. As I was texting, he was emailing me a message he had received from one of our intercessors. The intercessor had emailed him the details of a dream she had the night before.

"I saw all the dead bodies," she wrote. "You and Jen were arranging them in such a way that the life of God was being poured into their mouths. They were resurrecting!"

That same year, we were miraculously given a second church campus. It was a five-acre parcel of land with a church sanctuary, a sports field and a gymnasium that belonged to a church whose ministry had died. The pastor decided we were the church that should have it. We received the campus, remodeled it in cash and then turned it into a place of life and healing. This was what the dream was all about. We were given a corporate breakthrough in response to our fasting and prayers.

Pastor Sunday Adelaja from the Ukraine shares a similar experience. He led his people to fast and pray up to three weeks at a time because they needed the power of God to overcome persecution they faced from their government. As a result of their fasting and prayers, the Ukraine government gave them land to build a church—something unheard of in their country.

Recognize that it is one thing to fast for a personal breakthrough but another thing to fast for a corporate breakthrough. A corporate breakthrough is one that is needed by many people at one time. For example, the Israelites needed a corporate breakthrough from the bondage of Egypt. Today, whole cities, regions and nations need a corporate breakthrough from different kinds of demonic enslavement.

To achieve a corporate breakthrough, a God-fearing leader must call and gather the people to fast and pray. For example, when King Jehoshaphat heard a large army was coming against him, he did not move out in his own strength. He called the people to fast and pray until they heard the word of the Lord. Then the Lord spoke through Jahaziel, saying, *"Do not be afraid or discouraged. ... For the battle is not yours, but God's"* (2 Chr. 20:15). If you are a pastor or God-fearing leader, one of your responsibilities will be to spearhead corporate breakthrough by gathering the people to fast and pray.

Jesus received the Holy Spirit when He was baptized by John the Baptist. His ministry of power, however, was not birthed until after a time of fasting (Luke 4:1-19). Jesus then began His ministry of power, casting out demons and healing people of diseases.

The anointing was not just reserved for Jesus. It is also reserved for us who believe in His name. Jesus said we would do greater works than He did (John 14:12). He also said the servant is not above his master (Matt. 10:24). But we can only

do greater works than Jesus to the measure that we've been anointed by the same Holy Spirit.

This anointing is weighty. When the anointing for ministry comes to rest upon you, you may feel it rest like a weighted garment upon your person. The Bible references this as an *"ever-increasing glory"* (2 Cor. 3:18) and *"eternal glory that far outweighs them all"* (2 Cor. 4:17).

This weighty anointing rests upon our flesh. Since the Bible describes the Spirit being at war with our flesh and our flesh being at war with the Spirit (Gal. 5:17), this means that in order to sustain the anointing on our flesh, we have to put our flesh down through fasting and prayer. Through fasting, we present our bodies to Jesus as a living sacrifice and prepare our flesh to be made into new wineskins, capable of receiving the outpouring of the Spirit (Rom. 12:1; Mark 2:22).

Fasting and prayer is that which prepares our hearts to carry more of what we were made for. The kingdom of God is always increasing (Is. 9:7). That means we, too, should always be increasing. We do this through the power of fasting and prayer.

What is God saying to His church in this hour? He's saying, "Don't just pray. Fast and pray."

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