

How Fasting Kills the Flesh and Opens the Door for the Holy Spirit

Fasting is not simply one of those mandates in the Bible related to abstention of food, Pastor Shane Idleman says. It's about subduing your flesh and, more importantly, submission to the Holy Spirit.

"The Holy Spirit will lead us, guide us and convict us," Idleman says. "But He only leads those who want to follow Him. He waits for you to submit to that. It's the flesh that often holds us back from the things of God. Fasting is biblical and it's a very important spiritual discipline."

Jesus said to His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, "*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*" (Matt. 6:18).

Fasting, Idleman says, brings spiritual insight and wisdom and starves the flesh. When you cave into your flesh, it relegates you to a habit of submitting to your flesh, and the Holy Spirit cannot do the work in you that He hopes to.

But when you obey God and kill the flesh, the rewards can be very satisfying.

"When God tells you to fast and you do it, it's going to benefit you," Idleman says. "Some of the physical benefits of fasting are that it helps with aging, it gives you a better attitude, you have better resistance to disease, you sleep better, you change your habits, you have clearer skin, it improves your senses, you have more clarity and more energy, and so on. I don't know of anyone that wouldn't want those things."

One needs only to look at two biblical examples of fasting to

get the picture:

For a three-week period, Daniel refrained from eating the luxurious royal food offered to him by the king. He made a covenant with God in his heart to refuse to eat foods forbidden by God, instead consuming only vegetables, beans and water. From his fast, Daniel received heightened spiritual insight.

Before embarking on his earthly ministry, Jesus went on a 40-day fast. When He emerged from the wilderness, with His flesh subdued, the power of the Holy Spirit was stronger than ever within Him.

So why are many believers reluctant to fast? Idleman says that fasting is related to our spiritual appetite, and that our hunger for God must outweigh our hunger for food.

Evangelist John Piper once said, "The absence of fasting in our lives is the measure of contentment with the absence of Christ in our lives."

Ouch.

When you fast, Idleman says, the flesh submits to the Spirit and spiritual power and wisdom are released: "You're either disciplining your body, or your body is disciplining you."

For more of Idleman's message on this important biblical mandate, watch the video above.