

How Jentezen Franklin Discovered the Biblically Based Benefits of Fasting

As believers, we desire to be in the will of God and to walk according to His plans. The key to doing so is sanctification. As Paul said, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3a, NKJV). Sanctification is the process of becoming holy in daily life; it is practicing purity and being set apart from the world and from sin. Sanctification is allowing the Holy Spirit to make us more like Jesus in what we do, in what we think, and in what we desire. We do not hear much about sanctification from the pulpits these days, but if we are to see God do wonders in our midst, we must confront sin in our lives and live holy.

Fasting is an essential means of sanctifying yourself, pulling yourself away from the world and getting closer to God. Fasting allows you to filter your life and to set yourself apart to seek the Lord. Jesus prayed for us:

"They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth" (John 17:16-19).

Fasting will help you identify areas of hidden sin and things that are displeasing to God in your life. Fasting helps you discern between serving the flesh and serving the spirit. "For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living

God?" (Heb. 9:13-14). If we are in Christ, His blood cleanses us from dead works, enabling us to serve God in holiness.

Necessity of Sanctification

Why do we need to sanctify ourselves? We have no place in our hearts for pride. We have no place in our hearts for complacency. If God has blessed your life, you are critically in need of sanctifying yourself. Beware of being a member of the "first church of the frozen chosen." Do not let the blessings of the past interfere with the blessings of the future. The blessings of the future will be greater than anything He has done in the past.

David was a man after God's heart, yet he cried out, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10). We need a sanctification of motives. We need a sanctification of desires. We need a sanctification of attitudes. We need a sanctification of the right spirit. We need a sanctification of our flesh.

Crossing Over

When Joshua was leading the children of Israel, he gave orders for the officers to command the people, saying:

"When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before" (Josh. 3:3-4).

They were to stand back and watch God. They were about to see the wonders they had heard about but never seen for themselves. As soon as the soles of their feet touched the water of the overflowing Jordan River, the waters separated as they had in the Red Sea, allowing the new generation to pass

through the waters on dry ground. “Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan” (Josh. 3:17).

When you fast and sanctify yourself unto God, it moves you off the bank and into the miracles! There are too many people on the edge of what God is doing and not enough of us standing firmly in the middle of His will. Do you want things to change in your home? You are the priest of your home—fast, sanctify yourself, and take a firm stand in the middle of God’s will! When your family sees you stepping off the edge of mere “Sunday-morning religion” and getting right into the middle of what God is doing, they will follow and find God’s direction for their lives.

Blessing of Sanctification

Joshua’s words went out to “the chosen generation.” God had waited until all those who were stiff-necked and rebellious had grown old and died. That younger generation would go forth and inherit the promises. After they crossed the Jordan, God told Joshua to “make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time” (Josh. 5:2b). The older generation was circumcised, but the younger generation had not been. They were to bear the mark of the covenant in their flesh before God would take them any further.

Circumcision speaks of sanctification of the flesh. It is cutting away dead things and hidden sins. You can look good publicly, raising your hands, giving your offerings, praying and even fasting, but all the while hiding deadly sins. You are sanctified by the blood of Jesus when you first accept Him as your Lord and Savior, but over time, complacency and hidden sins can creep into your heart. You can start drifting, and you let your standard down. Paul explained this clearly to the Galatians:

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

The blessing of sanctification brings with it the promises of God's covenant and life in the Spirit: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another" (Gal. 5:22-26).

Fasting sharpens the blade and sharpens the Word in your heart and in your mouth, allowing you to cut away the dead flesh and hidden sin as you set yourself apart for God.

What About You?

What if you set yourself to diligently seek the Lord, sanctifying yourself with a fast, and journeying back to the spot where it all began—where He saved you, set you free, filled you with His Spirit and called you out? If you can't physically travel to that spot, you can go back mentally. You can recall the ancient landmark and that same simplicity, innocence and dedication with which you first responded to His voice.

God wants you to ask Him for—believe Him for—things that are bigger than yourself. The children of Israel had made it through the wilderness. They had stopped eating manna and had begun to eat the good fruit of the land. They lived along a river, and they could have easily set up trade with those from the big city of Jericho, but that was not their destiny.

Fasting will bring you into destiny. Fasting will bring you into alignment with God's plan for your life. Just as Joshua called the children of promise to sanctify themselves, I believe that, likewise, your "tomorrow" is just around the corner. God is going to do wonders in your life, leading you places you have never been before. Now is the time to fast, to seek God diligently, to sanctify yourself, to discern God's priorities and to walk in His promises. {eo}

This article was excerpted from Chapter 17 of Fasting by Jentezen Franklin.