

Is Your Body Holding You Hostage?

We are at the crossroads—opioid and alcohol abuse are leaving a path of destruction in their wake. Obesity is skyrocketing and plaguing the young as well as the old; it has reached epidemic levels in children—caffeine and sugar have taken us captive. Diabetes is plaguing millions, and cancer and heart disease are the number one killers in America. Is there an answer? Yes, there is: “This is what the LORD says: “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths where the good way is and walk in it, and you shall find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16). We must go back to the old paths to truly find freedom and deliverance.

By age 28, my life was filled with what the world offered, but I was empty inside. I was at a turning point. I could choose to turn fully to God and stop “playing church”, or continue to reject Him. By God’s grace, the prodigal came home. I repented and put my complete trust in Christ.

Although I’m far from perfect, God radically transformed and redirected my life. Within the months that followed, I truly experienced the infilling of the Spirit that is seen throughout the Scriptures (e.g., a transformed life resulting in a love for God and His Word). From this experience, came books, articles, speaking engagements and ultimately, a church. It was then that I began to consume hundreds of books and writings by the great heroes of the faith; most included the spiritual discipline of fasting. But today, we rarely hear sermons about fasting (e.g., starving the flesh to be filled with the Spirit).

In addition, fasting was referenced several times in the pages of early church writings such as the Didache, and the New and Old Testament. Fasting is seen throughout the Bible—when you

pray, give, and fast (see Matt. 6).

“Why is this important topic avoided or glanced over today?” was my burning question. I can only speculate, but it’s hard to preach what you don’t practice. Sadly, everything, including church functions, is centered around food: potlucks, get-togethers, fellowship gatherings and so on. The last thing we want to talk about is humility through fasting. But we must return to the power of the Spirit through brokenness, prayer, humility, and fasting if we truly want to be “restorers of the breach” (Isa. 58).

Leonard Ravenhill reminds us, “The early church had an upper room with fire; today we have a supper room with smoke.” Meaning we are full, satisfied, and content. A deathlike, deep slumber, has overtaken the church: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead” (Revelation 3:1). The beacon of light has faded, the salt has lost its savor, and the message of the cross has been edited out of most sermons. We have lost our fervor for the truth. Ravenhill again reminds us that “When there’s something in the Bible that churches don’t like, they call it ‘legalism’.” A profound statement, and this is definitely the case with fasting.

Fasting is like farming. The farmer can’t make the seed grow, but he can create an environment for growth. This is what fasting does—it aligns our heart with God’s. The choices we make in physical affected the spiritual: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

Moses received the Word of God when he fasted. King Jehoshaphat experienced victory. Esther received protection. Elijah was restored and renewed. Daniel experienced the supernatural. Ezra received direction and safe passage.

Nehemiah was strengthened. Joel offered the cure for judgment. Jesus was empowered, and on and on it goes.

The vast majority of the heroes of the faith fasted. And it's still very common in places like China and South Korea where they have secluded places for prayer and fasting. John Wesley would not ordain a man unless he fasted twice a week. He was testing the man's self-discipline.

The closer you draw to God, the more you do for God, and the more God does. Fasting is a hunger strike against hell—it subdues the flesh. “How can you pull down strongholds of Satan if you don't even have the strength to turn off your TV?” (Leonard Ravenhill).

Not only are the spiritual benefits incredible, so are the physical benefits. The Great Physician often heals our bodies through prayer and fasting. “There are multitudes of diseases which have their origin in fullness, and might have their end in fasting” (James Morrison).

Fasting doesn't replace a healthy lifestyle; it compliments it. Disease is often a result of neglecting the cleansing process—fasting starves the disease and cleanses the body. Fasting is not starving the body—it's nourishing the body. Fasting starves the flesh to feed the soul.

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NOTE: *Join us Sat., Aug. 19, 2017 live or via live-stream at 11am PST. Pastor Shane will talk about health, fitness and weight loss from a biblical perspective. If you're reading this late, the video will be posted on our website. You can also find it under our live-stream link.*