

Lou Engle: I Hate Fasting

This is not a product promo to get your attention. What I share with you comes from 45 years of ministry experience. In addition, tens of thousands of committed Christians all across America will be engaging with this powerful practice this month in preparation for an unprecedented event, *Awaken The Dawn/RISE UP*, taking place on the D.C. Mall Oct. 6-9.

When I ministered weekly to 2,000 primarily young people 15 minutes from the White House in the '70s, Bible teacher Derek Prince challenged us to fast, pray and simply obey the priority of praying for governing authorities "first of all" (I Tim. 2:1-4), and then pick up the newspaper to see our prayers answered. In childlike faith we responded and we saw, for the first time in U.S. history, a sitting president and vice president removed from office as unrighteousness was exposed! By the way, Derek once wrote a life-changing book entitled, *Changing History Through Prayer and Fasting*.

Fasting has a preeminent place throughout Scripture, yet scores ignore or avoid it. It does bring discomfort, yet we desperately need it. The benefits far exceed the drawbacks.

Don't change the channel! With the dire state of our nation and the church, it's time for us to rediscover this spiritual discipline that brings long-prayed-for blessings and breakthroughs from God.

'I Hate Fasting!'

Who said these words? Actually it's someone who just spent days with several thousand of us in Nashville seeking God for spiritual transformation.

Would it surprise you to discover the individual is one of the greatest advocates for fasting in America today? I'm talking here of a unique man of God I've known for 40 years as a close

friend and fellow laborer for spiritual awakening in our nation: Lou Engle.

Years ago, I sat in a living room with senior leaders and dear friends like Che Ahn and Lou and James Goll. We all stocked our plates with delicious foods and sat down to fellowship.

When I hunkered down on the couch, Lou sat next to me. Previously someone had whispered to me that he was in the middle of an extended fast so I twisted my posture to avoid having the sumptuous delights in his line of vision.

Suddenly my revivalist buddy startled me by saying, "Larry, don't worry, I'm OK. Enjoy your dinner! I hate fasting but, ya' know, I love what comes from the investment."

Face it, fasting is not natural. It runs counter to our desire for comfort, pleasure and self-satisfaction. It entails discipline like the apostle Paul described in 1 Cor. 9:27 (ASV) "I buffet my body." He wasn't speaking here of a food buffet!

When we humble ourselves through fasting to abstain from nourishment in order to seek God and His promised blessings, we position ourselves to be recipients of the "open reward" Jesus promised in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt.6:16-18). As long as we abide by His cautions to steer clear of legalism and outward show, plus stay in expectant faith, we can be confident of blessings and breakthrough.

In Matthew 9:14-15, Jesus told some inquirers that His disciples weren't fasting while He as the Bridegroom was present with them but after He left, "then they will fast." Richard Foster in his classic work, *Celebration of Discipline*, said, "This is perhaps the most important statement in the New Testament on whether Christians should fast today."

Multitudes don't fast today because of bad religious experiences (raised Catholic, I was forced to fast weekly); or

believe it's a discarded Old Testament practice associated with sin, sorrow and mourning. Manufacturers of Mrs. Paul's Fish Sticks loved the mandatory Friday fasting, but scores of us detested it and celebrated its discontinuance.

Today we have the privilege of willingly engaging in a "bridal fast," not out of legalism but a longing for greater intimacy with Him. We eagerly await the return of our Bridegroom, the consummation of the age and the "new heaven and the new earth" (Rev. 21:1).

Inspiration From Leaders

Before he died at 81, I had the honor, with apostolic leader Bob Weiner, to pray with Campus Crusade founder Bill Bright. His countenance was like that of a 30-year-old yet without any Botox. He once received the Templeton Award for Religious Progress and donated the entire \$1.1 million to promote the benefits of prayer and fasting.

Bill told us, "Fasting prepares us for the deepest and richest spiritual communion possible. It clears and liberates our minds to understand what God is saying to our spirits. It conditions our bodies to carry out His perfect will. When we persevere through the initial mental and physical discomfort, we will experience a calming of the soul and cooling of the appetites. As a result, we will sense the Presence of the Lord more than ever before."

Richard Foster, whom I previously mentioned, said, "In a culture where the landscape is dotted with shrines to the Golden Arches and an assortment of pizza temples, fasting seems out of place, out of step with the times. In fact, fasting has been in general disrepute both in and outside the church for many years. For example, in my research, I could not find a single book published on the subject of Christian fasting from 1861 to 1954—a period of nearly 100 years!"

Rediscovering 15 Rewards

Years ago, a pastor in Pennsylvania was convicted of wasting time on frivolous late-night TV when he should've been seeking the Lord. "Lord, if you're behind this, I'll put an ad in the newspaper to sell the TV but You bring a buyer a half hour after it hits the streets!"

Twenty-five minutes after the newspapers came out, David said to his wife, "Gwen, maybe this was not ..." Then the phone rang and a man said he'd come by in 15 minutes to make the purchase!

Because of this change, David Wilkerson sought the Lord earnestly, became aware of teen gangs in New York, then shortly thereafter relocated to the Big Apple. In time the most successful drug rehab program in the world, Teen Challenge, was birthed and notorious gang leader, Nicky Cruz, was converted. David's *Cross and the Switchblade* and Nicky's *Run Baby Run* reached millions worldwide with the gospel.

My wife's parents were converted through Nicky's testimony which led to seven other family members living at home all being born again and joyfully following the Lord with their families to this day!

Are you a candidate for greater intimacy with God through prayer and fasting? Do you have a lost one God needs to awaken? Is there a broken relationship needing reconciliation? Are you in need of a miracle, healing, deliverance or intervention from debts?

Rediscover the value of fasting to experience long-prayed-for breakthroughs and blessings in your life! Consult a doctor if you have health problems. Use wisdom if it is a water; juice; veggie; favorite food; 1, 2, 3-day or extended fast. Expect some spiritual and physical resistance. Those are mild hunger pangs. You won't die!

Get started and stay motivated by regularly reviewing these potential benefits of fasting:

1. Renews spiritual vision
2. Brings a holy brokenness
3. Purifies our heart
4. Humbles our soul
5. Releases spiritual guidance
6. Subdues our flesh
7. Heightens spiritual awareness
8. Deepens communion with God
9. Clears our minds to hear God
10. Brings supernatural refreshing
11. Adds power to prayer
12. Brings deliverance
13. Brings greater fruitfulness
14. Facilitates breakthroughs
15. Cleanses the physical body

Realizing the urgency of the hour and the critical need for God's divine intervention in our nation, will you join with millions of dedicated Christians reengaging in the rhythm of regular fasting?

Join with Jesus, the early church, Paul, Jonah, Esther, Moses, David, Elijah, Nehemiah, Daniel and countless others throughout the ages who have recognized fasting's potential for releasing the atomic power of God!

Remember Jesus began His first recorded fast "filled with the Spirit" and ended "in the power of the Spirit" (Lk. 4:1,14).

To gain further inspiration, enjoy the video, "Rediscovering Fasting for Blessings and Breakthroughs From God."