

When Emotional Eating Becomes a Spiritual Stronghold

Living a life of prayer and fasting empowers believers to break down and destroy spiritual strongholds, some of which the enemy has been diligently forging in our souls for years. Praying, fasting and seeking the Holy Spirit will reveal strategies that expose the devil's lies and help us walk into victory from the ties that bind, whether those ties are fear, rejection, confusion or—even emotional eating.

In fact, emotional eating is an oft-ignored area when it comes to fasting for deliverance. The Bible says our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and we are not our own—we were bought with a price, and we should glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Emotional eating does not glorify God. The Bible also admonishes us to do everything to the glory of God, even eating or drinking (1 Cor. 10:31). Paul made it a point to discipline his body and keep it under control (1 Cor. 9:27) and beseeched us to present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1).

Additionally, the Bible warns us about gluttony, which can be a result of emotional eating. Paul talks of those whose “god is their appetite” (Phil. 3:19), and Solomon warns us the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags (Prov. 23:2). We're called to deny ourselves and crucify our flesh, not allow our emotions to overrule our natural appetites. Of course, one of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control.

For many who are bound by emotional triggers that tempt them to find comfort in food, these Scriptures bring condemnation rather than conviction. But the Holy Spirit is not condemning anyone—He wants to come alongside and help you manage your emotions and ultimately manage your appetite so you can live

long and strong and make an impact in His kingdom.

Breaking Emotional Bondages

If you've ever been through a severely emotional trial, you likely do one of two things: You stop eating or you eat too much. Neither is healthy. Fasting is one thing, but not being able to stomach food because you are a nervous wreck is something altogether different.

When people have emotional injuries and don't receive healing from Jesus, spiritual strongholds can form in the mind. Sometimes that stronghold is lust. Other times it is addiction. Still other times people turn to food for self-gratification. The latter rely on food to comfort their pain, ease their boredom, cure their loneliness or reduce stress levels. Ultimately, when we're relying on food to make us feel better we're leaving our heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit He sent as our Comforter.

Seasonal times of prayer and fasting can break through the lies the enemy has sold you that tempt you to find comfort in food instead of the Holy Spirit. There's a saying in Latin America: A devil exposed is a devil defeated. When you see the root by the grace of God, you can lay the ax to it by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit Himself will help you let go of pain, fear, anxiety and other emotional issues that cause you to turn to food as your source of relief.

Examining Our Hearts

Psalms 139:23-24 says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my concerns, and see if there is any rebellious way in me, and lead me in the ancient way." Fasting causes us to examine our hearts—and allow the Holy Spirit to show us anything we're ready to see that is causing us to stumble, including factors that drive emotional eating.

As you pray, fast and yield to the Holy Spirit, He will co-

labor with you over a season of time to assist you in breaking your cravings and changing your eating habits. You could discover that the things you once sought will no longer be appetizing to you. He will begin to speak with you what to eat and what not to eat. You will hear that gentle voice leading and guiding you to Him and away from food.

By cooperating with the grace of God to crucify our flesh through prayer and fasting and determining by strength of our will not to satisfy ourselves with the things we desire, we are putting the First Commandment in first place in our lives. We are loving God with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength and all our mind. We're making the Lord more important than food. You might say we are dethroning food and putting the Lord back where He belongs. We are sacrificing our wants and desires for His. Fasting bends our will toward His heart, plans and purposes for our lives—which are good, perfect and acceptable.

When we fast, we draw closer to God because when we deny our flesh the food it needs to sustain us, we're forced to rely on Him as the bread of life. When we are weak in our physical bodies from fasting, we have to rely on His strength to carry on. In those times of solitude, quiet and peace, we experience moments of time and glimpses of who He really is and the power we hold within ourselves in Him to overcome our own emotions.

Prayer and fasting cause us to see inside our very soul the hidden things of the heart we often don't want to see—but that need to be exposed. God desires truth in the inward parts and will make us to know wisdom in the hidden part (Ps. 51:6). When we invite the Holy Spirit in to search our inward parts, create in us clean hearts and renew steadfast spirits within us, we are inviting His power to change us from glory to glory.

Beware Satan's Condemnation

During times of vulnerability with the Holy Spirit, the enemy will surely try to attack, tempt you to look the other way, cause you to rise up in pride or make you fall under guilt, shame and condemnation. In those times, you need to pull out the sword that is Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." When we're walking in this reality, we can shun the enemy's subtle lies and embrace the Spirit's conviction. When we embrace correction, we will finally discover the freedom for which we have been longing.

We need to take responsibility for where we find ourselves, but oftentimes the root cause of our pain is not our fault. Hurts and wounds—injustices—overtook us by the hands of friends and strangers alike. As we fast and pray, we find strength to forgive and even bless those who curse us, hurt us and despitefully use us (Matt. 5:44). We learn to give up our own rights and submit and release our whole hearts to the Holy Spirit—and we will get to know and experience the Comforter who will deliver us from food addictions and emotional ailments.

Jesus came to set the captives free (Is. 61:1). If you believe that, you can believe your freedom from emotional eating is near. Think of it this way: He didn't just come to set the captives free, He came to set you free! Don't simply believe for another person's freedom, believe for your own too. Through times of seeking the Holy Spirit and spending quiet time in His presence, He will give you instructions on how to live a life of prayer and fasting. Be obedient and trust Him. You will grow in your faith as you seek Him. You will feel refreshed and peaceful and become emotionally free.

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