

Why Do We Fast?

Today I want to teach on Fasting. You see there are different kinds of fasts. There are private fasts that you do privately. The Bible teaches that when you fast privately, He will reward you openly. But then in the Bible there are “called Fasts” – times and situations that because of the unusual “times”, call for unusual measures. Sometimes you need unusual measurements to meet the unusual times that you’re living in.

We found out the greatest time to fast around here is at the beginning of the year. Matthew 6:33 says, “Seek first the kingdom, and all of these things will be added unto you.” Our church begins each year with the 21-Day Fast. We believe if you’ll put God first, He’ll do amazing things in your life.

If you’ve got a pen and a piece of paper, I think what I’m going to share with you will encourage you and strengthen you, so feel free to jot it down. Some of you are maybe here today, and you just picked the wrong Sunday to come because you’re not interested in Fasting. You could care less, and you think you’re not going to fast, but you’re going to and you don’t even know it yet. That’s what thrills me.

We had one guy that went on the fast for two weeks before he was born again. He got born again the second week of the fast. I was called to preach while on a three day fast. The apostle Paul received his calling and his direction from God in Acts chapter 13, while he was fasting for three days. The Church at Antioch, the Bible says, was fasting and praying and ministering unto the Lord when God set them apart and gave that Church a mission to evangelize the world.

Every assignment has a birthplace and many of you are going to birth God’s assignment and God’s purpose in your life while you’re fasting and praying. I want to talk to you today about fasting because it’s mentioned sixty-nine times in the Bible.

For every three times prayer is mentioned, fasting is mentioned one time. That means that, for every three sermons you hear on prayer, you should hear one on fasting. And yet, this truth has been buried and it’s been done away with and people don’t talk about it. We act as though it’s not in the Scripture.

The Lord dealt with me strongly to talk to you about this year during the fast is that, there are some things that you must ask yourself before you fast; three things specifically.

Number one – What are your motives behind the fast?

I appreciate the fact that you’ll lose weight if you fast but that cannot be your motive. I appreciate the fact that it’s good for you and healthy. It’s been proven medically that when you fast it detoxifies your body. It cleanses you – it causes your digestive tract to be healthier. But that’s not what the fast is really about.

So, the first question you need to ask is, “What is my motive behind this fast? Why am I doing it? Am I doing it so I can fit back into my clothes after the Christmas Holidays?” That will be a side benefit, but that doesn’t need to be the main reason.

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You may ask, "Am I doing this because I'm going to feel condemned because everybody else will be doing it and I've got to fake it and go along with it cause everybody else is doing it in the church?" That's not a good reason to fast.

Secondly, what are the specific needs that you're fasting for?

Every time in the Bible when people fasted, they fasted for a specific need. Sometimes they were in trouble. Sometimes it was for finances. Sometimes there were occasions when they were fasting for their children or fasting for help or fasting for direction. But never did they fast and not know why they were fasting. It was clear to everybody on every fast in the Bible, why they fasted.

I want you to get in your mind why you're fasting. Specifically, what if God came down and said, "What are the three top things that you want Me to do in your life and in your family?" You should know the answer and you should have it before you go on this fast because it's very important.

And then, the last thing I felt led to ask you is, "Are you determined to minister unto the Lord during this fast?"

Acts 13 says, "As they fasted and prayed, they ministered unto the Lord." What does that mean? That means that fasting is a time that we set aside and it's not about us getting what we can get from God all the time. God will move when we fast. But it should be a time, when our heart is crying out, "I want to minister to You. I want to love You. I want to know You. I want to draw closer to You. My heart cries for You."

See, the thing the Lord impressed me to tell you is, your approach to a Fast is extremely important. You just can't be frivolous. I've heard people say, "Well I'm going to fast chocolate." Well, if you're not serious about it, then you won't get real serious results. The more serious you are about the Fast, the more serious God will respond. If you're frivolous about it - if you're kind of light about it and the kind to say, "Well, I'm going to do it, but if I don't feel like it one day, I'm not." That doesn't move God. Your heart's got to be in the Fast!

When your heart gets in this thing, I'm telling you, there will come a fellowship with God like you have never known before in your life. Determine on this Fast, "I will minister. You've ministered to me so much, I'm going to minister to You on this fast."

Listen to this. This is an amazing Scripture, Zechariah 7 and 5, "Speaking to all the people in the land saying, 'When you fasted in the fifth and the seventh months even these seventy years, did you fast unto Me?'" To me, this is phenomenal. The people had declared a certain time. Every year for seventy years they would fast to God just like we do. And they did it for seventy years. And God flips around the question and says, "Are you fasting for Me?"

Did you know it's possible to go on a fast and have so many personal motives and agendas that you're not even fasting unto God? You're fasting unto your own wants and desires? And God basically said,

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"You've been doing this every year, at the same time for seventy years. But I want to know, is anybody hungry for Me and My Kingdom, and My agenda, and My purpose, and My plan in the earth?"

I Corinthians 10 verse 7 says, "Be ye not as the idolaters as some of them were. For they sat, they ate, they drank, and they rose up to play." And Philippians 3:19 says, "And they made their bellies their god." Their bellies were their gods. How? Why did He accuse them of idolatry, of worshiping other gods? And he said, "I'm going to name your god. Your belly is your god." That is New Testament!

I refuse to let my belly become my god! And that's what fasting will do to you. That's what fasting will do for you. It brings the flesh off of the throne. I Corinthians 9:27, "I bring my body under subjection." My body must submit to God. At some point, every year, we need to bring our body and present it to God and say, "cleanse this body, and deal with the habits - and deal with things - get this nicotine out of me - get this lust out of me - get this stuff - this flesh tells me everything. And I'm presenting this flesh on this Fast to You. And I know it's always going to be there, but I'm just going to let it know that, Jesus is Lord in this temple!"

Now listen to me. Every time I fast I get closer to God... every time. If I didn't give you any other reason to fast, I just told you a powerful thing in that sentence. Every time you fast, you will get closer to God. What greater reward than Him?

Now there are seven reasons and seven types of fasts in the Bible. I quickly want to give them to you.

In Esther the 4th chapter and the 16th verse, there's the story of Queen Esther. The Bible talks about how she said, "Fast for me. Neither eat nor drink for three days." And she said, "Get everybody else to fast for me because I'm going in and I need favor with the king."

Here's the purpose for the three day fast. They were in a crisis. So the three day fast is for a crisis, for trouble. Are you in trouble? Is your home in trouble? Or one of your kids in trouble? Or are your finances in a crisis? One Biblical reason to fast is when there is trouble in your life. See, we need to do what the Bible says do. We need to do it like the Bible says do it.

When trouble and great crisis come, we don't fall to pieces. We don't collapse. We don't back down. When the enemy comes in, we rise up like a flood and come right back at him. And say, "You think you're bringing me a crisis? You meant it for my evil, but God's going to turn it around for my good. And this crisis is going to become a blessing!"

If you're in a crisis, if you're in trouble, the crisis of depression, or hopelessness, or bankruptcy, whatever it is - give God a chance! Give God a chance in the time of trouble. And the Bible says that God turned Esther's crisis.

In Acts 9, Paul fasted for three days. Why? Because he had been converted and now the people that he used to be with were trying to kill him. That's what you call a crisis. But he fasted and God delivered him.

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The second fast is found in Daniel chapter 10, verses 2 and 3. "And in those days, I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks, and I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine to my mouth, till three whole weeks were fulfilled."

This is a 21-Day Fast. This is three sevens. Seven is the number of completion. What is the Daniel fast? It is no bread of any type, no pasta, no bread, no meat. I've had people ask me everything you can imagine. "Is fish meat? Is chicken meat?" Let's tell it like it is – no meat. You just eat vegetables, fruit and drink water. I'm telling you, it'll be one of the greatest, healthiest things you'll do. Your system will be healthier. It'll be a powerful thing.

But why? What does this do? Why do people do the 21-Day Fast? What result did it get? Listen to what Daniel said. He said, "After the twenty-one days, the angel of the Lord came and said, 'Oh greatly beloved Daniel, I've come to give you understanding about the vision.'" In other words, God gives every person in this room a vision. God has a vision for your life. He absolutely has a dream for you. He absolutely has ordered your beginning from the end.

He finished your life and then worked back and put you in seed form in the womb of your mother. Your whole life – every part of it – who you're supposed to marry – what you're supposed to do – where you're supposed to go – what step you're supposed to take – all of it, God has it. He has a vision.

But notice that the twenty-one day fast brought understanding of the vision. Another word for understanding would be – focus or clarity. It brought about the "know how" to make the vision happen.

I've seen that so many times in this ministry. As we've grown and as we've gone from one level to another, I would see glimpses of things. I can remember when we were praying about going on TV and I was fasting about that. I knew I saw it but I didn't know how it would happen. It's like you can see it, but you don't know how to do it. If you'll fast, God will absolutely bring understanding of how to make the vision come to pass.

The vision of seeing your children saved is not a lie from Hell that God's dangling out there just to torment you. It shall come to pass! Habakkuk 2 says, "Wait for the vision, it shall surely come to pass." But you don't just wait on it. You do your part and nothing positions you for a breakthrough like fasting. The greatest thing to me that fasting does is, it puts me in the best possible position for a breakthrough. Now, God is the God of the breakthrough, II Samuel 5 says, but I position myself in line for that breakthrough, in whatever area of my life I need it, through fasting and through prayer

The 21-Day Fast gives understanding of the vision". So, you've got one that's for "crisis" – one that's for the "vision". And then there's another fast found in Leviticus 23 and verse 27. This is the one day fast. Leviticus 23 and verse 27 says, "Also on the tenth day of the seventh month there shall be a Day of Atonement. And it shall be a holy convocation unto you; and you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering." What is this about? What's this one-day fast about? And there's a confirming in Jeremiah 36. I love the wording of it in verse 6. "Therefore, go, and read the scroll and the words of the Lord, in the ears of the people in the Lord's house" – listen to the wording – "upon the fasting day." I love that, "upon the fasting day."

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In other words, every year God said, 'I want you to set aside a certain time that you fast and seek Me.' And here's the purpose for it – For self examination and consecration. In other words, when you do this fast, you need to ask these things. God, I'm doing a check up on me spiritually. How am I doing? Do I love You like I loved You when I first met You? Have I drawn closer to You this year, or have I lost my passion? God, is my worship what You desire? Is it at the right level?

Am I living it before my children? Has my family seen Christ in me? What about my temper? What about my words? What about my attitude? Am I negative? Am I ugly to people?

Lord, I'm bringing myself to You because I really do want to be more like You and I need a self-examination. And I'm seeing some things in my life that are not like You, and I want You to help me deal with them on this fast. Self-examination – the one-day fast.

What I'm about to say is very powerful. There's another fast that's talked about in Judges chapter 20. I'm just going to sum it up. And you ought to study this on the fast. Judges 20 is a powerful fasting chapter.

Now here's what took place. God had told the children of Israel to fight the tribe of Benjamin because the tribe of Benjamin had become perverted. And God was just ready to judge them. He said, 'I want you to go fight against them.' And they prayed and they sought the Lord, and they said, 'Are we to go now?' And God said 'Yes.' And they said, 'Well, who goes first?' And God said, 'Send Judah up.' And they sent Judah and they went out and fought and they lost twenty-two thousand men.

Now I want you to think about what I just said. They did what God told them to do, and it was a failure and a disaster. They went back home and they wept and they cried and they sought God as earnestly as they knew how. And they said, 'God, should we go out today and fight against our enemy again?' And God said, 'Yes, absolutely, go.' They went out and lost eighteen thousand more men. Forty thousand Israeli soldiers dead in two days...

And the amazing thing is, God told them to do it and yet they were suffering defeat. But then you come to this Scripture on the third day. "And the children of Israel and all the people went up and came into the house of God and wept, and set there before the Lord and fasted that day until evening; and brought an offering, a peace offering before the Lord." And if you read the rest of the story, they went out that time, and completely annihilated the enemy. What is that about?

I felt like the Lord spoke to my heart, and He said to tell people this: Never go into a major battle without fasting. And I think God was saying, "You should have known that." You don't ever take on a major battle... you don't ever expect to just walk into expansion and do great things for God and not back that new initiative and that new plan without fasting about it.

You know if you're launching out and expanding, or trying to do something with your business. Put a day of fasting behind that because there's something that happens when we fast and when we pray that will not happen if you don't fast – even if God told you to do it, you need to attach fasting to it and it'll bring the victory every time.

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The fifth fast is found in I Kings 21, verses 27-29, I won't take time to read them, but it's the story of Ahab, who was extremely wicked. And a prophet prophesied over him that 'the dogs will lick your blood up because you sinned against God'. I want to ask you a question. How many of you know somebody right now that knows right from wrong, and yet they're living a wicked life?

In the story of Ahab, he was so wicked. And the prophet said, 'the dogs are going to lick your blood up'. And it so moved him that he humbled himself and began to fast. And concerning that wicked man, God said, 'because he has humbled himself in fasting, I will lift the judgment'.

When I read that, I felt like the Holy Spirit spoke to me to say to people that on this fast, target someone that knows right from wrong but is living an exceedingly wicked life. You can fast and pray and lift judgment that absolutely will hit their life if you don't do it and give them more time for God's mercy to do a work in their life.

Everybody who's got somebody on your mind right now, raise your hand up.

Father, we claim these souls. And we pray that even as we fast, You will lift judgment off of them and extend mercy into their life. Let them come to their senses, I pray. Pop the yoke. Loose the bands of wickedness. Break up and mess up ungodly associations in their life. Drive them to their knees in Jesus' Name.

In I Samuel 30, there's a story of a man who was sick. He fasted three days and God healed him. Now, some of you are believing that if you fast, you will get sick. Well you're probably going to get a headache and you're probably not going to feel good. And I'm not going to lie to you, especially if you do the total fast for two or three days or more, just go ahead and know...this is not a fun time.

Isaiah 58 says, "When you fast" – it's the fasting chapter, just like I Corinthians 13 is the love chapter. The entire chapter of Isaiah 58 is about fasting.

But listen. He said that your health will spring forth speedily. Your health will spring forth speedily. And many of you are going to be healed. Your cholesterol level's coming down. Your blood pressure's going to normalize. You're going to feel the healing power of God come upon you. We're going to see miracles of healing. That's why we have a miracle service the last day of the fast. We've had people healed of mighty things. Not hype – not sensationalism! Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. If we would just get out of the way and let Him be God... And fasting says, "I must decrease and He must increase."

Then there's the 40-Day Fast. Jesus fasted forty days – and why did He do it? He did it for dominion. He did it for authority. He got back the dominion. You remember Adam lost it by eating? Esau lost his birthright. Is that meat worth you missing the promise? "Pastor, that's too strong." Oh you've been soft all last year. It's time to get tough. Fasting makes you tough in the spirit. Fasting makes the inner man inside rise up and say, "Devil, who do you think you are to mess with my family, put fear in my mind and afflict my body? Greater is He that is in me than He that is in the world." Jesus got back dominion. He returned in the power of the Spirit after He fasted.

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The first time that a fast is found in the Bible is in Genesis 24. And it was for a person who was single. Isaac needed a wife and Eleazer fasted for a day that God would send the right mate. And God sent him Rebekah. Every single person, before you marry anybody, you should fast, fast, fast. It's the most important decision you will ever make besides receiving Jesus Christ. And you'd better get your eyes off their hips and their lips and you'd better check out what God is doing in their life. Do they love your Savior? Do they care about your God? That's the thing that'll keep your marriage together.

Isaiah 58 says that, "When you fast you will raise up a foundation for many generations." Parents, check out this scripture in Ezra 8.

"Then I proclaimed a fast at the River Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before God." Three reasons. Three powerful reasons to fast, this year.

Number one – "To seek of Him a right way for us."

You see, God will reveal to you the right way. He'll help you at the transitions. He'll give you the wisdom you need. He'll give you the direction that you need. "Should I take that opportunity? Should I go for that job? Should I go to that college? Should I be this? Or should I do that?"

"To seek of Him a right way for us."

Number two – "We're fasting for our little ones...our children."

And number three – "For our substance, our resources, our finances."

God, we're bringing before You at the beginning of this year, the fact that You are our Source and we're fasting and praying that You will bless us financially...materially; that You will be the God of our substance.

That "little ones" reference... that's "our children". He said that you can raise up a foundation for many generations by fasting. Something begins to happen in the home of a faster that "a foundation upon which a house of faith is built" that absolutely will go from generation to generation to generation because somebody in that family laid a foundation in fasting and through prayer.

One of the most moving things that has ever happened to me, happened to me in Louisiana. I was with Tommy Tenney. And we went to a church, late at night after his Board Meeting. We went over to a church in Louisiana that has had a perpetual prayer meeting going - this almost sounds unbelievable - for over thirty years - Not one moment for over thirty years, through holidays, or whatever, has there not been people in the church praying...twenty-four hours a day for the past thirty years.

We went at around 1:00 in the morning and there were six people in the church praying. It boggled my mind that they've been doing this not for a year or twenty-one days. They've been doing this for thirty plus years.

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The next day Tommy said, "I want you to meet the person who started that." She was an old saint of God. An old, old woman of God - Had gray hair pulled back into a little bun - She just looked like one of those prayer warrior Grannys, if you know what I mean.

He introduced her to me. And then she laid her hands on me and prayed for me. And it was the most moving thing. He said, "Let me tell you how this prayer meeting started."

"Her son is now the Pastor of the Church. But she made a vow to God on his birthday. Every year she would shut herself in the church on his birthday, every year, from sun up to sun down. And she would call his name out in prayer and pray for him exclusively all day and fast all day and pray every day on his birthday." And he's over fifty years old and that woman has never missed his birthday. She goes to the church, shuts herself in, and prays and fasts and has done it for over fifty years.

He has become a great Preacher...a great man of God. But even greater than that, Bill Clinton, when he was Governor of Arkansas, was invited to this man's church to see his Messiah Play at Christmas time. And he came and was so moved by it that he started flying in every year. And even when he became President, he would fly down with some of his Staff, and they would go to this church to see this powerful Christmas drama. And he began, the President of the United States, the most powerful man on the planet, began to hook up with this country Preacher in Louisiana.

They became close personal friends until the problems arose in the White House and the moral situation that President Clinton got in. One of the first people he called was this man who had a Mama, who every day on his birthday, would shut herself into the church and pray and call that boy's name out. And say, "God, use him. I'm fasting. I'm praying for my little one. Use him. Use him. I pray you'll do great things with him."

And I believe that's the reason that man was flown to the White House – and to this day, is ministering to the Clintons in a powerful way! You quit worrying about all the stuff you don't like or whatever. Just know that God has somebody praying and a prayer warrior is connected to that situation.

But it just boggled my mind. Maybe that doesn't move anybody like it does me. But to think that a mother can lock herself in and fast and pray and God can take her son and cause him to become the spiritual voice in the life of the most powerful man on the planet at that time! How awesome is that?

Dad, I know you love your children. I know you would die for them. I know you want to give them everything. But can I tell you one of the most awesome things you can do is lay a foundation for many generations. O this text and fast for the little one's. How awesome would it be if hundreds of Dad's – the spiritual leaders of their homes – would say, "I'm not perfect and I have a lot of flaws. And I'm not super spiritual, but you know what? I love my family! And I'm going to call my children's name out in prayer. I'm going to hold my grandbabies up before the Lord. And I'm going to lay a foundation that's going to break through all this stuff that's sent to destroy our kid's."

How awesome would that be if you would rise to the occasion and fast and pray for twenty-one days for your little ones?

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How awesome would it be if mothers, on the birthday of their kids, somehow besides giving them presents and birthday cakes, you gave them a time of fasting and prayer on their birthday... and did nothing but pray for each one of them on that day? What could Hell do to them that the foundation couldn't handle?

I challenge you, mother. They were headed on a treacherous journey, if you read the rest of that story. In verse 23: "So we fasted and besought our God for this and He was entreated of us" - He did it. But if you read that whole chapter, it says, "There were robbers and bandits". It was a treacherous journey.

When we send our kid's to school. When we send our kids off to college, they're on a treacherous journey. But there's going to be a difference between those who have been shielded and covered in prayer and fasting. There's going to be a difference. You hear me? There's going to be a difference in our kids!

I read this week that Dr. Cho, who Pastors the largest church in Korea - seven hundred and fifty thousand members - every year, there are fifteen hundred teenagers. And the reason there's only fifteen hundred is that's all they can accommodate at Prayer Mountain who go for seven days - teenagers - who go for seven days. Lock themselves in cabins. And the cabins have nothing but a bed, an altar, a Bible and a lot of water. And they fast and they pray for seven days.

And twenty years ago only 2% of that Nation was Christian. Today over 40% of South Korea is born again Christians. And it started with teenagers. You're not too young to fast. You need to know God's direction for your life.

I want every one of you teenagers that are going to join the fast, I want you to get out of your seat, and I want you to come. I want you to come. God's going to do something awesome in this Church and in this Nation. Oh, God. We worship You. We worship You Lord.

You weren't created for drugs. You weren't created to party. There's something so much greater attached to your life. There's something so much bigger that God's dreaming over your life. That stuff will use you. That stuff will waste you. But God's really got a plan for your life and you're going to make contact with it. He will not turn you away if you'll fast and pray. It'll do a mighty work in you.

I want you teenagers to raise your hands up and lift your hands and say, "God, this year, I'm serious about coming after You. Do a work in my life. Do a mighty work.

Maybe you came here, and you're not even saved and you're thinking, "this is the weirdest Church I've ever been to in my life. These people are on drugs. They're talking about not eating for twenty-one days." Well we're not. We're talking about partial fast, and if God leads you to do different, then do it, but partial fast. We are talking about seriously seeking God's face.

"Disrupting business as usual", that's what fasting does. It disrupts business as usual. I don't want this year to be business as usual. Is anybody hearing God in that? God, something in me is crying out. Something in me is saying, "This is an urgent, urgent moment. I don't want business as usual."

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Father, I see the beginnings of a great awakening in this Nation and the nations of the world. You only needed a hundred and twenty in the Upper Room. Would You please do something awesome in our lives this year? We want You! Give us the way we should go. Deliver our little ones, bless our substance and give us Your presence like we've never had before.

Father, I pray for every person under the sound of my voice that they will successfully enter into this Fast, hear Your voice, be obedient and complete it with great victory knowing that what they've done has caught Your attention.

In Jesus' Mighty Name, you are blessed for the Fast. Are you ready for it?