



The Call to Fast (Part 1)

Have you ever felt strongly that something was supposed to happen? You were so sure you had heard from God? You waited, you prayed, you waited some more, and nothing. Then the questions started: Did I miss God? Was that just me? Why isn't anything happening?

In Mark Chapter 9, a father brought his son to nine of Jesus' disciples. The boy was demonized and epileptic, and even though the disciples had healed people before, they couldn't heal him. When the disciples brought the boy to Jesus and he was healed, they asked Jesus this question, "**Why couldn't we do it?**" Jesus answers in verse 29, "**This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting.**"

The Benefits of Fasting

There are things that God desires to happen in our lives and ministry that won't happen unless we fast. Fasting breaks strongholds, liberates people, and moves us into a realm of realizing God's power in our lives.

The more time you're spending with God, the more you're going to see the hand of God on your life in an extraordinary way. Like the disciples, there are things that God wills for us to do that we will not have the power to bring about unless we have spent time with Him.

What is Biblical Fasting?

Fasting is abstaining from food (or other things) in order to give ourselves to prayer and fellowship with the Lord.

The Bible mentions three kinds of fasts:

1. **Absolute Fast:** No food or water.
2. **Normal Fast:** Abstaining from food.
3. **Partial Fast:** Daniel's fast – abstaining from meat, sweets, bread or you can only eat bread.

Jesus makes the assumption that we will fast.

Should All Christians Fast?

Matthew 6:16a, “and **when you fast...**” (ESV)

Matthew 9:15, “*The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, **and then they will fast.***” (ESV)

Jesus makes the assumption that His followers will fast. Notice, that it’s “when” not “if.” **Fasting is an essential of the Christian life**, and Jesus understands that the absence of fasting will make us spiritually feeble.

Why is Fasting Such a Struggle?

But, we like to eat! If fasting is so important, why is it so hard?

The Esau Syndrome

We can literally eat ourselves out of God’s will.

Hebrews 12:16, “Watch out for the Esau syndrome: trading away God’s lifelong gift in order to satisfy a short-term appetite.” (MSG)

Esau comes in and says, “I am willing to sacrifice spiritual (and physical) blessing on the altar of my immediate appetite.” There are some blessings from God you and I will never receive unless we dethrone what commentator Matthew Henry called, “King Stomach.”

The Physical and Spiritual Battle

As we fast, there will be physical challenges along the way. Some may experience a caffeine headache, some may not feel well. For most there is more than just a little detoxing happening in our bodies. **But the battle is more than physiological; as we fast a spiritual battle is being waged.** Things are happening in the spiritual realm that we neither perceive nor understand outside of God revealing those things to us.

The Power of Prayer

It’s important to remember that **fasting is more than just missing a meal.** Powerful seasons of fasting are experienced when we **plan to spend additional time in God’s presence as we fast.** As well, purpose now that every hunger pang, every feeling of fatigue, and every caffeine headache will be a reminder to call on God in that moment and to cry out for those things you are seeking Him to do in your life. David Mathis says, “[Fasting] is a desperate measure, for desperate times, among those who know themselves desperate for God.”

But don’t just focus on the battle or the pain – Scriptures promises **there is fullness of joy in God’s presence** and there are pleasures at His right hand. Delight yourself in seeking Him and you’ll know the joy of seeing Him work in your life.

The Call to Fast (Part 2)

Why should we fast?

The Bible lists a variety of reasons for engaging in a fast.

1. Fasting Helps Secure Favor in Situations

Nehemiah 1:4, “As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, *and I continued fasting and praying* before the God of heaven.” (ESV)

Nehemiah 1:11, “O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, *and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.* Now I was cupbearer to the king.” (ESV)

The story of Nehemiah is a vibrant example of the favor that comes with denying ourselves for the purpose of drawing near to God.

2. Fasting Prepares Us for New Seasons of Life

1. Moses fasted before he received the law
2. Jesus fasted prior to the start of His earthly ministry
3. Paul fasted before the start of his missionary ministry

Acts 13:2, “While they were worshiping the Lord *and fasting*, the Holy Spirit said, ‘set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’” (ESV)

3. Fasting Gives Us Greater Awareness of God’s Presence

Isaiah 58:8-9a, “Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, *and he will say, ‘Here I am.’*” (ESV)

There is a unique spiritual sensitivity that comes through prayer and fasting. Fasting has a way of quieting our heart. Fasting helps us to hear from the Lord. If you are struggling to discern God’s voice, one of the best things you can do is fast!

4. Fasting helps us Discern God’s Will and Breaks Satan’s Grip

Daniel 10:1-4a, “In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel (who was called Belteshazzar). Its message was true and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the message came to him in a vision. *At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over. On the twenty-fourth day of the first month....*” (NIV)

Daniel fasted 3 weeks, 21 days and, humanly speaking, it appeared nothing had happened!

Daniel 10:4, “On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris,” (NIV)

Notice that the first day of the fast the answer was on its way. Daniel didn't see or hear anything for 24 days; but Heaven heard, and his answer was on its way from the very first day.

Did God answer Daniel?

Daniel fasted 3 weeks, 21 days and, humanly speaking, it appeared nothing had happened!

Daniel 10:5-9, "I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; those who were with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground." (NIV)

When you fast, you are going to see God show up in the midst of your situation.

Daniel 10:10-11a, "A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, 'Daniel, you who are highly esteemed....'" (NIV)

When you fast and pray, Heaven takes note. When you say, "I want God's blessing more than I want food," the Lord will help you.

Daniel 10:11b-12, "...consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you.' And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling. Then he continued, 'Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.'" (NIV)

Notice that the first day of the fast the answer was on its way!

Daniel 10:13-14, "But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come." (NIV)

The reward is worth the struggle.

Those verses remind us that when we are fasting there is a spiritual battle taking place. The struggles of fasting are not just physical. As we fast and pray we are doing spiritual warfare. Satan would love nothing more than for you to give up. Whatever your need is you can be sure of this, God responds to His people when they respond to him. If you want to see God's power in your life and in your situation, set your heart on seeking him. **As you draw near to him through fasting and prayer – you will see God do extraordinary things in your life.**
