

WHY DO WE FAST - Part 2

As I said last Sunday, as we spend our time and effort over this season of 21 days of prayer and fasting, this is NOT just a spiritual discipline— this is a holy invitation.

This is a deliberate and transformative journey to encounter the living God in a way that reshapes your heart and positions your life to have an encounter with the Holy of Holies....

From Abraham to Moses, from the prophets to the early church, history reveals that the greatest moves of God always began with a personal encounter of courageous obedience. **AMEN!!!!**

Lets talk about Moses this morning as he was a man of God who fasted and prayed as God encountered him and used him mightly.

Exodus 7:8 Aaron's Staff turns into a serpent!

Exodus 7:14 Water turns into blood

Exodus 8:1 Frogs over the land

Exodus 8:16 the plague of Insects

Exodus 9:1 Egyptian livestock dies

Exodus 9:8 The Plague of boils

Exodus 10:1 The Plague of Locusts

Exodus 10:21 Darkness over the land for three days
no SUN!

Exodus 12:1 the passover Lambs blood over the doors as the first born are dead.

Exodus 14:1 Pharaoh Pursues them

Exodus 14:13 The Sea Divides as they pass to safety

Exodus 15:22 The Lord Provides Water

Exodus 16:8 The Lord Provides Meat

Exodus 19:1 Moses on Sinai

Moses encountered God through prayer and fasting for 40 days on Mount Sinai and was empowered to lead the people through the wilderness and toward the promised land. And gave us the Ten Commandments.

So the Israelite's have experienced miracles to miracles and when Moses was on mount Sinai they started praying to the golden calf.

My point is that miracles are amazing and I LOVE them, but fasting is for deeper relationships and encounters not miracles...

Through relationship we can see miracles and answer's to prayer but the reason to fasting and praying is getting closer to JESUS!

He is inviting us into something far greater than a miracle:

Think about this "Jesus Christ" wants a personal, life-altering encounter with you.

Over the next 21 days, our prayer is that you won't just experience His work, but that you will encounter Him.

Darlene and I are already praying that **He** will expand your heart with His love, sharpen your vision with His Kingdom purpose, and awaken a deeper hunger for His presence than ever before.

WHAT IS FASTING?

Its purpose is to spend focused time in prayer and the study of God's Word, seeking to align our lives with God's will.

Ultimately, fasting is more about replacing than abstaining.

It is filling our lives with God's Word instead of with food.

It is a physical expression of our spiritual hunger for God and His righteousness.

Fasting has a way of sharpening our souls and making us more sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

“Fasting is not about changing God.

It is not a mystical exercise to gain God's approval.

Fasting is not about changing your world, but about letting God realign your heart toward His purposes.”

So we are seven days into fasting, so you should have picked your fast?

1. Pick your fast.

- ✓ Daniels Fast - Maintaining a very certain diet
- ✓ Full Fast: Drink liquids only.
- ✓ Partial Fast: Not eating one or two meals on a specific day or abstaining from certain kinds of food.
- ✓ All-day Food Fast: Abstaining from food one day or multiple days per week.
- ✓ Activity/Media Fast: Forgoing a time-consuming activity such as entertainment, hobbies, television, internet, sports, etc.

2. Set goals and write them down.

- ✓ Begin with clear personal desires as well as prayers for your church. Be specific.
- ✓ Pray and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Write these requests in a journal, notebook, or create a digital journal.

- ✓ Keeping a journal throughout your fast can help you track, remember, and celebrate all God does during your fast.

3. Feast on the Word of God.

- ✓ Fasting is replacing the daily intake of food with focused times of prayer, Bible reading, and spiritual listening. (Gospel Truth Network GTN APP or Bethel.Online APP)

4. Open your heart and life before Jesus.

- ✓ Make time to examine your life and discover where God is wanting you to grow this year.
- ✓ Pray for yourself, family, friends, neighbors, small group, church, church leadership, country, the world, etc.

5. Expect God to move.

- ✓ Enter your fast by faith.

The Word of God says in Hebrews 11:6, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for the one who comes to God must believe that He exists, and that He proves to be One who rewards those who seek Him.”

- ✓ Spiritual fasting is a supernatural practice that has shaped and transformed God’s people for centuries.

- ✓ If you experience doubt, ask God to meet you in it and to lead you in overcoming it, just as the apostles prayed in Luke 17:5 **“INCREASE OUR FAITH”!**

As you begin your fast do it with a **grateful heart**, from the place of THANKSGIVING! Do you realize you are fasting because you have plenty?

Each day is a day of thankfulness, expectation, and meeting Jesus in a deeper way.

So lets look at day seven.....

DAY 7. PATIENCE AND ENDURANCE

You are ending the first week of your three weeks of prayers for the Daniel Fast; you have displayed determination and commitment! Today, ask God for patience and endurance to continue, to finish the “race” and push on every day, even when it is just plain difficult. He will answer that prayer.

Thank You, God, for helping me through the first week of the fast, You are my reason for living and my desire is to know You. Help me today and the next two weeks of the fast to endure because Your Word tells me that perseverance produces character and character produces hope. And hope never disappoints us because You have poured out Your love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. (Romans 5:4, 5)

Thank You for patience, I am confident that comes from above, Lord, it is not in my nature to be patient. But Your Word and Your presence encourage me that all things are in Your time; Your

timing is always perfect but it is rarely what I think it should be. Help me to trust You and You alone; I know You are for me. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 8. IDOLS

Beginning your second week of prayers for the Daniel Fast, ask God to reveal areas in your life that need to be pruned and weeded out. Are you harboring idols that you don't even realize have impacted your walk with the Savior? Sure, you aren't bowing before a golden statue every day but what about things that take up too much of your time? Pray and fast today for those things that are taking up room in your heart to be replaced by love for the things of God.

Jesus, You are my strength and my song, You have become my salvation! Help me today to see things in my life that have become idols, even those I am not aware of. Reveal them to me, things that consume my time, things that fight for my attention and are total time wasting distractions. Help me to recognize the stumbling blocks that the enemy may put in my way, hoping I may trip and fall. But according to Your Word, when I fall, I shall arise!

I put my hope in You alone to strengthen me to replace those distractions with spiritually life-giving truths. May I fill my home, my heart and my mind with the good things of God that I may be continually reminded of all the blessings I am missing when I choose things over You. Blessed be the Name of the Lord, Amen.

DAY 9. RENEW, RESTORE

There are many benefits to fasting but the bottom line is that it empties us of ourselves and points our weary souls to Christ. He alone is able to heal, restore, renew and refresh us in His Spirit, and yet, there are some things that we may not see God do right

away. Trust Him today to know what is best for you and believe Him for every big and little thing.

Thank You today, Father, for the declaration in Your Word that fasting and prayer go together. If I am not spending time with You, it is just another healthy way of eating. I need healing in my body, in my mind, in my spirit. Please refresh, renew, and restore me as I humble myself in Your presence. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me! This is where I gain that strength to continue on with the fast; through worship and prayer.

Lord, I trust in You with all my heart and lean not on my own understanding. In all of my ways I submit myself to You, knowing You alone will make my paths straight. Amen.

DAY 10. OBEDIENCE

Obedience is difficult at times and yet necessary in all things of God. The Lord promises us great benefits if we obey! Deuteronomy 28 declares that all these blessings will come upon you if you obey His voice. Ask God to help you to be obedient, take away the human characteristic of stubbornness and rebellion and replace it with humble obedience. Then pray the rest of that group of scripture in Deuteronomy in the first person; make it your own!

Jesus, I thank You for showing me things in my life that I need to work on, things that may be hidden in my heart and so much a part of my nature that I don't even realize how they have changed me and inhibited me from being all I can be in Christ.

Help me to be humbly obedient, knowing that blessings flow in the life of the child of God who can readily submit to You being Lord in their life. Your Word declares I will be blessed in the city, I will be blessed in the field. My children and all that I consider mine will be

blessed. Wherever I go and whatever I do will be blessed by the Lord Most High if I keep my eyes on You and let You be Lord in my life. I am forever thankful, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 11. RELATIONSHIP

It's not religion; it's relationship! Do you really know God or do you just know about Him? "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8. Communication with God, including a listening ear, is the best way to develop that most necessary relationship.

I'm so very thankful, precious Lord, to be able to have a relationship with the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords! You alone are worthy to be praised, high and lifted up! I desire today to know You, not just know about You. I make it my mission to come before You every day, asking for Your strength and wisdom, longing to come into true fellowship with You. Help me to not just ramble on and dump a list of requests in Your lap but may I take the time to listen to Your voice. Your Word declares that Your sheep KNOW Your voice and another they will not follow. Thank you for the opportunities afforded me every single day to truly come into meaningful, life-giving relationship with You, the only One who has sacrificed His life for me that I might not just live but live abundantly. Thank You, Jesus, Amen.

DAY 12. THE WORD

Immersing ourselves daily in The Word of God is as necessary for the spiritual man as food and water are for the physical. Martin Luther said it well, "The Bible is alive; it speaks to me. It has feet; it runs after me. It has hands; it lays hold of me!" Ask God today to give you a love for His Word, to breathe a deep desire to embrace it, inhale it and apply it to every area of your life.

Lord, You declare that the Word of God is powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword and able to pierce my heart. Why, then, do I neglect to make time for the studying of the most powerful book in my home? Life is there, strength is readily available, encouragement, wisdom, direction, comfort and on and on. I need a love for the Word, a love for the instruction manual You have left for us. In it are the answers to ALL of life's problems and the keys to eternal life! Help me to realize I need it as much as the air I breathe and the water I consume. I must have it; I must crave it if I am to be effective in this world and to be ready to meet You in the next. It is in Your Name I pray, Amen.

DAY 13. PRAY THE SCRIPTURE

One of the most powerful things you can do while praying and fasting is to pray the scriptures. Daniel's prayer in the 51st Psalm is a great example of how to do that. Just apply a Psalm, or another example of a prayer in the Bible, to your own life, even inserting your own name or just pray in the first person. It is powerful! God will bring things to your mind as you pray the prayer of another and catapult you into deep prayer and praise.

Oh God, Everlasting Father, I ask You today to create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit in me. Cast me not away from Your presence; and take not Your holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; hold me up with Your free spirit. O Lord, open my lips; and my mouth will give You praise! (Psalm 51)

You have searched me and You know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from far away. You hem me in—behind and before; You have laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain! Search me O God, and know my heart; test me and know my

anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Amen. (Psalm 139)

DAY 14. WRESTLING THE ENEMY

You're now completing your second week of prayers for the Daniel Fast. The enemy doesn't fear you going to church but he does fear you when you hit your knees. When the angel Gabriel came to David to strengthen him and answer his prayers he told him that his prayer was heard the FIRST DAY but he was engaged in spiritual warfare to get to him. You may not see the answers to your prayers right away, but rest in the knowledge that God is working all things for your ultimate good.

Jesus, the Word declares that we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, or people, we are really wrestling, or fighting, with the enemy of our souls. The Word of God is our Sword, we fight, we win, by declaring Your Word. Because You have overcome the world, we can do the same when we humble ourselves in prayer and fasting. No weapon formed against me shall prosper! You fight for me, and I have read the back of The Book...we win! Thank You for victory today, remind me throughout the day that the battle belongs to You and You are more than victorious, Conquering King! I love and appreciate You today, Lord, and every day for all that You have given me to live an overcoming life. In Your Name, Amen.