

Introduction:

- We start a 21 day fast this Tuesday. I encourage you to fast the evening meal on the 6th. It does make it easier to begin your fast this way.
 - I find it interesting that the start of our fast is the start of the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah.
 - And the 8th is Yom Kippur–Day of Atonement.
 - This first week is about positioning our hearts before God. Let this be a week where you are God conscious of who you are in Christ.
- My goal this morning is to give you practical understanding on fasting and to answer questions you may be asking. Let's begin with the Word:
 - *"But **when you fast**, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you."* (Matthew 6:17-18, NLT)
 - *"One day the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked him, "Why don't your disciples fast like we do and the Pharisees do?" Jesus replied, "Do wedding guests mourn while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and **then they will fast.**"* (Matthew 9:14-15, NLT)
- Down through the centuries, godly people who have done mighty things for the Lord have testified to the necessity of prayer with fasting. John Wesley, who shook the world for God during the First Great Awakening, which gave rise to the Methodist Church toward the end of the eighteenth century, is representative of such great spiritual leaders. John Wesley so believed in this power that he urged early Methodists to fast and pray every Wednesday and Friday. He felt so strongly about fasting those two days a week that he refused to ordain anyone in Methodism who wouldn't agree to do it.

I. What is Spiritual Fasting? See: <https://www.houseoffreedom.org/fast-2021.html>
(handout on fasting)

- A. It is intentionally abstaining from eating food for the purpose of praying and fellowshiping with God. When we fast, we use meal times or time we spend eating to pray and seek God. Fasting is abstinence from food. Even the medical profession knows that. I.e. If you go to the doctor and he wants to do labs on you he asks that you fast 12 hours. That means no food only water. He doesn't say fast TV, though he might say you need to quit watching TV and exercise.
- B. Types of fasts.
 1. Total fast: Most fasts in the Bible were fasting food and liquids, except water.
 2. Partial fast: Daniel fast – fasting of meat and delicacies. Eat only vegetables.
 3. Partial fast may also be one meal a day, or fasting dinner.
- C. How will you fast?

1. One meal a day?
 2. Salad a day? A bowl of soup a day? IE. I like fasting liver! LOL!
 3. Total fast?
 4. Mix it up: Veggies first week; soup the second; and total fast the last week.
 5. You choose, I will not dictate how you fast, I want you to participate.
- D. We abstain from food to purposely pray and to worship....not just to go hungry. Though you may lose weight, that is not our purpose. The purpose is to encounter God.
- E. Questions on fasting:
1. What if I eat? Don't quit your fast. Start again. Honestly, I have broken fasts: I forgot and ate. I intentionally ate. In a moment of weakness, I ate. But every time I started over.
 2. What if I have to eat to take medication? Listen to your doctor and eat. Just don't go to a buffet to do it. Eat enough to keep from getting nauseous.
 3. What about my kids? We always encouraged our boys to join in our corporate fasts at some capacity. Smaller portions, veggies only, one meal a day, etc. By doing it together as a family and praying over family prayer targets, you get to see God answer prayers which encourages everyone.
 4. It is my friends birthday??? Sometimes it is easier to lightly eat than to answer tons of questions. Sometimes these are great moments to answer those questions when you do not eat at a party. And many times people will not ever notice that you are not eating. Then celebrate! The key is to not get into religious bondage while at the same time continuing in your fast.

II. What Are Our Prayer Targets?

A. Week 1

1. **Day 1-3:** Personal repentance, honesty before the Lord, abiding in Him. Ps 51:10; 51:17. Ps 84:5. Ps 27:8. Jn 15. We allow the Holy Spirit and the Light of the Word deep into our lives. Worship Jesus *The Gospel of Identity*.
2. **Day 4-7:** Going deeper with God. Ps 119: 25,40,88,156; 143:11; Ps 42:7; Eph 1:17; John 17:24; 2 Thes 2:14. This is a "blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" time. Clarify your identity in Him. Focus on who you are not on your sins.

B. Week 2

3. **Day 8-10:** Think on the fate of those separated from God. Luke 16:19-31; Pray for salvation of the lost. Luke 15; Pray for Holy Spirit conviction to increase upon their lives. Jn 16:8; Acts 16:30; Acts 2:37. To convict means "to convince someone of

the truth; to reprove; to accuse, refute, or cross-examine a witness." The Holy Spirit acts as a prosecuting attorney who exposes evil, reproves evildoers, and convinces people that they need a Savior.

4. **Day 11-14:** "Revive your church, Father!" "Awaken a nation!" Luke 18:1; 1 Thes 5:17; 1 Kings 18:39*; We are asking God to have mercy on America by reviving the church and awakening a nation.

C. **Week 3**

5. **Day 15:** Let today be a day of praise! Praise Him for who He is! Praise opens prison doors! Acts 16:25,26; Ps 149.
6. **Day 16:** Today, declare that your family prospers relationally, financially, emotionally and spiritually.
7. **Day 17:** Today, declare that prodigals come home. Luke 15:11-20.
8. **Day 18:** Today, declare favor on our nations children. Ps 5:12; 107:8; Mt 19:14
9. **Day 19:** Today, declare truth and integrity in our media, and entertainment industries.
10. **Day 20:** Today, declare justice in our land. Luke 18:1-8; Ps 89:14; 97:2.
11. **Day 21:** Today, declare Deut 28:1-14; And rejoice that you get to eat tonight! Praise Him!!!

D. **Try doubling the amount of time you spend praying in the Spirit.**

E. **Book(s) to read:**

- Tale of Three Kings – Gene Edwards. Growing in the character and heart of David.
- The Gospel of Identity - Mike Petzer. Order at MichaelCPetzer@gmail.com \$15/copy
- Release of the Spirit - Watchman Nee.

F. Prayer targets specific for Freedom Christian Center

1. Young families and young adults.
2. For souls.
3. Keys to our community. People, needs, etc.
4. Fire of God - on us and in us!

G. Personal Prayer Targets - All through the fast present your personal petitions before God. Identify prayer targets for yourself and your family.

III. We Need To Fast, Why?

- A. Bill Bright gives seven reasons to fast. Note to self: weight loss, better health, detox are not in his list. The fasting we are talking about today is a spiritual fast for the purpose of time with God.
 1. Fasting is a biblical way **to truly humble oneself** in the sight of God. (PS. 35:13;

EZRA 8:21). This was primary way of fasting in scripture and church history. Humility is an attitude of the heart. The Scripture says, "*A broken and contrite heart--these, O God, You will not despise*" (Psalm 51:17 NKJV). God will hear us and respond to our cry when we come before Him in humility and brokenness--acknowledging and repenting of our sins, and asking Him to cleanse us by the blood of Jesus and to fill us with His Holy Spirit.

- a) *"But I, when they were sick-- I wore sackcloth; I afflicted myself with fasting; I prayed with head bowed on my chest."* (Psalm 35:13, ESV)
 - b) *"Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions."* (Ezra 8:21, NKJV) Many times in scripture fasting was a response to crisis.
 - c) In his book *Fasting*, author and teacher Derek Prince describes fasting as "*a tremendous lesson in establishing who is the master and who is the servant. Remember, your body is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master.*" And, according to Galatians 5:17, the flesh, or carnal nature, always strives to be in control. Jesus said flesh counts for nothing Jn 6:63.
2. Fasting brings revelation by the Holy Spirit of a persons true spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance and change.
 3. Fasting is a crucial means for personal revival because it brings the inner working of the Holy Spirit into play in a most unusual powerful way.
 4. Fasting helps us better understand the word of God by making it more meaningful, vital, and practical.
 5. Fasting transforms prayer into a richer and more personal experience.
 6. Fasting can result in dynamic personal revival ...being filled with the Spirit and regaining a strong sense of spiritual determination. ie. Nehemiah
 7. Fasting can restore the loss of one's first love for the Lord. He is away...lets fast! MT 9:14-15.
- B. Key take away: Fasting, according to these seven reasons, brings us into a closer, more meaningful relationship with God. The closer you are the more you experience His presence. The closer you are to God the less hold unbelief will have on you.
1. In Mt 9:14-ff Jesus is asked about fasting. His answer to their question reveals some things about fasting.
 - a) The Pharisee's kind of fasting involved mourning. Jesus basically said, "You can't mourn when the bridegroom is with you. The King of the Kingdom is here so celebrate. The Kingdom is at hand...this is good news not sad. The Kingdom is here we are not waiting its arrival."
 - b) The New fast: The King will go away and then you will fast. Why? Because you

will long for Him to return. There will be both sadness in absence and longing at the same time. John Piper said it this way: *"We have tasted the powers of the age to come, and our fasting is not because we are hungry for something we have not experienced, but because the new wine of Christ's presence is so real and satisfying. We must have all that is possible to have. ...The new fasting, the Christian fasting is a hunger for all the fullness of God."* (John Piper, *Hunger for God*, p 42). Nov 2019 Dream: Found Lottery ticket, lost. "You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart." Jer. 29:11

2. When the Bridegroom is away then they will fast. Why? Because they long for His tangible presence.
3. When we long for His presence, His Spirit woos us and surrounds us with His presence. (Three of our 7 reasons for fasting speaks of the Holy Spirit.) The seven reasons all have to do with our relationship/intimacy with Him!

IV. Fasting in the Face of Fear So many fears that people are dealing with right now.

- A. Jehoshaphat was afraid. vs 3
- B. Called a fast throughout all Judah. vs. 3, 4
- C. Jahaziel prophesies "do not be afraid, or dismayed, the battle is God's not yours. Believe the Lord and believe his prophets. vs 20
- D. They put the praisers out front of the army.
- E. The Enemy killed themselves. vs. vs24
- F. It took three days to haul away the plunder. vs 25
- G. There was quiet in Judah and God gave Jehoshaphat rest all around. vs. 30

Conclusion:

- As you fast, my prayer for you is that you, like Jehoshaphat, would have peace all around.