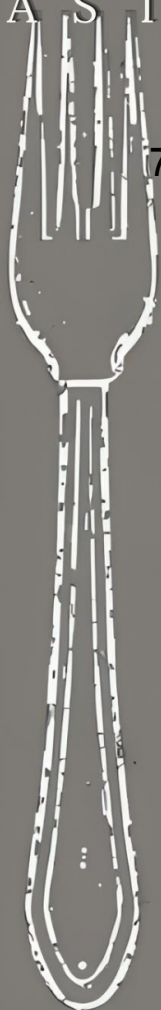


FAST Fast Forward FORWARD

7 - DAY PRAYER AND
FASTING JOURNAL



7-DAY PRAYER AND FASTING
JOURNAL



GLENN USRY

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Fasting Day 1: Necessary

“Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.” - Job 23:12

Fasting is a challenge because we are willfully denying our body a basic need for survival. Yet it is a necessary practice for believers periodically since it reminds us that there is something more important for our survival; that is, hearing from God.

Food can quench the appetite of the body, but it does nothing to counteract the attacks of the devil. While under assault by the enemy Job states to those judging his situation: “I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12b).

Because Job felt that hearing from God was more important to his destiny than eating, he was able to overcome the death of his children, the failing health of his body, the questioning of his friends, the ruin of his fortune, and the anger of his wife. In fact, he received double for his troubles!

As we *fast forward*, let’s build a habit of hungering for His word in reading, meditating, and praying daily. Let’s crave it like we crave snacks, drinks, and meals. When we finally eat let’s not do so as pigs, never looking up. Let’s thank God like crazy for his provision!

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Fasting Day 2: Spirit Led

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (1 John 2:16)

It's not a bad thing to follow a fast that is a part of our church tradition. Yet it should never simply be a ritual that has no particular purpose outside of just being religious. The best fasting is not done out of ritual, but is led by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit always has a soul goal. In one instance He led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Understanding the need to be at the “top of His game” spiritually for such an encounter, Jesus fasted for 40 days in His battle against what John calls “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”.

It was not fasting alone that gave Jesus victory over the enemy, but it was His relationship with the Father through His word. During no part of Satan's temptation did Jesus attempt to use wit, position, or philosophy on Satan. Although He outranked the enemy by more than leaps and bounds-- He never pulled rank. He simply pulled the word out of His consecration and hit him three successful times with: “It is written” (Matthew 4:4a). He used the Word so accurately that Satan left Him for a season.

During this fast, let's spend time in the Word and allow the Holy Spirit to direct us. Let's prayerfully evaluate where we are in our own battle against "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life". Let's not simply do this as a religious obligation. Instead, let's build up on our meditation time in scripture so we will be able to confidently know His word have we hid in our hearts, that we might not sin against Him (Psalms 119:11).

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Fasting Day 3: Turn Up!

Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

- Mark 17:21

One of the great accomplishments during pure fasting and prayer is the manifestation of God's power. We need His power because we can do nothing in our own power; especially in areas where the enemy has set up spiritual strongholds.

If just being an average church goer was enough to overcome the enemy, Jesus never would have rebuked His disciples for their inability to cast a demon out of a man's son in Mark 17:14-21. Jesus was so upset that he shouted out: "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long will I suffer you? Bring him hither to me" (Mark 17:17b).

His disciples had gotten confident in their own credentials as followers to the point that they tried to overpower a high ranking demonic entity in their own strength. After complete failure and embarrassment they asked Jesus, "Why could we not cast him out?". In turn, Jesus explained that if they had faith, nothing would be impossible to them. Yet the force they encountered was the kind that required them to take their prayer and reliance on God up a notch saying

“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting”.

During this consecration let’s remember a major point of prayer and fasting is deepening our relationship and reliance on God to do what we cannot possibly do by ourselves. The difference between hot water and boiling water is one degree. So if we are going to believe God for greater, we don’t need to be casual, lukewarm, and lethargic. We need to turn up!

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16b).

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Fasting Day 4: Can I Take Your Order?

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I called them. — Acts 13:2

If the only thing you do during a called period of fasting is endure it until it's time to eat again, then you may as well start eating. You are wasting your time and energy. Consecrations cannot be cheated. By trying to cheat you only cheat yourself. They are also not for show. They are opportunities for God to show us ourselves, our personal callings, and to give direction with more clarity.

The apostles understood the practice of prayer and fasting was more about relationship than about ritual. When the early church leaders came together it was not about titles and entitlements. As recorded in Acts chapter 13 they came together for the single purpose of worshipping the Lord and humbling themselves. As a result, they clearly heard the Holy Ghost speak and give clear orders from the throne.

When we wait on the Lord through fasting and prayer we are not simply enduring a process. We are taking the position like a waiter or waitress in a restaurant-- they don't come to you telling you what you want. The

good ones make you very comfortable, minister to you, and then ask: “Can I take your order”. During this fast let’s make sure we slow down long enough to minister to the Lord. Let’s make sure we hear and take His order(s) accurately. To be successful in life we are not to determine our paths, we are to discover them. So, like a good waiter or waitress, let’s wait on the Lord. His tipping will leave us speechless.

Today’s Scriptures:

“You have shown me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence” — Psalms 16:11

“In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He will direct thy paths” — Proverbs 3:6

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way” — Psalms 37:23

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint” — Isaiah 39:31

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Fasting Day 5: The Show Stopper

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward — Matthew 6:16

The term hypocrite is derived from a Greek word which literally means *pretender or stage player*. Sad to say, many people today-- as in the times of the disciples-- use religion to demonstrate their acting skills. Too bad they don't give out Oscars in church. There are a lot of great performances that would put Denzel to shame.

Truly, it is more profitable to eat and pray than to fast and play. The only reward for faking being on fire is the applause of people. And unlike God, many people have the tendency to applaud you today and ignore you tomorrow.

Pure fasting is a *show stopper*. Those who do so with the right spirit are not doing it to get brownie points from the pastor or his parishioners. They don't try to look deep and somber in front of other people in an attempt to twist God's arm. Jesus encouraged His followers *to clean up* their acts as it were, stating: "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face. That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father,

which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly”
(Matthew 6:17-18).

During this fast, let’s prayerfully keep a close check on our moods and motives. Even afterwards let’s be sure to fast and pray at times when the church has not called for one; and keep it a secret. God is the only one who has to know. After all, He is the only one who can reward you with that which can never be taken away.

Today’s Scriptures:

“The Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, the Lord looks on the heart” — 1 Samuel 16:7

“Behold, you desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part you shall make me to know wisdom” — Psalms 51:6

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” — Psalms 51:17

“I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments” —Psalms 119:7

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Fasting Day 6: Fast Living

In weariness and painfulness, in watching often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness (2 Corinthians 11:27)

It has been said that “spontaneity is the spice of life.” Well, for some it is and was a way of life. For a multitude of the early church leaders, it was sometimes a matter of life and death.

Paul, as an apostle, constantly found himself in a variety of life-threatening circumstances. In the context of 2 Corinthians 11, he was defending his lifestyle as a true apostle versus those who were false apostles. Those who were not speaking and living the truth lived relatively comfortably and received the applause of men. He on the other hand, for speaking and living the truth often found himself in numerous perils as

recorded in 2 Corinthians 11: 23-33, which included unplanned and unpredictable periods of fasting. Fasting and prayer were not a matter of religious obligation, but were involuntary spiritual responses to natural and demonic opposition to his proclamation of the gospel. He, and many of the persecuted saints, would often have to go without food because in the heat of their trials, there was no food to go with them. Thus, fasting and prayer periods would often be spontaneous. These unpremeditated times of prayer and fasting quickened their spirit to endure while they were simultaneously dying to the impulses of the flesh.

During this fast, let's prayerfully prepare to fast in the future when we are unprepared. This kind of fast living will prepare us to overcome unforeseen situations and add spice to that which the enemy sends to spoil.

Today's Scriptures:

Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered, "How can the guest of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them and they will fast." — Matthew 9:14-15

That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong — 2 Corinthians 12:10

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Fasting Day 7: Fast Forward

*"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?
(Isaiah 58:6)*

A yoke is a device fixed around the neck of farming animals, usually for the purpose of plowing. It is at times used in scripture as a symbol of control, bondage, or servitude of people. The prophet Isaiah particularly used the symbol to rebuke the harsh religiosity of the religious leaders of his day. Religion is the worst kind of bondage. It forces and ties up people to live in obligation through fear. It creates a heaviness that causes them to plow through life in depression. It is a cord that can even make sincere people sincerely wrong. Religion is a chain that doesn't connect people to God, but ironically, separates them from Him.

Because the prophets were called by God to rebuke the practice of religion without relationship they were often the object of ridicule and even attack. Yet prophets like Isaiah remained committed to the truth, even all the way down to fasting. He, to the amazement of the religious, proclaimed that the fast that God had chosen was not about turning over their plates, but turning over their practices. They practiced

control, corruption, and conceit when dealing with people. They made it hard for the people to look up because they were too yoked up.

As we fast forward, let's break the cords off the mindset that we fast to impress God. He is not impressed. He wants relationships, not rules. For this reason, He tells His followers fleeing from religious persecution: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29). If fasting is just another rule that makes us unruly and restless with people, then trust and know-- it is not the fast God has chosen.

Today's Scripture:

- Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-- when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. — Isaiah 58:7-8 Note: Read the whole chapter
- Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in

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