



Three Dimensions Of Fasting

Every fast mentioned in the Bible had a burden and a purpose behind it. The burden and purpose are more important to God than the actual act of fasting. There are predominantly three dimensions of fasting in the Bible. The order in which these dimensions are discussed does not depict their level of importance. They are only different aspects of fasting. All believers have the potential to realize these different dimensions of fasting in their lives.

FIRST: PREDETERMINED FAST

The predetermined fast. A fast in which the individual determines the purpose, length and type of fast he or she is going to undertake. This type of fasting is practiced in virtually every culture. A predetermined fast is very helpful in disciplining your flesh and bringing it under subjection to the Spirit of God. It is important to set aside at least one day a week for this type of fasting. This discipline will help you establish a lifestyle of fasting. If you fast at least one day a week, at the end of a year you will have fasted for 52 days. You will have tithed more than 10 percent of your days to God. God cannot overlook men and women who are willing to commit themselves to this extent, for His glory. Consistency in fasting helps to prepare you for greater things in God's kingdom.

The following guidelines can help you determine your purpose and the length of your fast. These are just guidelines. You may need to develop your own guidelines as you experiment with different lengths and disciplines of fasting.

- 1 to 3 day fast aids in subduing fleshly problems and desires, bringing favor, protection, salvation and healing. (Colossians 3:5, Ezra 8:21-31, Esther 4:13-8:11, Acts 9:8-22)
- 3 to 10 day fast aids in breaking yokes in your family, receiving wisdom and understanding. (Esther 4:13-8:11, II Samuel 12:13-14)
- 10 to 21 day fast aids in breaking bands of wickedness and yokes over cities and nations. Brings direction and deliverance, revelation and understanding. (Daniel 1:8-20, 10:2-12:13, Acts 27:9-44)

When fasting for long periods of time, it is prudent to let a spiritual authority or mentor know your intentions. This individual will be able to pray for you and help you through any unforeseen physical or spiritual difficulties.

Are there times when you should break your fast? Yes. There are times when your fasting can be a stumbling block to others. The Apostle Paul said, "When you are bidden to eat, eat whatever is placed in front of you" (1 Corinthians 10:27). He went on to say, "Let no man put a stumbling block or occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Romans 14:13).

Our decisions to break or continue with a fast must be ruled by the law of love, discernment, and discretion. For example, I was in the middle of a long fast, and my neighbor's wedding was approaching. I had made a commitment to attend the ceremony and reception several months before the fast. I thought about calling my neighbor and either not attending or requesting soup, but the Holy Ghost impressed me to go and eat. I attended the reception dinner and ate a delicious meal. My fast continued on schedule the next day. There were no physical ramifications, nor did my hunger return. God took care of every detail.

SECOND DIMENSION: GOD-DETERMINED FAST

The second dimension of fasting is what I will call a God-determined (or Spirit-led) fast. A God-determined fast

consists of a time period when the Spirit of God leads you into fasting for the purpose of hearing from God. It is a consecrated fast accompanied by an intense burden to hear from God. You may or may not know the specific purpose. The length of a God-determined fast is determined by the leading of the Spirit. He may impress upon your heart a certain number of days to fast, or He may not. The fast ends when there is a release of God's burden, and/or the return of hunger.

Moses, Elijah, Ezekiel, and Jesus all participated in God-determined fasts. These fasts were chosen by God to impart knowledge and anointing that would give direction to and determine the destiny of the people of God.

A God-determined fast should never be entered into lightly. It is to be a consecrated and holy period of time. During this type of fast, you will sense a strong desire to remove yourself from the fellowship of others and spend time with the Lord. It involves a time period when everything on your calendar is put on hold, except for those things the Lord gives you permission to do. This type of fasting is only for a season. When the Lord has spoken and His purpose is accomplished, He will lift the burden to fast.

THE THIRD DIMENSION: FASTING UNTIL

Herein lies the secret of receiving answers from God - - waiting. Fasting until, is a fast that entreats and seeks the face of the Lord until the answer comes. It is a humbling of one's soul and waiting upon the Lord until. When a man approaches God to fast until, he is placing his situation whole-heartedly into God's hands. He is laying aside every preconceived notion, selfish desire, and personal motive. He is waiting to hear directly from God. He is trusting solely in God for his answer, and not in man. This type of fast is repeatedly seen in the Bible. King David fasted until he heard whether his son was going to live or die. Although his son's life was taken, God was so moved by the sacrifice and compassion King David displayed, that He granted him another son by Bathsheba, Solomon (the next king of Israel). Daniel sought the Lord until he received understanding of the ages. In the book of Acts, Cornelius fasting until (Acts 10:30) salvation came to his household. The Apostle Paul fasted until for the salvation of those he was sailing with (Acts 27:21-24).

Fasting until is a fast that is based on relationship, not works. When we fast until, two very important attributes are produced in our lives Patience and Trust.

When you seek God to fast until, you need to determine whether or not you are going to eat any food and if so, what types of food and when you are going to eat. If you eat during this time, it should be only for strength and not pleasure. It is wise to pray and ask the Lord's guidance to help determine your plan of action. When the Lord has impressed a plan upon your heart, you are less likely to detour. When you receive your answer from God, the fast is over. You then resume your daily living and do what God has told you to do.

THE POWER OF A WILLING AND MADE UP MIND

"And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind..." I Chronicles 28:9

In every decision a man makes, the human will is involved. When a man truly purposes in his heart and makes up his mind to do something there is nothing that can detour him except death itself.

The power that lies within our human wills "to be" or "not to be" is extraordinary. The human will plays a vital role in our successes and failures in the kingdom of God. The more we are willing to align our will (mind, thoughts, emotions and desires) to the Word of God and submit to His grace (enabling power and divine assistance), the greater our accomplishments will be.

Learn to lean upon God's grace to receive the will and determination you need to fast. Hebrews 4:16, "Let us therefore come boldly before the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need." Fasting is not easy and can be physically challenging, to say the least. Therefore, you always benefit when you purpose in your heart to fast and completely submit your mind to the Spirit (meditating on the Word helps). In so doing, you will

reach your goal.

One of the greatest battles you will ever fight in your walk with God is bringing your mind (will, thoughts, emotions, intellect) under subjection to the Spirit of God (II Corinthians 10:5). Allowing the Spirit to rule your flesh and your mind comes through much breaking of the human will. Fasting aids in developing humility of mind and a poor (broken) spirit.

THE BURDEN

The hour was late and quickly approaching midnight as Jesus led His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane, the weight of eternity for billions of lost souls was descending upon His heart. As they approached the garden the burden became all consuming. Jesus said to His disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me." After separating Himself from His disciples, He collapsed under the weight of sin.

The burden for the eternal destiny of man, since the fall of Adam, consumed every fiber of His being. It was not the facing of death that brought Him to the garden, it was not the expectation of untold suffering that brought Him to the garden, it was the weight of the sins of the world that brought Him to the garden. It was a burden for your soul and my soul and the countless souls of men and women before and after the incarnate life of Jesus. He was making intercession for all transgressors. He was pouring out His soul unto death, even the death of the cross.

When Jesus prayed, "O my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." He was speaking on behalf of His people, who were appointed to the wrath of God because of sin. The cup that Jesus was referring to is the cup of trembling (judgement). For there to be salvation sin had to be judged. Jesus as the Christ (the flesh and blood of the Spirit) was about to take upon Himself the judgment of God for the sins of all mankind: the punishment of God's wrath appointed to sinners. Isaiah 51:22 says, "Thus saith thy Lord, the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again." Psalms 116:13, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD."

As Jesus prayed, the intensity of His burden grew into travail. Why? Could it be because He could hear the cries of countless lost souls pleading for the cup of judgement to pass from them? Could He have seen a vision of all the human spirits in hell waiting for the promise of redemption?

Travail in and of itself is a birthing process. His burden for Jew and gentile caused Him to travail until the Church was birthed into the kingdom of God.

Isaiah 53:12 confirms the purpose of His agonizing, traving prayer in the garden. "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many. For he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he has poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Jesus submitted His flesh to the burden of the Spirit in the garden of Gethsemane. We are the present day fruit of His travail. Today, we are living in the divine overflow of His intercession made in the garden.

We are quickly approaching midnight. The powers of darkness are advancing faster than ever before. Every sign in heaven and earth is pointing to the eastern sky and the soon coming of our Lord. We must watch and pray and not sleep. We must awaken to realize the urgency of the hour. Jesus could have slept with his disciples, but the burden wouldn't let him rest. He wrestled in prayer until He prayed through the burden of the Spirit. We too must wrestle in prayer for all souls who are dying and going to hell. Time is short, and the only earthly treasure that has any eternal value is a soul.

Over and over again we see the importance of a burden realized in the Word of God. Abraham had a burden for Sodom and Gomorrah. He prayed and Lot was saved. Jacob wrestled all night with the angel of the Lord and his name was changed from Jacob (supplanter) to Israel (prince with God). Moses cried out to God, "...If thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, I pray thee blot me out of thy book which thou hast written" (Exodus 32:32). King David had a

burden for his newborn son. He fasted seven days and nights to draw nigh the mercy of God that perhaps the life of his son would be spared. Although his son died, God received King David's supplication and gave him another son, Solomon. Nehemiah received a burden after hearing about the desolation of Jerusalem. He fasted and prayed certain days, repenting and making supplications for the whole nation. This resulted is God using him to rebuild the city.

WHAT IS A BURDEN?

Webster's dictionary defines a burden as "that which is borne with labor or difficulty, that which is grievous, wearisome, or oppressive. The bearing of loads; a birth, also a child in the womb."

When we agree to yoke ourselves with the burden of the Lord's heart, we are taking up our cross and following Him. Our job is to pray the burden of the heart of God. We do this until it lifts from us.

Everything God does, He does through the spoken word. When God has a burden, He looks for a man to speak it and to birth it into existence. God then manifests His creative power by responding to the burden openly.

Hosea 6:6, "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."

In Isaiah chapter 59, we see the state of a nation that failed to recognize the importance of a burden. They were so busy in their daily affairs that God could not find anyone who would carry the burden of His heart so that justice and judgement could be restored to the city.

Even today, truth is falling in our streets and judgement is turned back. Truth and justice no longer rule the hearts and minds of men. "None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity." The burden of God was to restore and to save, but no one would take heed to His heartbeat.

Let us stoop down and yoke ourselves with the heartbeat of Jesus. In light of eternity, we will never know how often our stooping has pulled souls out of a devil's hell.

Jesus is the great intercessor whose eyes go to and fro throughout all the earth seeking for someone who will pray. Someone whom He can show Himself strong through. Jesus is going to use someone to fast and pray His burden, it might as well be you, and it might as well be me.

GOALS DURING A FAST

As previously mentioned, it is needful to have a burden and purpose when you fast. This will be helpful in establishing your burden and purpose for fasting. If you are not clear as to why you are fasting, pray and ask God to impress your heart with a purpose. After establishing a purpose, you can set a goal for your fast. Make sure your purpose and goal are scripturally sound. Isaiah 58 is a good guideline for checking your motives and establishing your purpose.

Although your purpose will change for each fast, brokenness of heart, repentance and salvation of souls are God's first priorities.

Put aside time to maintain prayer and Bible reading when you fast. Prayer and the Lord will strengthen and sustain you throughout your fast. Because fasting is a time of abstinence unto the Lord, when possible, spend extra time praying and meditating on the Word. It is beneficial to search the scriptures before you fast and choose passages you can pray and meditate on while you are fasting. I know a man that sets aside his normal meal times for communion with Jesus while fasting.

The WORD is sustenance (food) for your spiritual man. Eating a balanced diet from the Word of God and drinking from the living waters of the Spirit (prayer), will help you develop a strong walk with God. Daniel said, "They that are strong and do know their God will do exploits!" Daniel 11:32

HINDRANCES TO FASTING

If you have headaches while fasting, decrease your intake of caffeine and eat foods with fewer additives (Monosodium Glutamate has been known to cause headaches). You can help reduce diarrhea and stomach problems by eating carefully before and after a fast.

Often times, your prayer life may seem hindered while fasting. This is because you are releasing toxins and bringing your flesh under subjection to the Spirit. You are also fighting unseen powers that are trying to hinder the results of you fast. Therefore, the most important thing to do is "press on!" Do not be discouraged if you do not see results during your fast. Most of the time, the results will come after you have completed the fast.

Weakness and hunger are a part of fasting. The word of God says, "if we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12). It also says, "they that have suffered in the flesh have ceased from sin" (Peter 4:1). It is important to understand that although it