

Fasting: A Hunger Strike Against Hell

by Shane Idleman

Fasting is a powerful means of spiritual warfare, empowerment, and restoration, and it requires balance and submission to God's will.

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Scripture: Joel 2:12

Topics: "Spiritual Discipline", "Fasting And Prayer"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of fasting as a spiritual discipline to create fertile soil for God to work in our lives. It discusses the need to discern God's will, break bondages, and silence the voice of the flesh through fasting. The speaker shares personal experiences and insights on how fasting can lead to spiritual discernment, humility, and strength in God.

Transcript

The message this morning, the title is fasting over forks, fasting over forks, a hunger strike against hell is what I added there. Now the reason this is so important, I believe a couple different reasons. Anytime you apply spiritual disciplines to your life, it's like farming.

A farmer cannot control the growth of the seed, can he? I explained this last week. What we do is we sow the seed and we provide an environment for that seed to grow. That's why spiritual disciplines are so important.

Fasting, praying, worshipping, reading the Word of God, it's not something you just put on a checklist. It's actually providing fertile soil for God to grow things in our lives. That's what spiritual disciplines are.

This message has been on my heart probably six months. I've read about 15 books in the last six months on this. I've read a lot of scriptural resources.

I've spent a lot of time, there's about 77 or so mentions of fasting and fasted or to fast in the Bible that I've looked at, I've prayed about. It was even a hard night last night. I was excited to get here.

It was 9 o'clock I couldn't go to sleep, 10 o'clock I couldn't go to sleep, 11 o'clock I couldn't go to sleep. I'm like Lord what are you doing here? There's something going on that I could just feel and I could sense because the devil doesn't like when you talk about him and he doesn't like when you talk about spiritual warfare. And this is spiritual warfare.

When the Bible talks about pulling down strongholds, you have something in your life that's a stronghold that you're, God I just can't get rid of this. Nobody in the 9 a.m. service, right? I know everybody, most of us have something. I mean you talk to somebody addicted to nicotine or sugar or caffeine or alcohol and it's a stronghold.

Casting down arguments, doubts against God, how thoughts come in, the enemy plants thoughts. The only way you can overcome that is to prepare with spiritual, the spiritual disciplines with the armor that we are to put on. So fasting is very important and as I was sleeping, trying to sleep last night and wrestling not knowing what's going on, it finally made sense when I dropped over the hill.

Do you know what I saw on my way to church this morning, 545 this morning? Let me show you. All the way to the church parking lot. And I thought, well this is supposed to be, people are like, why are you holding that up? Because God said I will never flood the earth again.

This is my sign to you. And then in our arrogance, in our blasphemous ways, we use that against God in his face. And there's a spiritual realm going on.

It's a spiritual attack. The enemy is trying to do things and sidetrack. And that's why we just stay the course and persevere.

And that's why I believe praying last night and fasting and God getting us ready, some of us ready for spiritual warfare and a spiritual battle. I'm going to talk about in the next week or two the why, the when, and the how of fasting. The reason is threefold.

Why it's so important, when do we do it, and how do we do it. And there's a message I gave on America and gluttony and on fasting. And they're like 10, 12, 14,000 views on YouTube.

And it's like, so there's a hunger there. Because I thought there would be two or three, right? I mean, who wants to watch that? But there's a desire there. When we took the survey, 85% of you wanted to participate in some type of corporate fast.

And that's what I love about Westside is there's a hunger there. And for me to avoid this topic, I think, would not be a good idea. Even though many people, they'll say fasting's not for us anymore.

It's the Old Testament thing and we don't do that anymore. Well, I would encourage you to show me one scripture that supports that. The fact is there isn't anything.

And if Jesus himself began his ministry fasting, we might want to consider what this means to our own lives. So let's see this. First, let me just throw this out here.

Fasting is seen throughout the entire Bible. Matthew 6, Jesus said, when you pray, when you give, and when you fast. Luke 535, the NIV, but the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them.

In those days, they will fast. Now, I could be wrong, but I think we're still waiting for the bridegroom, right? And there's a waiting time there. And fasting, the reason they didn't fast the whole scripture, the context of the scripture, is they said, why do our disciples, John the Baptist and your disciples of Jesus, do not fast? Jesus said, the bridegroom is here.

I'm here right now. Fasting was a time of mourning, of repentance, of this heart-wrenching seeking after God and being distant from him. Jesus is saying, I'm here.

The bridegroom is here. But when the bridegroom leaves, then they will fast. Leonard Ravenhill said many years ago, 50 years ago, I think, when there's something in the Bible that churches don't like, they call it legalism.

Isn't that true? Don't take a Sabbath anymore. That's legalism. Don't worry about what you watch.

That's legalism. Don't act a certain way. That's legalistic.

Don't fast. That's legal. Isn't it convenient, right? It's on everything we don't like to do, we just put legalism over it.

And I can tell when people, when carnal Christians get mad at me, they call me legalistic. And I can say, well, here's 42 scriptures that supported this view. I don't care.

That's legalistic. See, anytime we don't want to do something, we call it legalism. Here's the thing about fasting.

The physical affects or is affected by the spiritual. So the physical realm that we live in is affected by the spiritual realm. So fasting has spiritual implications that fulfill themselves in the physical.

We realize we live in two realms, right? There's a spiritual, there's a physical. And I'm gonna give some examples from primarily the Old Testament that I've given before when I talk about fasting, but it's so important because we need reminders. It's been six months, the beginning of the year.

I've not talked about this, maybe a little bit here and there, and I'll try to wait until next year again. How's that sound? Let's just get this out now. Moses received the Word of God after fasting.

So is there anything you need to receive from God? Lord, I'm waiting for answers. I need to receive something from you. We need direction.

King Jehoshaphat experienced victory after fasting. Do you need victory in any area right now? Esther received protection. Elijah received restoration.

Daniel experienced the supernatural. Ezra received direction. Nehemiah was strengthened.

Joel offered the cure for God's judgment. God's judgment was coming upon a nation. Joel said, return to me.

God says, return to me with fasting and weeping and mourning, and I will return to you. Jesus was empowered. Paul confirmed his calling.

Cornelius was saved all after fasting. Now you can just call that a coincidence if you want, but I'm not going there because it's a deeper relationship with God. Like in Elijah's case, do you need some things restored in your marriage, in your life, your sons, your daughters? Does something need to be restored? Or Daniel, do you need to experience the supernatural? And I don't mean some mystical weird thing, right? I mean, do you want to experience God? Because I believe there's a difference between those who experience God living in the fullness of the Spirit and those who just come to church and participate and leave untouched by God.

I'm not sure what side of that you want to be on, but I can tell you what side I want to be on. I want to be on the side that experiences God. Ezra received direction.

Ezra is an interesting story. He had to go and rebuild. Remember, Nehemiah rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem.

Ezra went to rebuild the temple that was destroyed, and he said, God, we can't go and do this. We're bringing all this gold and silver. We can't do this unless you bring us protection.

We're going to pray, and we're going to fast for ourselves and for our little ones. And God got them all the way there without any problems. Nehemiah was strengthened.

Joel offered the cure for judgment. Jesus was empowered. Do you need to be empowered? Paul confirmed his calling.

When Paul was called, he fasted. He didn't stop by Starbucks. He fasted and waited on God.

Now, here's why this topic is so difficult. I think for many people, I've experienced the benefits, so I'm jumping with joy inside, wanting to share the benefits. Many of you are thinking, oh my goodness, that's the last thing I want to do is not eat something.

Right? That doesn't sound fun. Well, it's not fun necessarily, but the rewards far outweigh the cost. Remember what we've talked about before? The pain of discipline or the pain of regret.

One or the other you're going to pay, and as your flesh submits, and you can, you, you, because here's what happens. I've talked about before, but it bears repeating. Your flesh controls more than you think.

You wake up in the morning, right? Get me frappuccino, caramel maca, whatever. And while you're there, get a big thing of donuts. And then after church, why not just keep going to In-N-Out Burger, or McDonald's, or the Western Bacon Double Cheeseburger, my favorite at Carl's Jr., right? Let's just go there.

And now that we've blown all day, stop and get that chocolate, and that Twix bar, and that soda on your way home to perk you up again. And why just finish it with a terrible dinner? And the flesh, and the flesh is just controlling everything we do. This keeps popping.

Is there a reason? You guys hear it too? Maybe I'll just put it back here. Okay, maybe it's popping on my side. But that's why the flesh is controlling.

So what fasting does, it says, no, no, no, you're done. You're done controlling. I'm going to start crucifying you, mortifying the flesh.

The Puritan authors would say, to mortify, to rebuke the flesh. Acts 13 to the NIV, and this is where, this is why I'm talking about fasting, this is where we just left off. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, now set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

So you have to wonder, if they were not fasting, if they were just in this gluttonous type of environment, would God have led them to the degree He has? Acts 14, 23, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and with prayer, and fasting committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their

trust. The vast majorities of the heroes of the faith have fasted. It's still very common in places like China and Korea for people to fast.

If you go outside of America, fasting is very common. Just to let you know, there's actually a place in South Korea, not North Korea, I don't know of any of their one there, because they worship a god there, right? The ruler of that country that wants to take America out. So you might want to pray and fast that God would judge them and judge him, but this South Korea, there's one of the largest, actually it's the largest church I think in the world, seven, eight hundred thousand members.

They have something called Prayer Mountain, and it's all they do is they go up to this mountain and they pray and fast for days. The Middle East, China, the early Christians in China, it's a place of fasting and prayer. So here would be my struggle, I can ignore a topic that people don't like and just tell us what we want to hear, or I can delve into Scripture, read a lot on this, get this, and give you, speak from my own personal experience for those who truly want to experience God.

John Wesley said, I will not ordain a man unless he fasts twice a week. Wow, legalistic, right? He's legalistic. What he's doing is he's saying, I would ordain a man who shows me he has control of his appetites, rather than allowing his appetites to control him.

Because if you have a man who is controlled by his appetites, he cannot rule the church well. It's impossible. That's actually one of the qualifications of an elder, is to be temperate in all things, not addicted to certain things.

Now, when it comes to fasting, there is a pendulum swing, right? The side that we've been talking about, and nobody wants to do it, so for Old Testament, that's actually pretty convenient, sounds good. I actually like that. If that's your view, I like your view.

The flesh likes your view, but that's not for today. But the other side of the pendulum swing is the fanatical side, where it's more spiritual, and you're always pushing, and you're always, you know, pushing people to do it, and in their face, and it becomes this workspace. I'm more holy because I fast.

I'm more spiritual because I fast. You don't fast like me, and it's, it becomes almost a work, and a self-focus, a self, a point of self-exaltation, but the pendulum swing is where it stops in the middle, is right what the Bible says. That's why those who love fasting see it mentioned throughout Scripture close to 80 times.

They see the enormous benefit. The key is this, the closer you draw to God, the more you do for God. If you leave here today, leave here with that nugget.

The closer you draw to God, the more you do for God. So those most in this room, I'm assuming, want to do more for God. Lord, I want to, show me, is this person unfamiliar? Lord, show me what you want me to do.

Show me what you've called me to do. Show me how I'm supposed to get involved here. Who can, who am I supposed to reach? And Lord, show me.

But that only begins to become real once we begin to fast, and pray, and worship. Then the closer we draw to Him, the more He does through us. Leonard Ravenhill also said, how can you pull down strongholds of Satan if you don't even have the strength to turn off your television? Wow, I could just sit

down.

I think that would be, that would be good enough, right? Because he's, he's, how can we pull down strongholds of Satan? Because see, we talk about it, we want to do it, but we can't, we don't have the strength to turn off our television. We don't even have the strength to say no. I mean, In-N-Out has been calling me since 530 this morning.

It just keeps, hello, double-double, french fries, chocolate shit. I mean, it's just calls, calls. And it's just like, no, be quiet, be quiet, be quiet.

And it's just calling. Now, people, guess I'll do a few disclaimers throughout the message. Food is not bad, right? We don't, food is wonderful, especially if you consume it the way God created it, to give life to the body, to give energy to the body.

We consume that food, and then that food is assimilated, and we use it for energy, for building muscle, for fighting disease, all these kinds of things. So it's wonderful. So it really isn't about food, it's whether food has you.

When it's controlling you, if, if there's no desire to fast and the body keeps winning, I'm a guessing you're losing the battle in a lot of different areas. If we can't subdue the flesh, how are you going to say no to that video that comes up on your screen? Or how are you going to say no to that gossip that keeps whispering in your ear to go and gossip? Or that backbiting, or that anger? How are you going to subdue those things if you can't even subdue the flesh in this area? See, it all is tied together. Everything is tied together.

John Owen, he's, he's a Puritan author. About four or five hundred years ago, I've got, it's, it's called the works of John Owen, of the mortification of sin and believers. I just love the strong words these guys, they don't mess around, I'm telling you right now.

If you read books hundreds of years ago, they do not mess around. They get right to the point, crucify the flesh, stop putting up with it, be killing sin or sin be killing you. I mean, it's just, now we're like, oh, I don't know, might be too strong.

Oh, come on, let's just, let's just bring in the soft little punches, and the, and the candy bars, and the seized candy, and just kind of be careful here, where the Word of God is, let it loose. Let the lion out of the cage, and let it do, let it do its work. So he said, and I'll interpret for you when I'm done, the choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business, all their days, to be mortifying the indwelling power of sin.

What he's saying in a nutshell is, if you are a believer, and you have been freed from the condemning power of sin, here's the, here's the interesting thing. This will be, this will be an eye-opener for many of you. As a believer, you have been freed from the condemning power of sin.

It doesn't condemn you anymore. You, it's, you're not condemned to hell. The ramifications, the result, you've been set free from that condemning power.

But then it's the question of, well, why in God's name is it still alive in me? Because see, the influence hasn't left. The power hasn't left. So that's why he said, believers who've been released from the condemning power of sin, they should make it their business to, to mortify indwelling power of sin.

Now, because they've been set free, every day they're gonna fight against that influence. And that's where that famous line comes from. Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.

Every unclean thought or glance would be adultery, if it could. If it could. Think about that.

Every covetous desire would be oppression, if it could. Every thought of unbelief would be atheism, if it could. See, that's what sin does.

Sin gives you a thought and says, if you, if I could take you to the full end of this, if I could take you to the full end of this, I would bring that thought out to fruition. So that's what sin is doing constantly. It's like, here's your thought, take action on that thought, keep taking action on that thought, so I can bring you to death in this area.

Here comes another thought, take it, take that thought, run with it, fulfill it. Now, I'm gonna keep leading you away from God. That's why every day, from the moment you wake up to when you go to sleep, that sin is wanting to come in and do that.

That's why fasting is so important. And I want to remind everybody this morning that you are not powerless. You are not powerless.

You give power to either the flesh or the Spirit. And I write, Shane, I'm so powerless right now. No, you're not.

You actually have more power than you think. You give, whatever, Paul says in Romans, whatever you choose to obey becomes your master. So you give the power to the Spirit or you give the power to the flesh.

Do you guys hear that? Okay, so something's popping back there. Oh, well, it's probably gonna happen from here on out. Unless Jake can fix it.

No pressure. I'll fix it. Yeah, I keep pulling it away, but it's pretty far now.

All right, we'll try that. Another thing he said, neglect of this duty to mortify causes the withering of the soul. So, in a nutshell, if we don't want to mortify the flesh, crucify the flesh, it leads to the withering of the soul.

Have you ever felt your soul wither? Go like this. You have. It's that, it's the withering of the soul.

It's like, God, I miss you. Worship used to, I used to love worship. I used to love the Bible.

What's happening? The soul is withering if we don't mortify the flesh and put it to death daily, be crucifying the flesh daily. James 4, 5 says this, that our spirit has envious yearnings. Did you know that? The Holy Spirit in us has envious yearnings, and that's a good envy.

He's saying, I want you. The Spirit in us is, it's like, do you remember when you had kids? If you're older now, if you have kids, Daddy, I want to spend time with you. Mommy, I want to spend time with you.

Nana, Papa, whatever they call you, I want to spend time with you. That's the Holy Spirit within us. He has, the Spirit has envious yearnings for more of God, and what happens is besetting sin cuts off the power source.

The point I'm really getting at is fasting helps to mortify the deeds of the flesh, because when you're fasting, you're in control. I'll tell you right now, if you struggle with addiction, sexual addiction, any kind of addiction, you can minimize it completely by fasting, because you take the power and the strength away from the flesh. You just rob the flesh of its strength, and it begins to be submitted.

And Jim Cimbala, I know many of you know who he is in the Brooklyn Tabernacle. I was watching it in New York. I was watching a wonderful video on obedience this week, and he talked about, he actually went to the electrical room in the Brooklyn Tabernacle, a huge room, and he said, if I pull this power, if I pull this lever, it'll cut off all electricity to the building.

And his parallel was with the Holy Spirit. If we have besetting sin, sin that we just leave, and it stops that power source, it stops God from moving in our lives. It's like a conduit that is blocked.

Fasting begins to release that. Now, I want to talk on this part about fasting, since we are on the topic. The spiritual, when it comes to fasting, the spiritual is the priority, but there are physical benefits.

Now, here's interesting thing about physical. Anytime we talk about the body, we're like, well, that's not important. Well, if it's not important, then why are 90% of the prayer requests about the physical things? Take this away from me, this disease, this ailment, this depression, this anxiety, this addiction.

So the spiritual is the priority, but there are physical benefits when we fast. Did you know this? That Jesus was the great physician? What does a great physician do? He heals our bodies. James Morris said this, and I would recommend a book, it's called God's Chosen Fast.

There are multitudes, there are multitudes of diseases which have their origin in fullness, and might have their end in fasting. Many of you aren't aware of this, but disease is actually fueled by the food we consume. Disease is fueled by the food we consume.

That food is either giving life to the body, or it's giving death to the body. My point of this is fasting has huge spiritual benefits that flow right into physical benefits as well for the body. God wants us to clean this thing that we have been given.

Have you ever seen a real dirty pool that you're not going to jump into? But picture the body, that's dirty blood, the heart is working hard, it's a very toxic environment. So it's this green algae, this dirty pool, that's how many of us live. And the body becomes sick and diseased.

If we had time we could talk about really what cancer is, is cancer is cells that do not die. Instead they keep multiplying and multiplying and multiplying and multiplying and form tumors. And they're finding that many things, that cancer has to survive off oxygen and food.

It has to. So it begins, that's why they tie a lot of it in with sugar, and they're also finding that it can consume amino acids, glutamine to be exact and precise. But the cancer, you actually fuel it sometimes by the foods we consume.

So if you begin to fast and withdraw the fuel source, you'll begin to see amazing results in the body. I can just tell you from my own experience, eyesight getting better, joints feeling better, energy coming back, the vitality, the way that we were designed, how God designed us. So not only the spiritual benefits, but you have the physical benefits that come into mind.

Now I think this is important and very important to introduce. Fasting is not starving, okay? Why are you starving yourself? I'm not starving myself. Fasting is not starving, it's nourishing, it's ridding our body of the excess.

Here's a crash course, real quick. Your body burns for energy glucose, which when you eat it's converted to sugar. That glucose is stored in the liver and the muscle to be used.

Once that is depleted, then it will begin to go to the fat and muscle storage for fuel. The problem is we never get to that point. So fasting, you begin to burn all the stored energy you have, it's gone, and then now the body begins to pull off of the tissue, the dead cells, the old things that need to go.

It's burning the fat, it's burning some muscle, it's burning old dead cells that are dying. It's going to grab the disease. I read a book, it gave a great example of if you're in a cabin in a snowstorm, right? You're using all the wood to stay alive, but what happens when the wood's gone? How good does that wood couch, or that wood chair, that wood, that didn't sound comfortable at all, but that big nice wood table you just made for the kitchen, or that nice, those wood tables you just made for the living room, guess where they're going in a matter of a day or two? In the fire, in the fire.

You start the lesser items, the wood, the hay, the stubble, the newspaper, and then you start to go to the greater items and throw that in the fire. That's exactly how the body works. You're not starving.

The body's pulling and using all this energy and getting rid of the dead waste. You actually go into a point of starvation once those resources have ran dry. So it's not starvation.

It's actually very healthy for the body to start consuming these things. I mean, I could just amaze you with the amount of testimonies I've heard that tumors have shrunk. God, people had like this gross on their skin and different things.

It would disappear from fasting because the body would start to consume the tissue and it gets fuel from wherever it can. That's why you don't feel good, because the toxins and the things are coming in and working in your mind and in your heart and your blood is trying to get rid of all this junk. So the point is, wonderful spiritual benefits, wonderful physical benefits.

Fasting doesn't replace a healthy lifestyle, though. It complements it. Did you catch that? That was in one ear and out the next for some of you.

Here's what many people do. And then they try to fast. Oh, I don't feel like fasting.

Or they barely get through and then they're back to the old habits again. Right? All the junk, all the garbage, as if fasting's going to replace that. It only complements it.

And the reason I have a passion for this, maybe some of you know, some of you don't know, is I have seen so many things cured by taking care of the body. I just went to the hospital. Somebody has a golf-size cancer cell in their brain.

As you know, that's not looking good. And other people are struggling. I mean, struggling with anxiety and fear and depression.

And, Shane, I can't...and counseling people, they're about ready to cry and have a nervous breakdown. And I look at what they're consuming. I'm like, well, no wonder.

You've got to get rid of these things. I don't want to. I love my... whatever.

So, see, that's my heart. It's not to upset people. But these things have... Shane, pray.

I pray for this healing. I pray for this. Stop eating 14 hot dogs a week.

Right? I get my heart's not in good shape. I need healing in this area. Stop doing things that lead to that.

Now, I believe in healing. I believe that God can heal and do certain things. But I also believe that there are ramifications.

See, we under...we believe that all of our choices have consequences, don't we? But when it comes to food, sometimes we think that doesn't apply. But that doesn't apply to...on food. But it does.

And I see so many people...let me give you example. The majority of people, different states, people that don't even go to this church, that are struggling...well, I better not say it in case he's listening. But a good friend of mine somewhere that way, not a believer, but all these people are on so much medication and trying to...what's going on? I'm like, you might want to stop the thousand milligrams of caffeine a day.

A day you're having. The monster drinks, and the guar nut, and the ma hong, and the herba mate, and the...all these things are just...they're killing you. They're killing you.

They're stimulating. Well, I don't want to stop that. Well then, what can...I can pray for you.

But see, my point is, we're actually bringing stuff in. I mean, who's gonna drink a six-pack and think it doesn't affect them? We know that does, right? Why do we think other things don't apply? So that's what my passion is. I see so many people...here's, I created illness.

In every case, of course not. And those people who don't like this message will use that against me. He said this.

No, I didn't. I believe that some is hereditary. Some is a product of our environment.

Some is just gonna happen. Some is a demonic influence. But many times, many times, what we're putting in affects us.

Did you know that the...it's called the...I don't know if I get it right. The manual...I don't even want to say it. The diagnostic manual for mental disorders.

For evaluating mental disorders in patients that psychologists use. They now have caffeine-induced anxiety in there. Caffeine-induced sleep deprivation.

They have it. It's a mental disorder. But yet, we don't care.

That's also what's frustrating. That's probably one of the most frustrating things for me. I say, here's what you need to do.

Start eating better. Get a lot more water. Get the stuff out of your...I don't want to.

Pray for me, though. I'm telling you. I'm giving you wisdom.

Because I've experienced a lot of this before. I've never...I've never experienced anxiety attacks to such a degree where you just want to scream. You want to hit something.

Where is this coming from? It's called withdrawal. Or it's called too much of something. See, we always want the prayer, but not the obedience.

God just take it away, but it's not gonna involve any work. And prayer and fasting is work, and that's why we do it. So, enough off the physical.

I probably upset you enough. But let's go back to this part about fasting. Fasting breaks bondage.

There's bondage in our life. Have you ever seen this? Let me just...example for me, then. I need a second helping.

Sweets, I can't say no to. Snacks between meals. Our favorite addictive drinks, right? We are snagged on these things.

So, fasting begins to break these things away from our lives. You crave what you feed on. You will crave what you feed on.

What we feed on, we begin to crave, and we want more of and more of. Now, here's another disclaimer. I knew I'd get to the other one.

Fasting doesn't twist God's arm. When the Bible talks about fasting, it's not like God's like, all right, uncle. You got me.

What do you want now? How can I help? You got me. Fasting does...what it does is it actually realigns your heart with God's. It starts to...you start to remove the clutter, and it's amazing.

That's why it's hard to picture now, but after you've told your flesh no all day, there's this euphoria or a spiritual high, for a lack of a better word. This being filled with the Holy Spirit that comes upon you, that you just, man, that was worth it. That was worth it.

The benefits are there. So, that's why there's so much difficulty in this area, because the benefits come later, not right away. I mean, many people think they say no to lunch, and then here's a new car out in their driveway.

It doesn't work like that. It's a pressing in. That's why we do it.

Joel 2.12, turn back to me with your whole heart with fasting and tears and mourning. Turn back to me with your whole heart with tears and mourning. So, it's realigning.

That's what fasting does. It starves the flesh, so my flesh is starved. It's crucified, because did you know this? The more you feed the flesh, the more it continues to grow in certain areas.

The majority of people I talk with who are hooked on pornography are also hooked on certain things. It's a consumption of meat and food and all this junk. They're just consuming all this, and then they're consumed.

It's just, it's all tied together. Everything in the body is tied together in this area. So, fasting does this.

It conquers both pride and passion. Both our pride is conquered, and our passions are conquered. Not forever.

That's why I encourage it to be a lifestyle. Don't eat every day? Of course not. You take it to God, and you pray, and you ask Him what He wants to do in your life, and what He wants to do in this area specifically.

Fasting also silences the voice of the flesh. Does your flesh ever cry out? Give me, and it begins to stop and silence that. So, is there a desire to resurrect dead prayers in your life? Here might be, here's, here, this might be a reason to fast.

Is there a desire in your life to resurrect dead prayers? You know what a dead prayer is, right? Lord is not going to do that anymore. It's beyond His grip now. I think I've done too much damage, but if you want to resurrect those dead prayers, bring them back to life again.

God says, I will restore the years that the enemy has taken from you if you begin to pray and fast again. I wonder how many miracles aren't done because we don't, we don't pray, and fast, and seek God hard, hard enough. And, and I'm not talking about works, but there's a fervency there, and, and I don't mean to put people down when I talk about this, but I've seen parents, I've talked to parents, and praying for their prodigal son or daughter.

They're in a bad spot. They're hooked on heroin. I can't even get the parents to fast.

Oh, no, that's too hard. I'm hypoglycemic. I'm gonna, you see, I had all excuses.

I was borderline hypoglycemic. I can never fast. Come to find out? It's no problem.

I'm gonna die by day two. No, it doesn't, I don't, didn't die by day two. It's just, and, and there's, there's, let me interject this too.

There's a learning about this too. You don't just say, okay, I'm gonna stop eating. There's a, there's a, there's a hunger there.

Lord, show me, what do I need to remove from my life? What is, is triggering? What is pulling me down? I can hopefully walk through that in the next, in the next week or so. I think attendance might decrease, but for those who are interested, I'm gonna give you some practical example. The desire to resurrect dead prayers.

And I was thinking this week, where, where's the faith of David these days? Who would grab a slingshot and go out and fight a giant and say, who is this uncircumcised Philistine who's going to deny our God? Who's gonna mock our God? Let me at him. Where's the faith? Where's that faith? Where's the faith of Daniel? When was the last time you said, put me in the lion's den, I'll be fine? Or he said, I'm gonna keep praying to my God. We're gonna kill you, Daniel, if you don't, I don't care.

Where, where, where, where is the, the, the faith of Elisha? Elisha, who came across all these false prophets of Baal. He came to fight them. He said, let the God who answers by fire, let him be God.

And God answered by the faith of these men, the faith of the women in the Bible. Esther or Rebecca, you see, where, where's that faith today? Many times here's a problem. Faith is often tied to fasting and prayer and worship.

The greater the devotion in these areas, the greater the faith. I mean, a person doesn't just wake up, right? A person doesn't just wake up one day and have tremendous faith. It's, it's built, it's sustained through the challenges of life.

So here's what I want you to consider. Why to fast? Is there a desire to resurrect dead prayers in your life? Has a dream died in your life? Has you, is there something you thought God was going to do, but he has not done? Or something you thought was going to happen in your family or resurrecting dead prayers and it's time to fast. Is there a stronghold that has been gripping your life? Is there a stronghold, something that has been gripping your life? Fasting begins a process of relief.

Now here's the mistake many people make too. They, they fast for a little bit and they say, oh, it's still there. Let me remind you that it's a battle.

This is a spiritual battle. We persevere and, and sometimes it's, it's, it takes a while to weaken the flesh. It's a wrestling.

There's a, there's a persevering before the flesh finally says, okay, enough, enough. That's why we're considering fasting. Now in the next week or so, I'm going to talk about when to fast, how to fast, but I want to ask you to commit today and pray for direction and begin formulating a plan.

I, if it were me, I would begin by cleaning house. What is God talking to you? What is he speaking to you right now about? Are there certain habits with, whether it's everything we've just talked about, sugar, caffeine, alcohol, addictive things, and begin to wean off of those things. I would tell anybody who has a high level of caffeine, have half and then have half and have half, have half, have half, and wean off, get down because withdrawals will be hell.

They will be hell. Trust me. Pray for heaven.

Pray for heaven. Release, but plan on hell, and you begin to get your body, because to try to fast, okay, I'm just going to stop fasting. Well, that means you're going to stop fasting from caffeine and sugar, alcohol, craving, all these things.

You're going to, you're just going to get, you are going to get hit with tons of withdrawals and toxicity, and, and you get, begin to clean house, begin to remove those things, because now I can go into a day fast or a two-day fast and just have water. It's, I mean, I can just get through it. It's not, not a big deal, but a couple years ago, wow, two hours with no caffeine, you're like going to lose it, right? That's what people, I have to have my whatever in the morning.

I don't mean to make this such a big point, but it's affecting the lives of a lot of people, and you don't realize it. It's affecting the temper and the anger. I see parents going off on their children and abusing their children.

I see people getting angry and yelling and screaming, all these roid rages, or roid rages, steroids, road rages. There's both, that happens too, but you see all these, you see all the effects of it, and all the testimonies we get from people being set free of these things, it makes me a little bit passionate, wouldn't you be? I mean, you see how these things play a role in our lives, so I would begin by cleaning house and beginning, okay, maybe removing, okay, Lord, I'm going to go without lunch today. I'm not going to have lunch at 11 or 12 or 1 or 2 or 3, I'm just going to have water, and I'm going to seek you, I'm going to pray, because you don't just fast a fast, you turn that time into seeking God, and you watch how the flesh will

fight you, but you're taking that first step in the right direction, and I truly believe somebody new to this who's cleaning house and was going to give up lunch and just say, Lord, I want to follow you in this area, I believe, personally, I believe that God is going to honor that just the same as a person who does two days or three days, who has longer history with it, because the heart's right.

He's always going after the heart, because you can have somebody on a week or two or three, three weeks worth of fasting, and they become spiritually proud, and they lose the entire benefit, and you have somebody who's just trying to not have lunch, and God's filling them with the Spirit. What's the difference? Always the heart, always the heart. Now, there is something to talk about duration, because I believe the longer you go, the more you can subdue the flesh, and the flesh is subdued, and it takes a while.

I mean, still, I look at Jesus going 40 days, and I'm like, I can't even fathom that. I mean, it's amazing, and there are people that do that. There are people that go a significant amount of time, and it's not to earn brownie points.

You actually get to a point where you don't want to eat anymore, and the body adjusts, and it begins to burn different things for fuel instead of the glucose and the glycogen that has been stored. It's an amazing concept of how the body works, and actually, the more I read about how the body works, the more I say, God, this is so amazing, and I had an interesting thought this week. I don't know if we were supposed to eat every three hours, right? Got to eat, got to stop by there, got something on every corner.

I think, for thousands of years, they put some nuts and some figs and something, and just walk for three miles to the next town, and then the body was built so it could go more than three hours without food. My kids crack me up. It's been three hours.

They're starving. I'm starving. I have to eat.

No, you don't. No, you don't, and the people are like, oh, you're being mean to them. Really? So you're going to teach them to fulfill that desire every time they get it, and then they start to control you, right? There's the ice cream truck coming down the street, and they begin to, and so, but we think we're starving.

We think we're going to die. Now, the third disclaimer, there are medical conditions, right? Especially, there's like diabetes and nursing moms who are getting the energy to their, I mean, you've got to use wisdom in these areas, and I can steer you in the right direction with books and things, but I would just take it to God, because I hid behind the excuse of borderline hypoglycemia, is what I had, and what happened, if I didn't eat, let's say, three or four hours, and would go work out or try something, I'd get really faint, and I'd have to have something. Well, come to find out, I was addicted to sugar.

I was having sugar all day, so after three or four hours of no sugar, that's why I feel that way. Now, how can I, for example, I ate yesterday, and I'll eat again tonight. 24 hours, just water.

I feel great. There's no, I don't know, weirdness, and, but five years ago, I couldn't go three or four hours. I got to eat something.

My blood sugar is dropping, and that can be valid sometimes, but just be careful, because it can also be an excuse to hide an addiction that is causing all of that. Not to mention, 600 milligrams of caffeine didn't help things. So, here's closing, for all you convicted, I'm getting off this point.

Discernment. Here's my closing point. Discernment is one of our greatest challenges.

Do you agree? What spirit is this? God, is this you? Come on, guys, don't leave me hanging here. Do I just deal with this, just me? No, I know. God, is this you, or is this the enemy, or is this me? Now, some things are clear, right? But, Lord, is this causing you, let's say, from take a different job, or to reach out to somebody in a certain way, or to move, or to, with your kids, and how to, I mean, I've got something right now I'm praying about, Lord, I don't know what to do with this.

I don't know, are you telling me to do this, or, you know, this is a, you know, interesting thing. Well, here's what fasting does. It will heighten your spiritual discernment.

If I've noticed anything, it's this. You can walk with much more clarity, because the flesh is starved. Ulterior motives are put at bay, and you begin to sense what God's will is.

If you're feeling rushed, confused, anxious, and you're going to react, then hold tight. That's not often the voice of God. If you feel that, if I feel that way, I usually back off, and I say, hold on, I gotta wait.

And it happens at church. Hey, we need an answer. We need an answer.

What are we gonna do? What are we gonna do? I don't know. We're gonna wait. I don't like that answer.

Like right now, right? I told you we're praying about what to do with Wednesday nights, right? Do we build the youth group, and now that one is growing, and do we have studies? It's like, and people are like, Shane, we need to know. I mean, September's gonna be here before we know it. I don't know.

That's all I can tell you. I might not, we might not know until a week before September 21st. What? That's impossible.

No, we might, I'm not gonna be rushed or pushed into things. Okay, we need to make a decision to make a decision. I mean, that's how the enemy works, and he'll do it in your own life with your job.

I gotta make a decision. You gotta do this. You gotta push.

You gotta push. You're anxious. You're, God, I don't know what to do.

Just stop. And even fast. Sometimes I'll take a drive to the atrophy, or just west as far as I can go, and just pray and meditate, and like not eat, and just, and the clarity becomes crystal clear many times.

Now, here's the other thing. If it doesn't become clear, then you have peace about waiting. You're like, you know, I'm just gonna wait.

I feel so much peace in just waiting. And the enemy hates when you wait, because how the enemy moves is he moves through pushing you. That angry email.

That angry phone call. That angry lashing out. That bad decision.

It's, he's wanting you to move. So when you just say, I'm standing still. What can he do? Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.

Having done all. Stand. Spiritual discernment.

Just this last week, I read that a 17-year-old Dutch girl died on Monday during a bungee jump. Miss out. She misheard the instructions and jumped when he said, no jump.

On the Spanish, one of the Spanish instructors on the bridge, when the teenager plunged 40 meters to her death, told the police that the girl jumped before her harness was clipped to the bungee cord. An instructor told the Spanish television channel RTVE that she had said, no jump, no jump. I'm trying to get it right.

But the girl may have misheard and thought she said, now jump. Now jump. And I thought, my God, that's spiritual discernment.

How many of us are hearing, don't jump? God's saying, don't jump. Don't. And we're, but we're hearing, now jump.

Now. Do it. Now.

The need, I believe in this day and age, the need to suppress the flesh and to conquer the flesh and mortify the flesh. You will, you will lose some of the battles. Let me tell you right now.

You will. But it's not about winning every single victory. It's about the heart in the right direction saying, Lord, I fell in this area.

I mean, I remember I preached one time. I used to go and travel for like Calvary chapels. They'd help me preach at North Edwards, Hathropie, Temecula, maybe, Hesperia.

And they would just help me travel. I preached when a pastor was out. And I was doing so good.

I mean, I was fasting. I felt the fire of God. And I just couldn't do it.

I got, it was night. I couldn't sleep. And I just, I don't even know what was there, Dorito chips and all this.

And I felt terrible. I almost couldn't sleep. I was like, God, I'm so, I couldn't sleep well.

I was just upset. It felt like a letdown. I'm like, I wanted to do this so bad.

And I went in the parking lot of the church and I could hear the worship through the doors that was open. And my heart just started, oh, I was worshiping and God, thank you so much. And just, or whatever you can do.

And that, I'll never forget that sermon. My goodness. I mean, fire fell.

People were coming to the altar before I was even done. And men are crying. The women are holding them.

Marriages are restored. Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. Right then.

Like, how did that happen? I just, but wait a minute. See, I was basing it off works and works and works. And if I, now there's nothing wrong with fasting and holding that line.

But when I said, God, I blew it. And I didn't just have a Dorito chip. I mean, it was a bag or two in the chocolate bar, whatever was in the hotel.

It was like, and, but then the heart was right again. And God said, now you, Shane, now you know my grace and my mercy. You can never play me as a puppet master.

That you control me. You don't control me. And he, and I, there's been times, I've told Tony this before.

And, and we talked about it. And I fasted for a day or two. And then the sermon's just dead.

Because see, I don't control God. I'm not pulling his strings and telling him what to do. Sometimes he'll say, see, you're trusting too much in that.

You're trusting too much in that. I will rain down fire when I want to rain down fire. I'm gonna bring grace.

I'm gonna bring mercy. And you submit to me. So he's taught me through all this.

I'll go home and tell him, that sermon stunk. Why'd I fast all weekend? I should have just had Starbucks and a big donut and Krispy Kreme. You know? What, what was that about? But see, then it comes back to the pride and the spirit.

Like I was gonna make God do something. However, I know that God will honor that often. That's why I actually started fasting five years ago.

Is because I wanted to go to the pulpit. Just, just, just drained of hunger and food. And, and the sermons were changed.

I mean, I loved it. And I couldn't, I don't like to preach on a full stomach or even a little bit. And as I can see how God can use it.

But don't put them in a box. Don't think this is some little formula. Genie in the bottle.

Three days of fasting. Here's what I get. It's all about drawing us closer to God.

And as, as you tell the flesh 30 times a day, shut your mouth. You can say it from the pulpit. It's okay.

I just, shut your mouth. Just, you, you go back to sleep. That's a, yesterday my son's in All-Star Baseball and we went to a game.

And of course the snack bars open. Like pepper bellies and hot dogs. And I'm just like, just shut up.

Be quiet. Flesh, go back to sleep. Just be quiet.

You're not, and then I got home. I told my wife, I feel so good. I'm ready to preach.

And I couldn't sleep, right? So there's a, there's an honoring of that. But the flesh, you have to begin to tell it. Because then you can say, when you click on your email, hi, I'm 21.

You want to see my pictures? Delete. Because you just told it. Be quiet.

And then when somebody, something happens and it might, your flesh might gravitate towards you, you have the peace and being filled with the Spirit of God. And I tell my wife, I say, I'm looking for pictures of the American flag. And these pictures came up about this girl in a bikini or something.

Like, what is this? You know, I'm being transparent and saying, hey, here's the, and you put the flesh in submission. You're honest and open and transparent. So that's what fasting does.

It helps the body. Actually, it helps you control the body instead of the body controlling you. That's why we do it.

It's, it's not, it's not to be a hyper-spiritual. It's not to be in good favor with God. It's not to be real holy and above everybody else.

It's not, and that's why Jesus said, when you fast, oh, there he goes. When you fast, act like you're not fasting. Put oil on your head.

Don't, it's not this, oh, man, man, brother, I'm fasting today. Everywhere you go, right? Going to crazy autos. I just see the heart attack and the plate on those things.

And it's, and you're going, I can't have it. I'm just fasting. Brother, would you like this? No, I'm fasting.

And you go around and it becomes this spirituality. That's why many times people don't know. They didn't know what the baseball field.

You know, I don't, oh, I can't, I'm fasting. No, I don't want a pepper belly. Is that Fritos and chili and cheese on it? It's, can you just, can you take, I will go move my seat, though.

I'll tell you that right now. I'll go down at the end of the grass where nobody's at with just my kids and my wife. Like, get away from all that, right? Because you're also inundated with it, too.

So, this is going in a whole different direction. This is why we fast. I'm going to close with this scripture.

Isaiah, I love this verse, 40, chapter 40, verse 28. Have you not known? Have you not heard the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth? He never faints, nor is he weary. His understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the weak. Fasting is humbling yourself, and it's weakening yourself in that, not only physically, but spiritually. And it's funny, even though you're weak physically, you're strengthened spiritually.

You're weak, you're weak physically, and you're strengthened spiritually. So, he gives power to the weak. Young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/gWuBfIYIDMM.mp4>

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