

Fasting Over Forks pt.1

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman emphasizes the importance of fasting as a spiritual discipline that fosters growth and empowerment in the believer's life.

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Scripture: Matthew 6:16

Topics: "Fasting", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the significance of fasting as a spiritual discipline, likening it to farming where we create an environment for growth. He discusses how fasting helps to break strongholds in our lives, allowing us to gain control over our appetites and desires, ultimately leading to a deeper relationship with God. Shane highlights that fasting is not merely about abstaining from food but about realigning our hearts with God's will and experiencing spiritual empowerment. He encourages the congregation to consider fasting as a means to overcome personal struggles and to seek God's direction in their lives. The message serves as a call to action for believers to engage in fasting as a vital part of their spiritual journey.

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, do 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 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 and 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'd be two or three, right? You know, 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? Well, 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. Elisha 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 Elisha'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 a 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 just, 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 with 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, this is personally 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 good enough, right? Because 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 even 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 just calls, calls. And it's just like, no, be quiet, be quiet, be quiet.

And it's just calling. Now, people, I 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.

What is controlling you? If there's no desire to fast, and the body keeps winning, I'm 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 a Puritan author. About four or five hundred years ago, I've got, 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, I don't know, might be too strong.

Come on, let's just, let's just bring in the soft little punches, 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 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 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'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 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, 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 are 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, 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 an 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.

I think, 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, and 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, 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 doesn'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, it's very healthy for the body to start consuming these things. I mean, I could, I could just amaze you with the amount of testimonies I've heard that tumors have shrunk.

God, people had like, just gross on their skin and different things that 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. And it's if fasting is 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've seen so many things cured by taking care of the body. I just, I just went to the hospital. Somebody has a golf-size cancer cell in their brain.

And 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 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 it on food.

But it does. And I see so many people. Let me give you an 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? 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 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... 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 why my passion is... I see so many people... Here's, I guess, the best word for it.

Self-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 what's also... It'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 you. 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 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 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, hooked on pornography are also hooked on certain things. It's the consumption of meat and food and all this junk. They're just consuming all this and then they're consumed.

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 voice, your flesh ever cry out? Give me, give me. And it begins to stop and silence that.

So is there a desire to resurrect dead prayers in your life? 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? The 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 enough. And I'm not talking about works, but there's a fervency there. 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.

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, I didn't die by day two.

It's just, and 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 hunger there. Lord, show me. What do I need to remove from my life? What is triggering? What is pulling me down? I can hopefully walk through that 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'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's 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's that faith today? Many times

here's the 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 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? 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 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 sometimes it takes a while to weaken the flesh.

It's a wrestling. 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. 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, 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 gonna stop fasting. Well that means you're gonna stop fasting from caffeine and sugar, alcohol, craving, all these things you're gonna, you're just gonna, you are gonna get hit with tons of withdrawals and toxicity and you 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. I mean I can just get through it.

It's not a big deal, but a couple years ago, wow, two hours with no caffeine, you're like gonna 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, that's 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 gonna go without lunch today. I'm not gonna have lunch at 11 or 12 or 1 or 2 or 3. I'm just gonna have water and I'm

gonna seek you.

I'm gonna 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 gonna give up lunch and just say, Lord I want to follow you in this area, I believe, personally I believe, that God is gonna 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 the glucose and the glycogen that has been stored.

It's 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 food was 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 then you know and the people like oh you're being mean to them.

Really? So you're gonna teach them to go that 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 and so but we think we're starving we think we're gonna 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 there's you got to use wisdom in these areas and I can steer you in the right direction with with books and things but I would be care 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 like say three or four hours and would go work out or try something I 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 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 God 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 what 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 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 saying 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 do we build the youth group and now that one is growing and do we have studies it's like and people are like shame we need to know I mean September's gonna be here before we know it I said I don't know so 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 got to make it to see you got to do this you got to push you got to push your anxious you're a lot look 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 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 and 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 and 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 our TV that she had said no John no John 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 it worked but we're hearing now jump now do it now the 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 that should be Temecula Temecula maybe Hesperia and they would just have me travel I preached when a pastor was out and I was doing so good now 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 right yeah I don't even know what was their 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 just upset it felt like a letdown I'm like I wanted to do this so bad 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 to haul is worshipping 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 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 shame 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 any and I there's been times I've told Tony this before and we talked about it and I fasted and for a day or two and my wife and then the sermons is dead because see I don't control God I'm not pulling his strings and telling him what to do he 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 my wife

that sermon stuck why did I fast all weekend I know I should have just had Starbucks and a big donut 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 hungry and food and and in 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 you tell the flesh 30 times a day

shut your mouth you can say it from the pulpits okay I just shut your mouth just you go back to sleep that's a yeah yesterday my son's an all-star baseball and we went to a game and of course the snack bars open like pepper bellies and hot dogs 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 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 it's something happens and that might your flesh might gravitate towards you you have the peace and being filled 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 Otto's 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 to 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 gonna 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 and not only physically but spiritually and it's funny even though you're weak spirits physically you're strengthened spiritually you're weak you're weak physically and your strength and 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

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