

Fasting - They Found the Secret

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman emphasizes the significance of fasting as a powerful spiritual discipline that strengthens the spirit and promotes spiritual growth.

Duration: 48:27

Scripture: Isaiah 58:6, Matthew 6:18, Matthew 26:41, Galatians 5:17

Topics: "Fasting", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the transformative power of fasting in his sermon 'Fasting - They Found the Secret.' He explains that while the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak, and fasting serves as a means to strengthen the spirit by denying the flesh. Idleman highlights the historical significance of fasting in the church and its benefits, including spiritual insight, power, and healing. He encourages believers to embrace fasting as a way to humble themselves before God, seek His guidance, and break free from the burdens of sin and addiction. Ultimately, fasting is presented as a vital spiritual discipline that can lead to a deeper relationship with God and a renewed sense of purpose.

Transcript

I am kind of like a kid on Christmas morning, unwrapping a present, a secret that I want to give you. It's not a topic that's going to be popular, but it's one that's helped me many times. And when we read in Matthew two weeks ago, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

Meaning the flesh doesn't want to do the things of God. The spirit does and the flesh doesn't. The spirit is weak to the things of God.

So I want to encourage you, I want to show you, the title is Fasting, They Found the Secret. Matthew 26, 41, watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is indeed willing but the flesh is weak.

The flesh is weak. And I want to help you strengthen the spirit. And it was interesting, one interesting thing about the Holy Spirit is that it's a hard concept to understand for some, but the Holy Spirit actually leads us.

He'll direct us, He'll guide us, He'll quicken us, He'll convict us, all these different things. So you kind of have this picture here of the Holy Spirit just leading us and He does that. But you can quench and grieve the spirit to such a degree that they will, have you ever grieved your spouse? And joy turns to, and

happiness, it's all that you're grieving.

And that's the same picture we have here. So the spirit is willing to lead, but He only leads those who want to follow Him. So it's almost as if the Holy Spirit's saying, I will lead you, I'm willing, but you have to obey.

So that His Holy Spirit just doesn't pick you up off the ground and just throw you towards God's will. He waits for you to submit to that. So the spirit's willing, the Holy Spirit is willing.

The spirit within us is willing, but the flesh is weak. And it's the flesh that holds us back often to the things of God. So here's how you engage the spirit.

Matthew 6, 18, I'm gonna paraphrase it. Don't let it be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you openly. Here's a big misconception in the Christian church.

I'm gonna wake everybody up. Fasting is a very important spiritual discipline that was lost about 100 years ago. 100 years ago, church history, they knew of fasting.

It was a very important part. I can take you to Martin Luther and John Calvin and John Knox and John Wesley, before they would preach in the Methodists and in Welsh in the 1700s, back to the founding of our nation with the pilgrims and Puritans and a lot of different groups, they would fast. And before you go, oh no, this does not sound good, let me remind you that any time you obey God and you kill the flesh, the reward is incredible.

That's why Jesus said, but when you fast, do it in private. In other words, don't be showing off. What about if I say, oh, I've been fasting for two days, guys, look how spiritual I am.

I'm so holy, and can't you believe it? And you're losing that reward. So Jesus is saying, when you fast, and interesting, not if you fast, but when you fast. He'd say, when you pray, when you give, and when you fast, do it in secret.

And your father, who is in secret, will reward you openly. So that's the title of the message, They Found the Secret. And you're probably wondering what's so important about fasting.

Well, let me just start off with a few things. You get spiritual insight. Spiritual insight.

And I don't have a lot of time to turn to these, but if you want to write down the name Daniel, you can turn to the book of Daniel, or also Google the Daniel Fast. And Daniel received spiritual insight. What he did, he said, I'm not gonna eat sweets, I'm not gonna eat junk food, I'm not gonna drink wine, I'm not gonna do anything that's the delicacies, just vegetables and beans.

It's like, oh, that would be tough, wouldn't it? No, that sounds easy, try it sometime. You won't even make it through tomorrow morning without coffee. So what it is, the Daniel Fast, and I don't really have a, we know that a fast in the Bible is going without water and food often.

Jesus would do it, Moses would do it, we don't recommend that. Obviously you need water, I don't think you can go more than three, four, five days without that. So it's abstaining from food.

But it gave Daniel spiritual insight, and many people who fast, they see their spiritual insight, God opens somehow their spiritual eyes. And also in regard to a Daniel Fast, and I would actually encourage those

who haven't fasted before, hopefully I can get to that in a little bit, you don't want to just go, I'm gonna go 30 days, water only, because you won't make it three days, usually. We've got so much junk in our systems that you'll start having severe withdrawals and you'll end up in the emergency room.

So you have to work your body sometimes into that. Daniel Fast is very good because you eat very clean. It's basically God-given food.

Minus dairy, minus meat, all these things that the body craves. What fasting does, Jensen Franklin, I don't know if you've heard of him, you can google some of his sermons on fasting, wonderful motivation, he tells a story about fasting, really it sharpens us. Do you ever want that edge to return? Do you remember when you were quoting Scripture, when you were ministering to people, you had that edge.

And if you had it, you know what I'm talking about. And if you've been in sports, you know when you can just start shooting and they're going, they're going, or hitting baseballs. There's that edge, and there's an edge in the Christian faith that many of us want to get back again.

I've lost that edge. I've lost that passion. And he talked about Jensen Franklin in one of his sermons about a lumberjack who was actually getting ready to retire.

He'd been a lumberjack 30 years. And this younger lumberjack, bigger, stronger, was there that day. It is going away.

And he said, hey, why don't we have a contest and see who can knock down the most trees? Well, the older lumberjack said, okay, I'll try that. I mean, you're bigger and stronger and probably can go longer, but let's do it. So they started going at it and the younger lumberjack was just, he was just knocking down trees.

And you know, the big acts, have you seen those guys? And just hitting that tree and that's a good workout. And he was hitting down trees and every hour or two he'd see the older man having to sit down and relax. And he goes, oh, I got this guy.

No problem. So he, you know, he just kept doing what he was doing. And by the time the day was over, he'd lost.

The younger lumberjack had lost, and he could not believe it. He said, how did I lose? You were taking a break every two hours. He said, I wasn't taking a break.

I was sharpening my axe. But isn't that true? That's what fasting does. It sharpens that axe.

It returns that edge. And if I could just encapsulate it, what you're doing is you're starving the flesh to be filled with the Spirit of God. Hunger.

We all have a hunger for something, a hunger for food. It's not wrong. It's God given.

But there's also a hunger and a desire for God. And these forces, these pulls are competing against each other. So as you starve the one, you get full of the other.

And you've noticed, I mean, after a big dinner, you're a claim jumper, and you get home. Do you want to read the Bible and pray? No, usually not. You want to do this.

Because it's that wrong hunger. Spiritual power. Fasting brings spiritual power.

No better example of this than Jesus Himself. He went on a fast for 40 days, and the Bible specifically says coming out of the wilderness, being filled with the Holy Spirit, now ready to start His ministry. Now, I don't know about you, but I don't call it a coincidence that Jesus fasted and then began His ministry.

And was filled with the Spirit. What He did, He subdued the flesh. And it's almost like, you have this picture here, you have a couple guys wrestling, or you see it on some of the Discovery channels, this big lion, these lions, and this lion beats the other lion.

Well, now that lion submits to Him, doesn't he? He knows. He knows, okay, I'm not taking this guy down. There's a submission that takes place.

That's what fasting does. The flesh submits to the Spirit. It says, okay, you got me.

I'm submitting to the Spirit. So the Spirit's willing, the flesh is weak. And once you overcome the flesh, once you overcome that, and the flesh says, okay, you got me, there's a submission that takes place.

And just to let you know up front, you're either disciplining, if you don't like this topic, too bad, you're either disciplining your body, you're either disciplining your body, or your body's disciplining you. There's not, we want to live in this middle ground, there's not a middle ground. You're either, like Paul, bringing your body under subjection, or your body is controlling.

And that's why we get in bad habits. You ever get in a bad habit and you just can't break it? It's just, why do I keep having it? And you just, it's like, I just can't break free of chocolate. I just can't break free of alcohol, or caffeine, or, it's just this habit has got me.

It's because the flesh has got you. And fasting breaks that. There's spiritual power that takes place.

Spiritual wisdom happens when we fast. Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted for the elders, before committing them to the Lord. Spiritual protection.

Ezra fasted before he led the people to rebuild some of the area of Jerusalem that was in light and waste. Spiritual victory. Israel lost 40 men in battle in just a few days, and Judges 20.

The people went to Bethel and sat weeping before the Lord and fasted that day until evening, the next day God delivered them. And you can go back to Moses with the Ten Commandments. I can take you to Nehemiah.

I can take you to Elisha. I can take you to Peter. And it's throughout all of the Bible.

It's in church history. Folks, this is the secret. This is the secret.

You know when you make, I don't know if you've ever made a shotgun shell, or you don't make it, but you put one together. You have the empty shell, and you put in a machine, and then you put in the primer, and then you put in the powder, and then you put in a plastic wad, and then you put in the shot, the BB, and then you close it. It takes all, that's what fasting does.

Many people are just, you got an empty shell. You got some powder in it, great, good for you, but there's no shot. Nothing's gonna happen.

That's what fasting does. It brings that spiritual insight. It brings that spiritual wisdom.

It stars the flesh. And after you fight the flesh, and you'll go through bad moods for 10 minutes, and you'll be, like today, I had to get something to eat. So instead, I stopped and got one of those green drinks.

Oh, man. But, 10 minutes later, I was feeling worship. I couldn't, I can't explain it.

It just came alive. It's like, I felt, oh, I conquered the flesh. I'm ready to preach tonight.

Had I caved into that, it puts you back, it backs into submitting to the flesh. Now, before I keep going, I wanna just tell you something about the physical benefits of fasting, because when God tells you to do something, it's also going to benefit you physically. Let no anger and bitterness and wrath and anger, let all that be put away from you.

We know, ask a secular psychologist, that we know, we know that holding on to those motions are, it's toxic. It will result in your health. It will hurt your health.

If you hold on to bitterness and rage and anger, it'll hurt you. I don't know how that all works in the body, but God does. So physical benefits of fasting, it helps with aging, better attitude, better resistance to disease, better sleep, change of habits, cleaner skin, creativity, drug detoxification, improved senses, vision, hearing, taste, joint relief, more clarity mentally and emotionally, more energy, more relaxation.

Let me just, on this point, more energy. This is amazing. When I do a fast, a juice fast sometimes, it's like, you know, sometimes you can have, I just want to lay down, take a nap, and then within five minutes, I'm up.

I wanna play, I'm with the kids. And I can't, where did all this energy come from? That's how God designed us. There's a scripture that says, I pray, I didn't reference it, because I just wrote it down about a half hour ago, or an hour ago.

I pray that you be in good health and prosper just as your soul does prosper. I believe that God wants us to be in good health, and it runs parallel with spiritual health. Now, all of us know that's not often the case.

Sometimes very spiritual people are sick from no fault of their own. So I'm not one of those people who, you know, just say you should never be sick, because that's clearly not the case. But, I wonder how much of our sickness is related to the choices we make.

And that's what fasting does. More energy, more relaxation, rejuvenation, rest for the digestive organs, a form of a Sabbath, technically. Spiritual awareness, weight loss, all these things.

So we see this wonderful spiritual insight, wonderful spiritual power, wonderful things it does by killing the flesh. So spiritually, we see how wonderful it is, and then we see that it also has physical benefits. Tremendous physical benefits.

Now, I don't know of anybody in this room who doesn't want physical benefits. So you want to be tired? And groggy, and all your joints hurt, and your back, and your neck, and all these things? There's good books out there to explain what fasting does. Fasting helps to get the body back to the original healthy state.

And here's why I believe that there's physical ramifications. Because the spiritual side is built up and strengthened, the health of the body often returns. Because when you build up the spiritual side, and you honor God, it often has an effect on the body.

I've seen it more times than I can even count. Fasting is directly related to our spiritual appetite. Hunger for God outweighs hunger for food.

John Piper explains it this way. The absent... Now this is going to hurt a little bit. It hurt me.

So it's going to hurt you. The absence of fasting in our lives is the measure of our contentment with the absence of Christ in our lives. And he's right.

Removing fasting is directly related to how much of Christ we have in our life. There are two competing hungers, which I alluded to earlier. The spirit and the flesh.

You know that by now, right? You have this spirit, spiritual side, filled with the spirit of God. If you're a believer. If you're not a believer, then you're under the dominion of the flesh, a slave to the flesh.

But as a believer, you're filled with the spirit. You have the spirit and you also have the flesh. And they are not friends.

They go like this all the time. They're fighting back and forth all the time. Galatians 5 I'm actually going to read from a commentary.

I don't quote it too much. The New Living Translation of the Bible. What that is, it's more of a thought-for-thought commentary on what a passage says.

So if you have a New Living Translation, I would encourage you to also get a study Bible. A good study Bible. English Standard Version, New King James.

It's more word-for-word study. And then you look at other resources to kind of add some more light on that. But I like what it said about Galatians 5-17.

The sinful nature, over here, wants to do evil. Which is just the opposite of what the spirit wants. And the spirit gives us desires that are opposite of what the sinful nature desire.

And these two forces are constantly fighting each other so that you are not free to carry out your good intentions. What he means by that is spiritual side. I have great intentions.

And I'm just going to carry them out. Well, that sounds good and you can. But there's a guy over here knocking on the door.

The spirit gives us different desires. Don't get the last word in. Be nice to your spouse.

Love them. Tell them how much you appreciate them. That's the spirit telling you what you do.

But then what's the flesh saying? You've worked all day. I'm tired. There's no dinner ready.

She keeps getting the last word in. I'm tired of this. I'm the man of this house.

You tell you the man of this. I can't get the spirit to say, don't you dare. Take the road of less.

Just humble yourself. Take a drive. Well, who's going to win? That's the battle.

And it happens. You can put this on lust. You can put this on anger.

You can put this on addiction. Whatever. It's the same battle that's happening between us.

It's like you have, Billy Graham gave this story many years ago, and I've told it a couple of times. It's almost like you have two dogs battling within. And which dog wins? Well, whatever one you feed the most.

If you're built up in the spirit, I can tell you right now, I treat my wife much better when I'm in prayer and in the word and in fasting and repentance and brokenness and humility and filled with the spirit of God. It's very good in our home on weekends. Right? Come home from church on a spiritual high, but come Wednesday, remember me? Remember me over here? It's pulling back in the little things.

You know what all those little things are. The trash isn't out. The house is dirty.

Whatever it is that flesh just wants something to grab onto. So that's what happens. That's why fasting is so important.

Fasting, basically, you just starve that dog to death. He's going to be quiet for a while. A couple hours go by.

Maybe usually for me, it's later around two or three. It's like, oh. And it's funny.

As soon as ten minutes go by, you're like, wow, I'm glad that hunger's gone. And then a couple hours later, here it comes again. So he stops for a while.

And as you go longer, I mean, I've read books, a lot of books. You can pick up good books on fasting. I don't know how people do it.

Ten days? Fifteen days? Water only? I must be weak. The longest I think I've went just water only is about two and a half days up at the Oaks. Wow.

Let me tell you. Yeah. You go through just extreme irritability and then you put on YouTube worship and you start crying.

It's like this and once you get that out, I think I don't know if Yvette's here, but I came down and I preached right after that. I came right from the Oaks to here and she said, you need to go do that more often because you're just in a broken state. The flesh has been subdued.

It's what happens. That's how important fasting is. When we give in to the desires of the flesh, this guy, it results in anger, addiction, depression, guilt, shame, anxiety, fear, and disappointment.

Sound like anybody in this room? I want to encourage you. On one hand, I want to explain what is happening. When the flesh is dominating, these things will dominate.

Everything I just read, anger, addiction, depression, guilt, shame, anxiety, fear, and disappointment. Many times we can't break these things because we keep opening the door to this. That's why fasting comes in.

Fasting is the right hook and the left hit. It just knocks the flesh down. Now you're saying, flesh, you're in submission.

You just lost. You just lost. Bill Bright, have you heard of him? Founder of Campus Crusade for Christ wrote the following.

Fasting was an expected discipline in both the Old and New Testament. Fasting and prayer can restore the loss of the first love for your Lord. Did you catch that? I mean, that right there would make me want to fast.

Because all of us have the tendency to drift back this way, don't we? Where's that first love? Where's that passion? Did you ever used to sing worship and tears would start coming down your cheeks? Or leading worship? Ronnie, Leslie, you're leading. You just start the power of God and you feel that first love. That's why I'm glad we sang that song.

He's my first and my last. You felt that. You returned to that first love.

That's what fasting does because you're starving the flesh. It's impossible to keep feeding the flesh all day long. Hamburgers and this and milkshakes and get home and all this stuff and chips and ice cream and then watch CNN and Fox News and oh no, it's Hillary or it's Trump.

We're all in trouble. Oh no. And we're just feeding this flesh and we walk around and we wonder, where is Christ in my life? Where? Shane, I hear you.

I want it. But I've lost that first love. Fast.

Fast. Fast. It's the best thing you can do.

But of course it's fasting and praying. Because you can just fast to fast like I want to lose weight and that's not fasting. And actually it's a pulling away from entertainment.

It's a pulling away from the enjoyments of life. And it'll make a big difference. When you feel that hunger and say, nope, I've done it before.

My wife's cooking something and it smells really good. I say, alright, you guys enjoy dinner. I'm going to go in my office and read and I open the Bible and I'm mad.

I'm mad for about 10 minutes. And I put earplugs in because I can hear the plates jingling and the kids enjoying it. I've got to go far away because you start smelling it and you're in trouble.

And it happens every Saturday. Most of you know I try to fast on Saturday. And I love it.

When I get here my stomach's empty but my spirit's full. And I go check our PO box in Quartz Hill and there's that Tony Reno's Tony Pizza on L14. It's like... I've got to get in and out of here quick because that smell is just... It's this guy.

Come on. One piece. One piece.

That's how he does it. Because who can have one piece? That's impossible. That's like saying, go to In-N-Out Burger and have one bite.

And one french fry. Just one. And that's what he does.

Anyway, I don't even know where I was at. Back to restoring the loss of the first love. That was an important point too.

Fasting is a biblical way to truly humble yourself in the sight of God. And that is absolutely true. Because by denying the flesh you say, God, I need you in this area.

I need you to return my son or my daughter to you. I need them to come back to you. I need my spouse to come back to you.

I need this to happen. God, I'm humbling myself. I'm humbling.

It's a form of... You can pull up nowadays on Google, all scriptures on fasting. And it's in every category for healing, for deliverance, to be set free. Mainly in the Old Testament it was in sackcloth and ashes.

Call the sacred assembly. Humble yourself and fast. Jonah came out to the city of Nineveh.

He said, repent or God is going to destroy you. What did they do? Fasted. And God relented because it was a mark of humility.

I'd love to do a whole series on this because we've got to get to a point of surrendering in this area. And if we're all honest, and I know we're all here tonight, why don't we want to? Why don't we want to fast? If we're honest, it's because I love food. Basically what we're saying is I can't submit that area.

The flesh is winning in that area. Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your true spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance, and a transformed life. When you fast, the Holy Spirit will reveal your true spiritual condition.

And I can't just say do this kind of fast. What I do is I take it to the Lord and I say, Lord, what do you want me to do? I read on it. For some people try going with water all day or juice.

Because you'll feel it around 10 a.m., 2 in the afternoon, dinner time, you feel this flesh is not happy. And you know what's funny? You're not going to die. I mean, we got enough right here, I could probably go a month, of not eating.

And there's books that you can read, pick them up at different stores on fasting, even from secular sources that say after the third day hunger leaves, and you're just tons of energy, you clean the house, the body's rejuvenating, you've got foul breath and different things, because the body is cleansing itself. See, God designed it for spiritual benefit, but also it cleanses the body. I'm wondering if it has anything to do with the Sabbath.

I mean, we take a Sabbath from work, why not give our body a rest? Fasting can transform your prayer life into a richer, more personal experience and a dynamic personal revival in your own life. And that's true, because when you're fasting, you're not in a hurry. Let me get through prayer.

Because many times we want to get through prayer because we're in a hurry. We've got to be somewhere, we've got to do this, we've got to eat breakfast, or lunch, or dinner. Why do most people want to leave here? Where are we going? In and out.

No, I hope not. Don't tell me that. Let's get into a little scripture.

Isaiah 58, 39. Why have we fasted, they say, and you have not seen? Talking to God. Why have we afflicted our souls and you take no notice? Now the main context of Isaiah 58 here, the main context is acting spiritual.

These people were acting spiritual. God, we are going through the fasting motions, but you don't take notice. We are going through the fasting motions, but you're not taking notice.

That's what the context is. We're fasting, and God says, I don't care if you're fasting. You're not, the heart's not right.

And I also thought of people saying this, I'm reading my Bible, but God, you're not taking notice. I'm praying, but God, you're not taking notice. He says, you're right, because your heart's not right.

Are you curious why I preach on humility and repentance and brokenness so much? Because that's the key. I can get you all fired up on prayer, but you'll pray and you'll say, God, why aren't you hearing? Why aren't you taking notice? You'll read your Bible, God, why aren't you taking notice? Because the heart's not right. A.W. Tozer said prayer will become effective when, you ready for this? If you wonder why sometimes prayer's not effective, prayer will become effective when we stop using it as a substitute for obedience.

That's a sermon right there, because we use prayer as a substitute for obedience. God says, obey me in this area. You say, nope, let me just pray.

God says, I'm not going to hear that prayer. See, prayer and obedience work together. Prayer, obedience, fasting, worship, if you can't break that, they talk about a three-stranded rope is not easy, broken, try a four-stranded rope.

It's not easily broken. In fact, continuing in Isaiah, Isaiah 58, in fact, God is saying, in the day of your fast, you find pleasure and exploit all your labors. Indeed, you fast for strife and debate and to strike with the fist of wickedness.

You will not fast as you do this day to make your voice heard on high. So basically, they're fasting, but they're not treating people good. They're not seeking God.

They're still engaging in the pleasures of this life. In other words, we find this in the New Testament. Your fast will not work unless you present your bodies as living sacrifices.

It's interesting on that scripture. Paul says, I beseech you, brethren, I beseech you, I beg you, brethren, to present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable, which is your reasonable service. Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and perfect will of God.

Many people want the will of God, but they don't want to present their bodies as living sacrifices. See, show me your will, God. No, you do this first.

See, once you present your body as a living sacrifice, what does that look like? Dying to self. Well, Shane, can you be more specific? Yeah, not my will, but your will be done. Can you be more specific? Yeah, not letting the flesh lead you.

When that happens, then God's will becomes clear. So I often tell people who want to know God's will, present your bodies as a living sacrifice to God. Stop fighting Him and surrender.

In verse 5, is it a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, an acceptable day to the Lord? Anyway, they've got the sackcloth and the ashes on. They would put the ashes on themselves. They would put this clothing that hurt.

They did all this stuff, and we're not eating today, but they're treating their neighbor with contempt. They're bribing them. They're engaging in other pleasures, and they're not following the heart of God.

So God says, I'm not going to honor this fast. It's as if God is saying, the fast that I've chosen is one in which your flesh fills the pain. Your spirit is built up, and you treat people the right way.

It's not a time to seek pleasure, take advantage of people, and get into arguments and debates. Fasting humbles you. I can recommend a good book.

I don't know if you can get it real quick on your phone, or order it. It's God's Chosen Fast by Arthur Wallace. God's Chosen Fast by Arthur Wallace.

The reason I brought this whole area of fasting up, I know most people tune me out right about now, but that's okay. I want to encourage the church to call a corporate type of fast mid-year, which is now. Sometimes a lot of churches do it January 1st, and that's good, but I need more than one for the whole year.

So I would encourage you, if you want to fast, there's a church that we're starting now. I'll talk about this probably through the end of July, not every week, of course, or through the month of July. We'll be in Matthew still, but I want to start thinking about fasting because it doesn't just happen overnight.

Some people might start immediately, but you've got to prepare your body, and I'll talk about that in a minute. But as a church, because what's going to happen, sometimes you'll start doing great, because it's real easy to say you're going to fast after a full meal. You eat good, and you're like, this sounds great, Shane.

After dinner tonight, that's when I'm going to start. And it sounds easy, but once the rubber meets the road, that's when it gets difficult. So I want to keep encouraging people over the month of July, because they're going to start out, and they're going to fall.

And they're going to say, forget this. And I want to just encourage you to keep doing, to falling forward. And it's not about, you know, pleasing God, I've got to do this.

What it does is it sets aside time for God, prayer and fasting. It's not about rules. It's not about a ritual.

It's not about legalism. It's saying, I want to starve the flesh and be closer to God. So whatever that looks like to you, I don't know.

I want to do the Daniel diet, or the Daniel fast, and just everything that's clean. It's very difficult. I've done it before.

And anything that tastes good? No. Basically. Unless you like beans and broccoli and things like that.

But there's Ezekiel bread, which is outstanding, right? With some honey on it, maybe, right? Oh, we can't put honey on it? Well, it's not about, again, it's getting the flesh submitted in weak areas. Some of you need to get off coffee. Some of you need to get off soda quickly, because it's killing you.

This is a time to start. If you want ideas, there's plenty of books out there. Jensen Franklin has a great website.

Maybe you could say, half a day, I'm just going to have water. I need my breakfast. What I've done before, I've had breakfast and then the rest of the day, nothing.

But freshly squeezed juice. Maybe some orange juice and some celery. And that's it.

Until dinner. That's hard, too. But I'm starving the flesh and starving the flesh.

And I'm hoping, God, I'm hoping to get to one of those two or three day water fasts again. Not, again, for legalistic, but just to, I feel prompted by God to get back into that. Because when I was doing that two years ago, I felt the edge was back even more.

The Word of God and everything was coming alive. I'm going to talk about a few things before we close. Prepare yourself.

Here's what you need to do if you want to do this. Prepare yourself. Get the body and the mind ready.

Because your mind might be ready right now, but it won't be ready when you're starving. And there's actually a couple chapters in that book, I think I recommended, or Jensen Franklin talks about the power of a made up mind. Very true.

Because if you go into the fast thinking, you know what? I'm going to try it. And, you know, I'll be kind of flexible. And, you know, you'll have every excuse in the book.

Every excuse. Because if I don't get specific, my orange juice will turn into a latte, which turns into maybe getting a donut, which maybe turns into I'll start next week. Because you're throwing, so go before God and say, Lord, I want to fast.

But you have to get the body ready. What I mean by that is, okay, Shane, start tomorrow. I'm going water only.

Well, you better start weaning off of caffeine. You better start weaning off of sugar and junk food and garbage that does nothing for your body. A lot of the food we're eating breaks no life to the body.

It's not God created it's man-made in a factory. I just ran into a guy today. I don't know if it was a divine appointment or not.

But he missed his doctor's appointment. Couldn't find it. I was listening in.

He's supposed to get gastric bypass surgery. And he only looked like 50 pounds overweight. You know, I'm like, what do you guess? So I said, hey, you don't always have to do that.

Oh, I can't stop, you know, In-N-Out or Carl's Jr. or something. So I had a book I had written a long time ago on this. I gave it to him and talked to him.

He just felt that he was hopeless. What it is, it makes your stomach really small. In some cases, I wouldn't rule it out.

If it's a health issue, you're going to die in a year versus this. That's what it's there for. But it makes your stomach really small.

But it's not necessarily the right way to do it. As believers, I believe there's another way that we can do that. But you've got to get the body ready.

So somebody wanted to fast. I would have them start cleaning up their diet. Start weaning.

If you have five cups of coffee a day, switch to green tea. Have about six tea bags a day. Get that down to five to four to three to two to one within a week or ten days.

Or your caffeine withdrawals will kill you. You'll go, I can't handle this. Caffeine is so potent that even now before people have surgery, they'll give them a caffeine IV to prevent withdrawals.

Hmm. That's why they call it the Christian crack. Right? Or sugar.

Just as dangerous. A lot of people... I mean, this guy probably... I've got diabetes. I can't eat... Why did you just buy that 32-ounce soda at the AM, PM? Well, that's different.

No, it's not. That's not different. I mean, you've got 10 teaspoons of sugar per 12 ounces.

You know what 30 teaspoons of sugar looks like? You'd have two hands. There you go. Put that in water.

That's what we're consuming. We wonder why we're in the mess we're in. So you have to start, okay, I'm getting this stuff out of my diet.

I'm cleaning up my... And you're getting the body ready because the fast is... A thousand years ago, it was much easier, I believe, because there wasn't chemicals and preservatives and all these things. There wasn't tons of sugar, fake food. The body wasn't addicted to all these things.

So fasting now, I believe, has to be strategic. You stop weaning... Start weaning off of junk. It's what it is.

I'm adamant on this because it is. Half a million people... Because people say, oh Shane, that's extreme. Well, listen to this.

Half a million people a year will have their chest opened up and a vein taken from their leg and sewn onto their coronary artery. I call that extreme. And that is Dr. Caldwell Esselton.

Thank you, Rosie, for posting on Facebook. If you're here, I saw this today. This is perfect.

I mean, isn't that so true? People say, oh, that's extreme. Really? Our failed health is extreme. What's happening in our culture is extreme.

Second thing, commit yourself to be specific and realistic. Be specific and realistic. What I do is just start simple.

Lord, here's what I want to do tomorrow, maybe... You know what it is. I'm going to start tomorrow or Monday, and you get specific, you get realistic, and you set realistic goals. Say, Lord, here's what I want to

do.

I need your help. And when you fall, fall forward. Because not everybody does it perfectly.

God's not looking for perfection. He's looking for a heart that simply wants to honor Him and His Word. Isaiah 58 continues.

This is the fruit of the labor. Is this not the fast that I've chosen to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free? Now, let me stop here for a minute. Some people talk about Isaiah.

They think he's talking about this is actually what a fast will do. A fast will loose the bonds of wickedness. It will undo the heavy burdens.

But he's actually telling the people. Isaiah is telling the people, wait a minute, in addition to your fasting, loose the bonds of wickedness. Undo the heavy burdens that you're putting on the people.

Let the oppressed go free. And break every yoke. In other words, humble yourself and live according to how God wants you to live.

Share your bread with the hungry. Bring them into your house. When you see the naked, cover them and hide not yourself from your own flesh.

Then your light shall break forth like the morning. Your healing shall spring forth speedily and your righteousness shall go before you. The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call and the Lord will answer. You shall cry and he will say, Here I am. So the people are saying, God, we're fasting.

Why aren't you hearing me? Why aren't you hearing us? He says, because you're oppressing people. You're arguing people. You're debating your wickedness.

All you want to do is fight and argue and take pleasures in the things of this world. Start treating people right. Start breaking before the Lord.

Start just humbling yourself. And then my light will break forth. That's exactly what it says.

The glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. You know what a rear guard is? The armies used to come and attack people from the rear. But God says, I'll be your rear guard.

I'll go before you. I will be your shelter. I will protect you.

You'll call on me and then I will answer because your heart was right during your fast. Now, ironically, when you do fast, you also loose the bonds of wickedness. If there's a wickedness in your heart, you're caught in something.

And you know what it is. We could sit here and name a lot of things, couldn't we? I can start at anger and finish at pornography. Where do you want to meet in the middle? Everything.

We're bound. Some of you are bound by something. Fasting will loose that.

It will undo the heavy burdens. Are any of you feeling a heavy burden? Are you weighed down? I can't do this another day. I can't keep going.

God, I need you to move. I'm weighed down by jobs and responsibility, by my marriage, by health issues. All these things are weighing down on me.

Fasting will undo those heavy burdens to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke. And this is what addiction is. People are bound in addiction.

And if you've never been addicted, thank God. And if you have that nature, you know exactly what I'm talking about. Because any chemical can come in there, and you're bound.

It's a yoke. What a yoke was, they would put a yoke around an oxen. And the yoke would be tied to the cart.

And this yoke, this oxen would carry the yoke on his neck, which would carry, which would pull, kind of like a fifth wheel on a trailer, in the back of your truck. It's a yoke. And God's saying, I will release that yoke, that heavy burden.

You'll be free. And that's what fasting does. Here's what I love about fasting.

You know, God, I'm submitting to you. I'm humbling myself. I'm praying.

I'm in your Word. You've got to move. Your Word says you will move.

And there's release there. There's freedom. But when we stay bound, and we're not doing what we know God's called us to do, there's no peace there.

There's no joy. We're bound. We're stuck in that rut.

And fasting breaks that loose. The light breaks forth when we humble ourselves. Healing takes place.

I've seen it many times before. Spiritual healing, emotional healing, mental healing, physical healing can take place all because of fasting. This kind cometh not out but by prayer and fasting.

Either that scripture's in the Bible or it's not. Jesus, why couldn't we heal this person? This kind cometh out not except by prayer and fasting. See what happens? Now you're in a position of victory.

The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer. You shall cry, and He will say, Here I am.

I mean, the wonderful thing about God, He will never, He can't. He can't be a liar. He will never let you down.

We sing those songs. Your friend will let you down. The church will let you down.

Anybody on this planet will let you down. The system will let you down, whatever that means. The government will let you down.

The next president will let you down. Everything. But God says, Here I am.

Just call on me. Nothing shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. Nothing, nor height, nor depth, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any created thing will be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, my Lord.

And you stand on those promises by praying, and fasting, and seeking God. The demons tremble when you pray, and when you fast, and when you worship. Why do you think, I don't know if you've ever been involved with somebody who has been demonized, and you just say in the name of Jesus, I plead the blood, because of the blood of Christ, and they'll start freaking out.

They'll start sometimes falling down. Why? Why? Because there's power in that name. This kind cometh not out, but by prayer, and fasting.

The reason, I think, is you're just a humble, broken person before God, because you've been fasting. You're not just going to come around, two in-and-out burgers, double-double, and a chocolate shake. Let me pray for you, my brother.

Whew, I'm tired, but I'll pray for you. See, what's the difference? I mean, it's a joke, but it's not. I want somebody praying for me who's fasting, because that's when you're... To me, you turn up the serious button, the gauge, and that's what it does.

That's how it works together. Pray. We have to pray, and the fast just says, God, I'm emptying myself.

Flesh, be quiet. Be quiet. It's okay.

Tell your flesh to shut up. Right? You can tell your flesh, shut up. Kids don't tell your parents, don't tell other people, but you can tell your flesh.

You have permission to tell your flesh. I do. Shut up.

Come back later. You're not talking to me right now. Well, Shane, that's not what eloquent preachers say.

Well, I don't care. I'm a broken preacher, and I need God. I need fasting.

I need prayer. I need worship, and it's funny. God gives us this arsenal.

God gives us this arsenal at our disposal, and we say, no, and we complain, and I do, too. I love food. I can't eat on Saturday.

It's ridiculous. Now we've got a barbecue next Sunday, and I committed to a Daniel fast, and you're all going to be seeing what's on my plate. Grilled vegetables.

Can't wait. But let me tell you the secret. I want God more than I want that.

See, what is hunger? Hunger is a strong desire for something. You have to refocus the hunger to God, because that's a hunger. It's a competing hunger.

It's a competing force. So I would encourage you, starve the flesh. Of course, you've got to throw the disclaimer in there to see your doctor so I don't get sued.

Make sure you're physically able to do these things. There are some people who can't. I mean, I didn't fast for 10 years because of borderline hypoglycemic blood sugar levels, but when I got off two Vente coffees

a day and a whole bunch of sugar, those symptoms seemed to disappear.

Hmm. You wonder how much is self-inflicted.

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