

The Hidden Treasure of Fasting

by Shane Idleman

Fasting is a powerful spiritual discipline that can help us position our hearts to hear from God, overcome addictions, and experience a stagnant spiritual life turn into flowing waters.

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Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:19

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

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of fasting as a spiritual discipline, highlighting the benefits of fasting for both physical and spiritual well-being. It addresses the struggles with addiction, the need to make healthier choices, and the impact of fasting on cleansing the body and drawing closer to God. The sermon also touches on the deceptive nature of the enemy in showing the price of following Christ without revealing the true cost of being distant from God.

Transcript

Many of you know we are ending our series on hearing God's voice, hearing God's voice through worship, his word, submission, all these areas. We took a break and we talked about hearing God's voice. How do we hear the voice of God? Because many people live in deception.

James says that we can hear the word of God, but not do it, and then we live in deception. So people that can hear the word of God, they know what the word of God says, but if they're not applying it to their lives, they live in deception. I can live in deception, because we come in, we hear something, but then we go home and we don't obey what we know to be right, and we live in deception thinking we're okay with God, when in reality, we're distant from him.

So we're ending that series tonight. I've been talking about a lot of different things. If you haven't been here, you can go and watch the series online.

It's on our website. But sin's ultimate goal, the ultimate goal of sin is to destroy our testimony and our lives by following the wrong voice. So you have to remember something, that sin wants to kill, wants to steal, wants to destroy.

That's the ultimate goal. Sin's ultimate goal is to destroy our testimony and our lives by following the wrong voice. And you know, a lot of people don't follow God's voice, don't follow God's leading.

They follow the leading of the flesh. They follow the leading of the world, and then they end up getting in trouble, and they say, what happened? But God was there the whole time saying, listen, listen to my voice. And that's what we wanted to unpack the last few weeks.

And on that note, let me just read James 1, 14 through 15 about this issue of sin's ultimate goal. James says, let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone. He will definitely test us, but he doesn't tempt us to do evil.

But each one of us is, you might say, well, then how do I do evil? If God doesn't tempt me, who does? The devil? Yeah, but guess who else tempts you? The enemy within. The enemy within. So James goes on to say, but each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

Then, when the desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. So isn't that interesting? That each one is tempted when he's drawn away by his own desires, and then when this desire is acted upon, that's when it becomes sin. And that's what we need to remember.

Temptation isn't sin. Temptation, we all are tempted, right? We're getting tempted in our thought life. We're getting tempted to do things that we know we shouldn't.

We're getting tempted. But what do we do with that temptation? Do we flee? Do we bring that thought captive to the obedience of Christ and make a decision that honors God and say, Lord, this thought is not right. I'm not gonna go there.

Nice try. And we go this direction. Or do we say, uh-oh, well, that sounds good.

That sounds a little better. That desire, that temptation then becomes, it's conceived. It's acted upon.

And we need to abort that conception right off the bat. And that's what people, you know, this happens to all of us. This is where we get in trouble, right? Well, I'm led this way, and then now the sin is conceived, and now it begins to grow and grow and grow.

This little weed that you could've pulled out early on eventually becomes a full tree, and now it's in our lives running chaos in our own lives. So how do we abort that process? Well, there's a couple different ways. How do we abort the conception of sin? You starve the fuel source.

You starve the fuel source. So whatever is fueling that conception, you've gotta starve that. And too many people wanna play with it, right? I wanna play with this sin.

I wanna play and coddle it, and kind of, I know it's not right, but it's really, you know, and we just sit there and we play that game, and we fall back into temptation, fall back into the sinful lifestyle. So how do you starve the fuel source? One way is to starve that fuel source through fasting. Fasting kills.

It'll starve that fleshly desire. So when we're talking about hearing from God, hearing is all about positioning the heart. Hearing God, right, it's all about positioning our heart.

Is our heart set in the right direction to hear from God, or is it set in this direction, I can't hear from God? So as we're talking about hearing from Him, it's all about positioning the heart. And I like what Andrew Murray said, that pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you. Did you catch that? Pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you.

And as we talked about in the last few weeks, worship opens the heart. Worship opens the heart to the things of God. We talked about the first series, or the first message, and then the word of God, the word of God directs us, and then godly counsel confirms and encourages, and then prayer leads and sustains, and then submission, last week, keeps us humble and teachable.

So you see how all that works together? The worship opens the heart, the word of God directs us, godly counsel confirms, prayer leads, and submission keeps us teachable. But fasting, fasting improves all of these areas. It is the hidden treasure that nobody wants to talk about, right? Everybody's like, oh gosh, why isn't he on some other topic? Not this topic, I don't wanna talk about fasting because we all love food, right? Who doesn't love to eat? I do, I'm looking forward to it after this service, aren't you? So that's why we don't like this topic, and I read a lot of early church history, 1600s, 1700s, 1800s, a lot of deep devotional writers, and you would find chapters, entire books on fasting.

But then when you fast forward to now, we don't hear anything about it. Even though Jesus fasted, Jesus said when you pray, when you give, and when you fast. It's a very important spiritual discipline that can help in many areas of life, and that's what I wanna talk about tonight.

Because fasting improves all of these areas. Worship begins to, the heavens begin to open as worship pours in. The word of God becomes living and active.

Godly counsel, we become teachable. We want to hear, we become moldable and flexible. We want to hear our prayer life increases, and we become humble and teachable, all through fasting.

And let me just read a testimony that I got this week on this area of fasting. Because we can't talk about hearing from God without discussing fasting, I'll just be honest with you. We can skip this topic if we want to, because it doesn't feel good, but to hear clearly from God, even more so, to heighten that experience, it demands that we fast from time to time.

So here's a testimony I got this week from somebody here who attends Westside. He wrote, I experienced by far the best day of being connected to God while fasting last Sunday. Previously, I would fast for only part of the day, or if it was for a whole day, I would still use caffeine and other things.

But this day was different. I still did chores, but I stayed focused and meditated on God's word. My prayers were ongoing throughout the day.

I felt led by the Lord to make a difficult phone call in order to take the first step in the healing process of mending a broken relationship. Another thing that God did for me that day was I learned how to become a better spiritual leader. Fasting is difficult and grueling for the mind and body.

However, both were refreshed, cleansed, and invigorated afterwards, and still are five days later. I had a lot of energy the next day, and I could think clearly. Yesterday, I did the same type of fast.

And during the last eight days, I've experienced an incredible amount of healing take place in my marriage. In retrospect, I did not even realize how broken my marriage had been. I have never been so close to God, have been so in tune with his will for my life because of fasting.

So that can be the hidden treasure of fasting. And why is it so important? Why is this issue so important? Because a lot of times, we get caught on, we get caught up on feeding the flesh, right? Myself included. We're just feeding the flesh.

We're feeding the flesh. We're feeding the flesh. Fasting says, stop, hold it, hold it, stop right there, stop feeding the flesh so you can be drawn closer to God.

You might say, well, how does that work? Well, it works pretty easily because you starve the flesh. And as you're starving the flesh, the spiritual side of you grows. The flesh kind of is in submission.

Paul says, I discipline my body, and I bring it into submission. It's starving the flesh so you can grow spiritually. Do I like that process? No.

I wish I could stop by Panda Express on my way home and Starbucks tomorrow and get a whole bunch of donuts, and that would just grow spiritually. I wish, don't you? But it doesn't work that way. But all things are good because how God designed it, there's a benefit just beyond the struggle.

What fasting does, it repositions the heart, and it starves the flesh. We can see better, spiritually speaking, and we can hear better. Today, I was gonna bring some glasses that my one-year-old got into, these sunglasses I had.

And you know, after kids touch glasses, and there's a little bit of mustard on there, ketchup. It's like, oh, what is this? I gotta throw it in the washing machine or do something with it. But if I were to put those glasses on, would I still be able to see? Yeah, a little bit.

I can still make you guys out in this, but there's tons of stuff in the way, and I can still function. I might be able to drive home. But what fasting does, spiritually speaking, is it takes those glasses off, and God's will becomes living in your life.

If you begin to see things clearly, God's word becomes alive. Worship sounds sweeter. You don't want that country music junk on that's causing you to go back and drink again.

You wanna get the worship on. People are laughing. I guess I hit a chord with that one.

Well, I'm a country music fan, but it does make you just wanna get on a train and grab a six-pack of beer and just cry. But fasting removes those things from your life because now you're in tune with the spiritual side. Why? Because you're not thinking about eating.

You're thinking about God. Lord, I'm hungry right now, but I'm praying about these issues, and you have a list of things. Lord, this relationship.

I need to know your will. Financial doors. Lord, I need healing in my life.

Lord, I don't wanna return to that addiction. Lord, I need you now more than ever before. And that fasting forces you to pray.

It forces you to worship. The fleshly man has to bow with the foot of Jesus Christ because you're seeking him now with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. That's what fasting does.

It builds you up spiritually. Just consider for a minute, consider how much our addictions control us. I was shocked this week.

I mean, I was shocked when I thought, and you just sit and you think about how much our addictions control us. What happens first thing when we get up in the morning? Word of God or an addiction? I gotta

have my, you fill in the blank, whatever it is. Coffee for some, Mountain Dew for others, Diet Pepsi.

I gotta have it. I gotta have my cigarette, my nicotine. I gotta have it.

I gotta have it. We become controlled by these things. Think about for many years, I had to have my coffee and then this.

I had to have it. It controls everything, what time I go to bed, what I buy, where I go. What about this? We drive a certain way to pick up our addiction.

We go to certain places so we can hold on to our addiction. We schedule things around our addiction, right? People will leave here tonight and they will stop by somewhere and grab their addiction. I need my lift.

I need my, and I know, I mean, I had to go through, I mean, I was addicted to Diet Pepsi. I was addicted to Mountain Dew where I could not stop. It was my, it was hell breaking loose of that stuff.

I mean, I've often said that caffeine is the hardest thing I've ever had to wean myself off of, bar none, without a shadow of a doubt. And I knew, being in the health and fitness industry, I don't wanna make this a whole, be like, oh, here he goes again. But we need to hear these things because we are, in giving our body things that the body's not designed to assimilate and be on this high strung out all the time and be amped up all the time and energy drinks and monster drinks and soda, all these things that have no value, no value physically, no value nutritionally, we're feeding on these things and it's controlling us.

Think about this. No one has ever said, hey, you're addicted to apples. It's causing you to lose control of your life.

Never, ever. Go to your kid, broccoli, you've had enough broccoli, you're eating too much of it, never. Why, because these addictions wanna pull us in a certain direction.

And I know because the addiction begins to, I gotta have my morning this and then I gotta stop by somewhere by one o'clock or I'm gonna be a ticking time bomb. You don't even wanna be around me until I get my, you fill in the blank, right? And then people driving home, I gotta get my dark chocolate and peanut butter and my coffee, I gotta have, and we live our whole lives with addictions. Have you ever thought about that? It controls everything.

I know people who go to a certain restaurant because they serve their certain beer. And then after four of them, they go, oh, I can't, I gotta stop that tomorrow. And that controls everything.

We get up in the morning, we start over with our other addiction. It's just an ongoing cycle of feeding addiction. If you look at the lives of most people.

If you don't struggle with addiction, you just thank God right now, I'll tell you what. Thank God, because it controls. What we do is we put the addiction first and we make choices around it and we have to have it.

Now, are some of these things good and God-given? Well, if it makes you feel better, I don't know if God would, Pepsi and all these sodas are really a wise thing. Tons of coffee, I don't think that's a wise thing. Just lose wisdom.

What's it doing to the body? Is it helping or is it hurting? And you'll see the article in the bulletin, sin never stands still. Addiction never stands still. Fasting starves it.

Fasting will put the flesh into submission. I can give you a dozen testimonies right now of men who have overcome pornography by fasting from food. What? How does that work? Because you're starving the flesh.

These lusty fleshly desires are minimized, severely minimized. I know people who have overcome pills and alcohol and caffeine by fasting from food. Fasting because it puts, you tell your body, now I'm in control.

See, now I'm gonna have you submit to me, I'm gonna do what's biblical, I'm gonna seek God and I'm gonna starve the flesh from these things. Now I'm gonna get into using wisdom when you do that in a minute, but I'm trying to set the stage right now. As the flesh submits, you become more in tune with the things of God.

A stagnant spiritual life. Do you have a stagnant spiritual life? I'd say most people I talk to, they say, Shane, my Christianity just stinks. God seems distant, the worships, whatever, and I couldn't read the Bible if my life depended on it.

But you know a lot of that's about motivation, right? Because as soon as I said, hey, as soon as you get through the Bible once, I'll give you \$10,000, you guys would be avid readers, right? You'd disconnect the TV for a month. Okay, Shane, pay up. Every single word, \$10,000.

So it has nothing to do with, it has everything to do with motivation. We're not motivated. And as we're feeding the flesh, that kills spiritual motivation.

Think about it. The more people we eat, we drink, all these things, it kills our motivation for the things of God. Now, does God give us some of these things to be enjoyed? Absolutely, I'm a big fan of good food.

Who isn't? And it's not really talking necessarily about food right now, but I'm talking about addictions and indulgence and all these things. What happens when you fast? A stagnant spiritual life turns into flowing water. What I mean by that is you're not stagnant anymore.

You see hope, there's hope there. You see the will of God for your life like never before. Choices are easier because you're waiting on God.

You're putting the flesh in submission because a lot of times we make decisions in the flesh, right? We rush things, we push things, we're in a hurry, and we just, like I call bulldozer Christianity. We just steam right through life. And then we pick up the pieces later.

But fasting helps us slow down in what was a stagnant spiritual life. And I know there's a lot of people out there. Christianity's boring, Shane, the Bible's dead.

I'm just dying spiritually. Well, if you fast and you seek God, you will be revigorated in a powerful way because that's what you're doing. You're starving the flesh, it's pulling you down, and you're focusing on God.

How in the world can you go wrong with that? Will it be easy? No, it will not be easy, but it will be worth it. So a stagnant spiritual life turns into flowing waters. The mind becomes uncluttered and focused.

The things of God rather than the things of the world begin to dominate our thought life. I know these things are sometimes hard to hear, but I committed, when I committed to this church, I committed to speak the truth. I committed to help people, even if it hurts.

I committed to help you physically and spiritually and emotionally and mentally, all these different areas. We're a whole person. If all we do is talk about the spiritual things, then we go have eight donuts, what's the point? What's the point if we just keep not taking care of the gift that God has given us, but we just focus on spiritual things, brother, but never the physical things? Well, the last time I checked, God has called me to do something spiritual, but in a physical body.

So if I have more energy, more focus, my temper's better, you think being off caffeine's gonna help me have a relationship better with you guys? You better believe it, because if not, I'll be snapping, I'll be rude, I'll be moody, I'll tell you off, I'll get mad at my emails, I'll get mad at my texts, because I'm high strung, and I'm anxious, and I'm irritable. You don't think that would help? Absolutely. Now, put that into your own life, in your own marriage.

You think you'd be a better spouse if you weren't so edgy and moody, and living on the edge, and just walking on eggshells? Do you ever think that, oh, I'm just walking, I just can't, I hope they're in a good mood today, I hope they had their cup of this, I hope they got their soda, because if not, all hell's gonna break loose. I don't think that's a good thing. And if you wanna argue and debate this, you better come with some scripture.

Because this is, we're not taking care of the, America, the most blessed nation on the planet, is dealing with more disease, and pills, and sickness than any other place. Moses received the word of God by fasting. Do you realize that? Moses received the will of God by fasting.

King Jehoshaphat experienced victory by fasting. Esther received protection by fasting. Elisha was restored by fasting.

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

You see a trend here? Joel offered the cure for judgment when he was fasting, and by fasting. As a matter of fact, in the book of Joel, when it talks about this time, when God's judging the nation, Joel says, listen, call a sacred assembly, call the people, consecrate a sacred fast, and repent, and cry out to God, to remove his hand of judgment. Jesus was empowered.

Jesus Christ himself fasted, yet we don't think we need to. Jesus fasted for 40 days, yet most people think, I don't need to do that. Well, if Christ did, we better, might want to rethink this a little bit.

Jesus was empowered by the Spirit after a time of fasting. It's interesting, the Bible says that Jesus fasted, right? 40 days, 40 nights, and then Jesus, being filled with the Spirit of God, came out of the desert. Now we hear of him.

Now he goes from obscurity to notoriety. Now there's power in everything he does. Now he's on a mission because of this time of fasting and overcoming temptation.

There's powerful parallels here. What about Paul? He was called on straight street after fasting. Peter received confirmation about knowing God's will after fasting.

Cornelius' household was saved after fasting. It's probably not a big stretch to believe it in the book of Acts, when they were up in the upper room praying and they were probably fasting. The Spirit fell upon those people.

So it's a wonderful spiritual discipline about starving the flesh and feeding the Spirit of God. It's what it boils down to. Ezra, 823, so we fasted and asked God and he answered our prayer.

Nehemiah 1.4, and it came to pass when I heard these words that I sat down and I wept and I mourned and fasted and prayed before God of heaven. I am convinced, what did Nehemiah, why was he mourning? Because he just got report that the city of Jerusalem lied in waste. And the king said, why are you sad? He said, why should I not be sad when the place of my father's tombs lies in ruins? Jerusalem been wiped out.

And he went and he fasted and God began to move in that area. I often wonder, everybody's complaining about America and the government. I wonder what would happen if a handful of Christians got serious and they prayed and they fasted.

I don't know, you think we might get God's attention? Listen, there's churches across our nation praying and fasting, praying and fasting, praying and fasting. That would spark revival in my opinion. Remember what I said a few weeks ago, if we'd spend more time in the prayer closet and less time on Facebook, we would see a revival.

I'm convinced because God revises people. God's word does not fall void. If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, well humility often throughout the Old Testament was affliction of the soul.

Humbling ourselves and fasting and praying and petitioning God, that moves the hand of God in a powerful way. I don't know how exactly it worked, but in the supernatural realm there where we're fasting and God moves in a powerful way. Daniel, when Daniel was fasting, there was a spiritual battle going on, principalities over that nation.

It's very interesting if you look at scripture, all the scriptures on fasting. Basically what you're saying is I'm going without so I can draw closer to God. Isn't that what it is in a nutshell? I'm going without so I can draw closer to God.

And isn't it interesting how we do that in the physical realm all the time? Have you ever heard the word retirement? I'm gonna go without so I can have something later. I'm gonna go without in this area so I can have something later. It's the same thing, going without.

We do this for physical things. And I've actually been praying about this sermon for a long time. I've been looking for an opportunity to kind of tie in my background in physical fitness and health and with preaching and trying to have a message that brings us two together.

So I want to share some things that I've learned over the years on this area of fasting and how it can help with the body because I think the spiritual truths in our life also parallels with physical truths. You know, if God says do something, here's some spiritual disciplines, it's gonna have physical benefits as well. I mean, God doesn't tell something to do something spiritually and then we find out that fasting is the worst thing you could ever do for the body.

It's actually the opposite. It's one of the best things you can do for the body and healing it. So here's what to expect.

For those who are serious, I know half the room are giving me sour faces and are waiting to get on to the next message next week, but those of you who really want to apply this, here's what to expect. First, expect a fight. The fight.

The flesh is gonna say you better not and your spirit's gonna say but I want to and you expect a fight. Expect it. And you can prevail.

Because if we teach people here's what to expect, then they're forewarned and then they're forearmed. And that's what we want to do. So number one, fasting is natural.

Fasting is natural, but so are cravings. So here's the battle. Fasting is natural, but so are the cravings for food.

So it's gonna go back and forth. Fasting is a natural process just to let the body relax. Stop working and digesting and processing and cleansing.

Just let it relax. It's a natural process. It's nothing to be scared of.

But if you truly cannot fast, and here's my disclaimer, see a physician before fasting. Okay, so I'm off the hook legally. But honestly, if you need to talk to a physician, do some extra research, I'm not saying start a hardcore fast tomorrow, but I am wanting to motivate you.

But if you truly can't fast, then try a complete cleanse type diet where it's just healthy foods. Healthy, organic foods and just healthy as you can get. Well, I don't want to do that.

Well, see, there might be excuses. We might just be making excuses. Because you know what my excuse was for 12 years why I didn't fast? I'm a borderline hypoglycemic.

Low blood sugar, I'll just fall over. Guess what I found out when I fasted? I'm not a borderline hypoglycemic. I actually feel much better.

A lot better than a Reese's peanut butter cup and a strong cup of coffee. Feel good for an hour, but then when that hour's over, the crash comes. So you have to be careful.

A lot of people, we make excuses why we can't fast, and really, fasting is good for you. If you can't. But see, I'm not against the medical industry here.

Medical industry and the health industry should work together. You need both, you need both of those. But we can't run to one or the other.

We have to find the middle ground. But if you truly cannot fast, try going completely healthy. Eliminating all the things you know that are bad, just focus on God-given foods only.

Try that, just try that. And if we don't want to do that, then really, we don't want to fast. Really, it's an issue of the heart.

We're making excuses why we don't want to do these things. Anytime you can fight the flesh, say, Lord, I'm gonna have a healthy breakfast tomorrow, not all this other junk, oh, that's gonna be hard. I'm gonna

have a healthy lunch, oh, that's gonna be hard.

And you're teaching the body, you're training the body. So even if you can't fast, there are definitely ways you can make some changes. I was talking to a guy who was a diabetic recently, and he said, I'd love to fast, but I can't.

So I understand that, and I said, but you also realize that those three egg McMuffins every morning, you're not really on your, it's not gonna put things on your side. And that 42-ounce soda from A&PM? Man, so we get tricked into these things. I can't fast, but I'm gonna consume all this garbage and all this junk as if that's not gonna matter.

Oh, yeah, it's gonna matter. There's a price to pay. God has given us certain things to take care of the body and certain things that will destroy the body.

So just look at that. Before we make excuses, look at what we're consuming, and look if it's God-honoring, and just pray. Actually, just pray to God.

I'm amazed in this area, just about everybody I talk to is convicted about something in this area, right? I know I need to do that, I know I need to eat better, I know I need to take care of myself. Well, where in the world does that conviction come from if it's not from God? Because he's wanting us to take care of the billion-dollar piece of machinery that he's given us to live one life. I realized that a while ago.

I don't know if I'll ever, I mean, I might get cancer in the future because I put my body through hell for 29 years. So I'm not saying this is a foolproof thing or a heart attack, I might. What I put my body through with the drugs and crystal meth, and I mean, I'm just glad I'm where I'm at.

But then I learned that the more you take care of what God has given you, the better you can minister to others. The more I'm not as grumpy, the more I have more energy, I can go to different places, I can be more stable, I can take care of my family. It works all together.

I mean, when I was 275 pounds, just going up a flight of stairs was hard. I didn't have any energy to do anything. I just wanna sit down and prop up my feet and CMT.

You know what that is? Catch a music television. Tim McGraw, Faith Hills, back in those days. I don't know if they're still on.

That's all, just, oh, I'm so tired, I can't do it. And I just didn't do anything. Just get here and do this, and it was so tiring.

And then losing that weight and seeing the difference in the vitality and the energy. And at 24 years old, I was told to go on high blood pressure medication for the rest of my life. So I told the cardiologist on Avenue N by the freeway, Dr. Chowdhury, I told him, give me 30 days.

He goes, that seems ridiculous. And 30 days, started losing, eating healthy, and he said, oh, this is really good now. You're down, we don't need it, blood pressure 117 over 75.

Eventually it is now. But back then, they wanted to put me on, you know, so I had a machine, I had to measure it every night. Medication, they were gonna put me on all these.

But see, that's my one beef with the medical industry. They go for the, it's almost like let's cover up the sore, but not get to the root of the cause of it. So there's a pill, but let's not mask it.

Let's get to the root of what's going on. Let's get to the problem. The problem was my eating habits.

The problem was not taking care of my body. And so being able to lose that weight and then getting everything down, I got to where I had to read my own blood work. HDL and LDL levels and cholesterol.

So this isn't some guy up here just speaking about something he doesn't know about. I had to watch my blood work and look at triglyceride levels, keep them under three, you know, all these things. And I watched just how taking care of the body put everything back to where it was.

And I saw that a dozen, I would say hundreds of times in the physical fitness industry. People would get off medication, get off all these things, and once they took care of the body the way God designed it, miracles would happen, healing would happen, all different kinds of things. So I saw it.

But does that mean that happens in every case? Of course not. I'm not stupid either. I realize that some things that we cannot prevent.

But I've seen the miraculous benefits of it. And I feel better, don't you? When you're taking care of your body? I mean, a healthy bowl of oatmeal, a little bit of green tea versus a 18 ounce venti coffee, black. I'm like a NASCAR driver.

I'm like, honestly, my kids do anything, I'm just upset. I'm irritated, I'm like, I can't handle this. Traffic is off, everything's like, what is going on? Caffeine-induced anxiety disorder.

Over 500 milligrams of caffeine, you will experience those things. Listen, I've studied this, I've read biochemistry books, I've read biology books from secular, from Christian, from all these things, and we are affecting our body in a very powerful way and we don't even realize it. Number one, because nobody wants to talk about it.

I remember I went to the cardiologist about this, these things, and he goes, oh, no, coffee and all that's okay, you just need to do this. I'm like, I feel like I'm ready to explode. That does not feel good.

My heart, where's that come from? I mean, so just think about all these things. That's all I'm saying is think about it. Motivation, here's the 13th thing to expect.

Motivation turns to discouragement. How many of you are very motivated right now to make some changes? Oh, good, that's more than I thought. And there's a big group who don't want to raise their hand, too, right, and you are.

All of us are convicted, me too, me too. I love a hot cup of coffee, you know, a big cup of coffee with cream, but I am a jerk after it. And then I like to get big, organic, black, chocolate, deep chocolate, dip it in some peanut butter every night.

And then somebody about four years ago told me about some health drink called kabucha, and then you get hooked on those things. Like, there's addiction everywhere. You gotta break away, okay, Lord, okay.

The addiction, culture, everything, we just love it. We just gravitate towards it, and it affects us. It really affects us.

You wanna know how much it affects you? Try going off. You're gonna turn into Mr. Nice Guy or Mr. Jerk. You're gonna be very mean for the first few days.

Why? It's called withdrawal. You're withdrawing from an addictive substance that you need. Stop eating apples, you will never get upset, right? If you eat broccoli all the time, stop broccoli tomorrow for a week, see what happens.

Nothing, nothing. We just don't realize how powerful these drugs are. I'm also reading, I wasn't gonna, I mean, I would just shock you if I brought in a book, it's called Caffeine Blues, and it does all the studies on, you know, everybody that says, you know, coffee's good for you, this, if you go and you look who's paying for those tests, Folgers, you know, the industry, they're actually hiring people to say certain things.

And you look at the statistics on, he had a whole thing on ADD and HDA and kids and all these diseases linked with, he told one story where this lady actually had to get checked into a mental ward, but once she was in that mental ward and away from caffeine, she was having like 16 cups, I think, a day, once she was away from all that, after some withdrawal, she became a normal housewife again. They let her go in a few weeks. Well, what do you, wow.

This isn't like, oh, Shane, come on, get over it. No, I've experienced it. I've seen it.

I've seen somebody turn into a irritated, angry jerk off Mountain Dews and Red Bulls. They go from this, oh, no problem, whatever, to this, oh, Jekyll and Hyde. So I've seen the difference in my own life and countless other people, too.

We had a boss in construction that I worked with, and I knew, man, after he got his coffee, he was just, he was on a rampage. First, he was calm and quiet, and then after that, he just went off on people. So anyway, I'm getting off my point here.

I'm not, my whole thing isn't to bash caffeine. It's to just bash everything that's hurting the body. So let's just put everything in that camp that is doing that.

Motivation turns into discouragement. So you're motivated, guess what? It's gonna turn into discouragement. It will, be prepared.

But then guess what? The discouragement turns into motivation once you get past it. So you'll go through a cycle of, oh, I got so many excuses to not do, and then once you pass through that, then the joy will follow and peace, and like, Lord, do you ever feel good when you conquered the flesh? When you conquered the flesh, and you said, Lord, I followed your word, I feel so much better. There's peace, there's freedom.

Prayers are being answered, and God's moving in a powerful way. Prepare for it. This is number four, prepare for it.

Don't just start tomorrow morning if you're addicted to all kinds of things. Wean off of it. Schedule it.

What I mean by wean off is if you're having a big cup of coffee in the morning, later in the day, and a soda, you better, you gotta minimize that. Put it in half, and then half again, and then half again, then half again, and half again, half again. So after the course of weeks went by, you can eventually, a week and a half, 10 days.

If you're like me, it took me about four months because you kept excuses. I'll just start tomorrow. I'll have a hard day.

I've got a lot to do today. I need that fix. So you just get caught in this endless cycle.

But once you get down to it, then you can go on a water-only fast, no food, if you can do that, because you've got your body to a state of now it's ready. If not, you're going cold turkey, and you'll just feel like. I mean, if I had the symptoms of going cold turkey, flu-like symptoms, vomiting, you can't sleep, a foggy memory, a severe depression, uncontrolled anxiety, all from just going off caffeine.

So you tell me that's not a powerful substance. You just try to tell me that. I'd love to see how you're gonna back that up.

Now, some people it doesn't affect as much as others. I got it. I'm not talking to those who aren't convicted.

I'm talking to the convicted group right now that knows that these areas are hurting them. So prepare for it. Wean off, and then schedule it.

So when I fast, usually like I've told you guys a lot of this before, but I stop usually Friday night, so I haven't eaten since Friday. I just do water all day on Saturday, just so I can, I just feel clearer, preach better. Lord, I need you here because I can't do this.

I just humble myself, Lord, move in a powerful way. And it begins to, I schedule for the days that I can do that, or if I'm going for two days, I usually maybe when I'm on vacation, or the kids are gone for a few days, or you've gotta schedule, because you'll go through mood swings that you never thought existed. You never thought that was inside of you, and you're just, and you get so upset, and you're fighting this, but then when you start to wean off, and when you schedule it, and really fasting is, when you're taking in a lot of healthy water, you're giving your body a lot of water that it hasn't needed, or hasn't had in a while, and you're giving it tons of rest of the needs.

We're so amped up in this culture, we never have time to rest. We're always on the go, always on the go, always on the go. So what this does, it brings refreshing and relaxation back into your life, and guess what, on a day when you're fasting, you can take three naps.

It's okay. That should tell you something right there. The body's saying, stop.

It's just, you're just resting and recuperating, but if you can get a good habit of once a week, doing a one-day fast, or once a month, doing a two-day fast, or different things, you'll feel a lot better, because the body was designed to do that. And finally, take it to God and set a timeframe, and keep it, but be realistic. Because many people say, yeah, I'll try fasting, and they go about five hours, right? Okay, breakfast, oh, forget it, I can't do this.

And they just give up, and there's no timeframe. So you have to have a realistic timeframe. Listen, I'm gonna go, I started the whole day, I had a big breakfast in the morning, and then I went the whole day on Saturdays, that's how I started.

And that was hard. Oh man, around 11 o'clock, you're like, oh Lord, and then two o'clock, oh, what's going on here? But you took baby steps, and then you can go longer because you're disciplining the body. Now

granted, I don't want people to get caught in a legalistic thing, you have to do this, you get trapped in this.

It should be part of our freedom as Christianity, as Christians, is to draw closer to Christ through spiritual disciplines. So it's not a love-hate relationship, it's more of, Lord, I love to do this because I draw closer to you. And then tomorrow, back with the kids, eating normal, and Monday, eating normal, but then you're in this relationship of fostering spiritual disciplines.

So it fills us with the life source of water and the power of rest, two very important things. And make sure you're getting healthy water, not like tap water and just a lot of junk in the water because the whole idea is you're cleaning and cleansing your body. And remember, spiritual disciplines have physical benefits.

Spiritual disciplines, when God tells us to do something spiritually, it's gonna have physical benefits. So let's talk about those benefits briefly. And this is where I'm gonna pull in some of my past into this with my background in helping people in this area.

Many diseases feed on sugar and junk food. Did you know that? Many diseases in the body, allergies, anything, they feed on this junk, these toxins that we're feeding our body. And I've said before, it bears repeating though, we all get cancer cells often, but the immune system recognizes the invaders and it removes them, kind of like Pac-Man, right? Takes them out.

Now this isn't in the case, I'm not saying just eat healthy and you'll be fine, of course not. People get things, diseases, and it's beyond what anybody can do, only God can do a miracle there. But for the most part, many diseases feed on these things, feed on toxic food and junk food.

And fasting gives us a desire for God-given food. So the good thing about fasting is now grapes taste better, apples taste better, everything tastes better. God-given food, the way we're designed to eat, it's palatable, it tastes better.

I don't want an In-N-Out burger tonight, I want something God-given. Because the fasting is to help the body, it's trained in that area. And interesting too, not only does it give us a desire for God-given food, so once we get back on track with God-given foods, foods that God has made, there's something I want to point out, they've been studying this for a while, LGIC, E-L-L-A-G-I-C, LGIC acid, like from berries, blueberries, strawberries, you know, berries.

LGIC acid actually eradicates disease cells, test tubes, different things, it will eradicate disease cells. That's why they'll tell you eat a lot of reds, eat a lot of purples, eat a lot of blues, eat a lot of colored foods, because they're high in these things. Like blueberries, right? But here's the flip side.

Isaac will put it up in just a minute. Let that stick in your mind. I just came across it this week.

If he shouldn't breathe it, why should we eat it? And on that note, like blueberries, strawberries are the most heavily sprayed things in our nation. Sprayed with eight, I think blueberries have eight different pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, going all on this stuff, and then we're taking these toxins and we're taking into the body. So there's a flip side to this.

That's why I promote God-given organic food that was prepared just like God prepared it. I'm walking out in the desert, how would God prepare it? I'm walking out in the Yosemite Valley eating nuts, how would God prepare it? Do I do that perfectly? Absolutely not. Absolutely not.

It's impossible to eat perfectly in this culture. But you can definitely put your body in a state of eating. Why not blueberries with nothing on them? Nothing.

And watch the healing power that could take place. Here's what else happens. Removes toxins.

While you're fasting, the toxins are released. That's why sometimes there's a foul odor sometimes, urinary tract is just, you're just getting rid of all these toxins in the body. That's why medical professionals a lot of times on the physical fitness side will say that death begins in the colon.

Death begins in the colon by not removing all these toxics. So the fasting, not only is it a wonderful spiritual benefit, but God has given it to us for a wonderful physical benefit. It cleans out all those toxins, everything, clarity, mental alertness.

There's testimonies of people having their memory returned to them through these things. What about helps overcome addictions? It promotes weight loss. It promotes healing in the body.

Inflammatory diseases and allergies and reducing blood pressure. All these are the physical benefits of a spiritual discipline. That's amazing to me.

And I came across a testimony this week too. Have you heard of Galen Clark? Many of you who go to Yosemite maybe have. He was there in Yosemite many years.

He lived there. Galen Clark started I think one of the first hotels in the 1800s. Well, it's interesting.

If you read his story, he had two to six months to live and he was in the end stages of tuberculosis. Yeah, I pronounced that right. Tuberculosis.

He was coughing up chunks of his lung. And then the doctor said two to six months. And he said, well, I love Yosemite.

I'm gonna go there. And just that's where they can. He dug up his grave and has tombstone made and everything.

But he started to eat the nuts, the berries, the fresh game, lean meat, elk, and different things. And then his biography records that he died at 96 years old. He went there when he was 42.

And he died some 50 years later because of rejuvenating everything and healing the things that were taking place. He got out of that atmosphere, that environment that was creating it. Can we all move to Yosemite? Nope.

We can only visit there. But we can make different changes that will help. And just this week, I looked at the, you know, it's a favorite chip out there, and my kids are gonna eat it today.

So I was reading the back of it. It's, oh, let's see, what's in the back of here? Watching my kids eat this. Oh, partially hydrogenated oils.

You know what those are? It's where they inject hydrogen gas into the fat molecule so that the chips will never go bad. You can sit on your shelf for five years and you'll open up that bag and it'll taste just as good. Because they pump hydrogen gas into these fat molecules and then it won't go bad, it won't go rancid, or what they call it, shelf life, increases shelf life, so you're consuming that.

And then, of course, they had MSG in there, right? Monosodium glutamate. And I like what this neurosurgeon, again, this is a medical professor, or medical person, a neurosurgeon, he wrote a book called Excitotoxins, The Taste That Kills. And he explains that MSG is an excitotoxin, which means it overexcites your cells to the point of damage or death, causing brain damage to varying degrees and potentially even triggering or worsening learning disabilities, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's, Lou Gehrig's disease, and even more.

And the FDA even said, so I said, what was the FDA say about this? They say abnormal function of glutamate receptors has been linked with certain neurological diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease, Huntington's disease, injections of this in laboratory animals have resulted damage to nerve cells and in the brain. But they're allowing these things to continue. And then I read the next ingredient, food coloring.

Oh, well, let's see what that is. Food coloring, around the turn of the 20th century, scientists began formulating synthetic colors derived from coal tar. Wow, that sounds really good.

Today, only seven of these colors remain because they've been removing them. In 1950s, they removed orange, number one, when children became ill after consumption. In the 1970s, scientific testing pointed to red, too, as a carcinogenic property, which means cancer-causing in rats.

And it, too, was banned. And then yellow one, yellow two, yellow three, yellow four are among the others that have been made illegal. But now we still have yellow five is currently under, we have that in our foods, and that's currently undergoing further testing for links with hyperactivity, anxiety, migraines, and cancers.

And this color has been banned in many European countries. So they're sitting here consuming something that nothing in it is good, nothing. I didn't even talk about sodium casinate, sodium bicarbonate, nothing.

There's nothing in there, nothing. Nothing that the body can assimilate. So it's all this junk that we're eating all the time.

Little kids say, oh, look at that little kid. It's just junk, and then we wonder why all these things are happening. Now, ironically, I went and looked at all the testimonials from moms who said, once I got my kids off food coloring and off all this junk, ADD, gone.

Attention deficit disorder, gone. Hypersensitivity, gone. All these things, children became quiet and listening, reigning disabilities, learning, they would listen.

So we wonder how much of what we're consuming is actually affecting our body in a negative way. There's many testimonies out there about this topic. Now, of course, here's what the argument is, right? It's too expensive.

It's too expensive to eat healthy, life-giving food, right? Is that the big argument? It's too expensive, Shane, to eat that way. I like just a Costco 40-pound bag of cereal. Just Captain Crunch, pour it in there.

Captain Crunch, that's a good one, huh? But that's what the, many people say it's too expensive, but I want you to think about this. I just started to realize this this week. Think about how much our addiction costs.

How much do you spend at Starbucks? The average, if you're at four or five dollars a day, you're at \$150 a month. And then you stop somewhere else and get the Diet Soda or the Mountain Dew, and then you're

another \$150 a month. And then what about that chocolate bar with peanut butter? I gotta get at Vons on the way home, right? So you could be at three, \$400 a month feeding an addiction.

So we say it's too expensive, organic food's too expensive, or healthy food's too expensive. Well, look at the price versus cost. Look at how much we're feeding the addiction.

I mean, you ask somebody who smokes cigarettes how much that costs. Or nicotine, chewing, all these things. Really, it's not that we don't have the money, it's we're misappropriating the money that's been given to us.

And that's where it comes in, to this price versus cost. Price is the initial investment, but cost is a long-term cost. So although something might, the price might be a little higher, the long-term cost is a lot less, right? Less doctor visits.

How many times has your family been to the doctor compared to a family who's healthy? How many times missing work, productivity, energy, functionality, being productive, earning more, everything, it all falls into taking care of the gift that God has given us. And I know I wanna be sensitive here because this is a big struggle for me. I've struggled with my weight when I was young and throughout high school and stuff, and battling and food.

So I know, I wanna be sensitive to that. But on the same time, the benefits far outweigh, far outweigh the price and also the struggle. It's worth it.

It's a battle you can win as believers. No temptation has overtaken us, but what is common to man, but God who's faithful will allow you and me to escape the temptation that we may be able to bear it. So as believers through fasting, see, back to the hidden treasure of fasting, through fasting, then I'm built up spiritually.

I can make better choices. You think tomorrow, after fasting all day, you think tomorrow I'm gonna hit In-N-Out and Baskin-Robbins? I won't even feel like it. But after a week of the world, and after a week of eating and letting my flesh dominate, it just leads me wherever.

Let's go to Burger King, let's go to Carl's Jr., let's go to Subway, everybody thinks Subway's healthy. I won't even get into the ingredients and that stuff. And we just go, we just think, you know, we just let the flesh lead us wherever.

And it's very, we have to be careful in this area. I think, and I'm glad I was able to give a sermon like this because I see the spiritual benefit. Sometimes we magnify the spiritual and we minimize the physical.

I believe God wants us to magnify the spiritual, absolutely. He says bodily exercise profits a little, but spiritual, godliness is good for eternity. But you can't ignore how they work together.

The physical and spiritual work together. God's called me to pastor in a physical body. Let's just throw this, could I, if I was 275, let's say I hit 300, you know, when I was going in that direction, trying to make some radical changes, would I be as effective pastor at 300 pounds as now at 220? I'm not talking about physical and fitness, I'm just talking about just being a better resource with what God has given me to do.

I guarantee I wouldn't be. I'd be calling in sick a lot more. I'd be up here, I'd probably have a handkerchief.

You know, and just tired, and I don't know. And also, you'd probably say, pastor, man, you've gotta get some things under control there. You know, this area of your life.

And so I see that, and I see how it makes a difference. And that's the whole point of the sermon was to help, not to hurt, it was to encourage, not to discourage, because I know you'll feel much better. I know that God can use that in a powerful way.

And when the physical and the spiritual are together, I think it's a powerful life there that many people are missing. But on that note, I don't wanna forget about this and come back into the spiritual side of this. And as I'm gonna close with this point, but the enemy misleads with price without mentioning the cost.

Let's stay on this price versus cost issue. The enemy is going to deceive people with the price. You don't wanna give God all of your life.

You don't wanna fully surrender life. You don't wanna follow Christ with everything. You don't wanna pick up your cross and deny him.

Or for somebody who's not a believer, you don't want that religion stuff. You don't wanna do that. He'll show you the price.

You don't wanna pay that price, but he'll fail to show you the cost. And the cost of not following Christ wholeheartedly, not fully surrendering our lives, the cost is great because we walk through life and say the Bible's dead, church is boring. Shane, I don't even wanna come here next Saturday now.

Your sermon upset me. And we just get through life and we're not, we see that because we don't wanna pay the price, and the enemy hides the end result of cost and being distant from God. So I just encourage you, whatever area, wherever you're at tonight, we're struggling with addiction.

Most people do, I'll just tell you that right now. Because all an addiction is is giving yourself up to a habit and then becoming dependent upon that habit. That's a Webster's defined addiction.

And we live in this culture that the flesh is wanting more and more. And the ultimate goal of a, do you know the ultimate goal of somebody addicted to alcohol that enemy wants to destroy everything? The ultimate goal of a heroin addict is to destroy your life, that's the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal of poppin' Oxycontin and all those pills, what do you think? You think devil's, oh, just have a few pills, it's good.

No, have a few bottles over the course of the week. The whole idea is to destroy. When it's conceived, it gives birth to sin.

And when sin's fully grown, it brings forth death. So that's the issue I have with addictions is the end result is where it's taking people. But where do we give that? We give that back to Christ.

We say, Lord, help me with this area. And it's all about falling forward. It's not about perfection, it's about the direction of your heart.

Is the direction of your heart set on spiritual disciplines? Is the direction of your heart set on honoring God and seeking him with all your heart? That's really where I wanted to get everybody to.

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