



### Lent Day 12, March 4, 2012 Fasting That Pleases God

*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, And an acceptable day to the LORD?*

*Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke?*

*Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide 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.*

Isaiah 58:6-8

Fasting is defined as abstaining from food in order to humble oneself before God. It is used as a way of preparing oneself to receive divine revelation from God. Jesus used times of fasting to focus on God and His will for His life.

I used to be afraid of fasting. It seemed to be a very intense and extreme discipline of the Christian faith that was practiced by the very godly and very mature Christians. I believed that monks and hermits regularly engaged in fasting but not every day Christians like me. At that point in my Christian walk, I was suffering from an intense spiritual battle that I struggled to overcome. I had heard that the discipline of fasting could help strengthen my faith so decided to educate myself concerning this discipline. I began by asking other Christians, whom I respected, what they knew about fasting. Unfortunately, no one I asked had ever fasted and knew very little about the process; therefore, I went to my local Christian bookstore and bought a book on fasting. After praying about fasting and learning about the process I decided to try my first fast; I fasted from one meal for one day. I was encouraged in my faith when I successfully completed my first fast. Eventually after several other fasts, and intense times of prayer and Bible study God helped me overcome that season of warfare.

Since that time I have participated in several other fasts. Sometimes I fasted from a meal for a day. At other times I fasted from dessert for 40 days. On some occasions I fasted from any complaining and negativity.

Usually my biggest reason for engaging in a fast is because I am seeking victory over a certain sin and the enemy or seeking the heart of God on a specific matter. There are many other reasons to fast. Below is a list (not exhaustive) of reasons to fast:

- To focus on God.

- To draw closer to God.
- To seek victory over a certain sin, attitude or habit.
- To seek the will of God for certain situations.
- To receive strength and power to endure hardships.
- For the outcome of elections or national decisions
- For national crises or disasters such as war or hurricanes.

We can participate in private fasts, in which we fast on our own for personal reasons or group fasts in which we join others and fast for a particular reason. "Fasting might be partial, such as abstinence from certain kinds of food; or total, such as abstinence from all food. Fasting may be as short as one meal or for several days. 1 Samuel 31:13 speaks of a seven days' fast, while Daniel abstained from "pleasant bread," flesh, wine and anointing for three weeks. Moses and Elijah fasted for 40 days."

In Hebrew, fasting means "to abstain from food, to shut the mouth." In the Greek, fasting is described as a religious exercise in which one abstains from food or drink for a period of time. During Biblical times, fasting was often coupled with prayer and was at times accompanied mourning and weeping.

Fasting is also about the heart not the body; we are not trying to impress God by our works but striving to seek a closer relationship with Him. Fasting is also on focus; not on what we are giving up but on the will of God. By fasting we are not trying to move the hand of God, but seek the heart of God.

In closing, if you are trying to overcome a sinful habit, if you are longing to hear God's heart on a certain matter, if you need specific direction, if you need strength to overcome the enemy, then you will benefit from the spiritual discipline of fasting.

### **Application:**

Is there an issue in your life that seems to be at a stalemate, something that you have been trying to overcome for months or years but can't seem to make any progress? Let me encourage you to try a fast. If you feel comfortable, please list the issue you wish to overcome in the space below.

Now, please choose a fast from the list below or choose your own:

- Fast for one meal for one day.
- Fast for one meal, one day a week for one month.
- Fast for one meal a day for a week.
- Fast from favorite dessert or snack food for one week or one month.
- Fast from technology, social media or favorite TV program for one week or one month.
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Also, while fasting use the time you would have spent doing the activity you're giving up to pray, read scripture and focus on God. Repeat your fast as long as it takes until you experience healing and freedom.

**Prayer:**

Dearest Holy Father,

Thank you that Your Word promises that when I fast with the right heart attitude that You will loosen the bonds of wickedness on my life and I will experience great healing and freedom in my life. I thank you that You promise to break every yoke of the enemy until I am yoked only to You. Thank You Father that you promise to guard me with Your righteousness and glory. Please strengthen me through this fast so I can become all that you created me to be.

In Jesus Holy Name,

Amen.

By Mary Kane