

Essentials for Change
Vol. 1 Fasting

Preparing for a life of royalty in the kingdom.

Charles E. Davis, Jr.



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As we rapidly approach the year 2010, there is a prompting from the Spirit of God to prepare for change. Many of us expect change, prosperity, advancement and the like but how many of us are preparing for it? We will make resolutions for the New Year as we have so many times, but what will be different; what will we do to ensure our success this time? I have to tell you that although prioritizing, organizing, scheduling, and follow-through are very important; it all starts with you.

It is fruitless to order the things around you without setting order within. You may ask, "How can I do that, I don't know where to start". Well the answer is in discipline. Discipline is not the same as punishment. Discipline puts you back on track or guides you to a predetermined destination. A parent takes away the phone privileges of a distracted teen, hoping to get their focus back on their studies. The teen thinks the parent wants them to be miserable but that is far from the truth. A thank you will come only after they graduate from college. An athlete stays in at night avoiding parties, drinking, and drugs in hopes of being the best and winning a championship. He must train while others rest and have fun. He eats healthy while the few friends he has eat junk food. It sounds like punishment but this is discipline.

Fasting is a spiritual discipline. Fasting is found in scripture as a source of preparation for service, consecration, and seeking answers from God.

Much like exercise and diet put the athlete in tune with his body, fasting puts the believer in tune with his spirit, and most importantly with the Spirit of God. This is vitally important in times of transition and change when God is leading us into His plan for our future success.

In Luke Chapter 4, we find Jesus being led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. In the first verse we find out that the Holy Spirit is leading Jesus. The Spirit of God leads Him to fast for forty days in preparation for His showdown with Satan.

The results are astonishing. Satan begins to tempt the Savior with bread knowing that He is hungry; but what he doesn't understand is that through the discipline of fasting, Jesus had overcome the power of natural hunger. Once you conquer the desires of the flesh then the life of the Spirit can shine through unhindered. The only thing left in Him that had any power was the Word of God. "IT IS WRITTEN" rumbled from a deep place within. Later when some of His disciples had difficulty casting out a demon, Jesus told them that the only way that they would be able to have success at that level would be through fasting and prayer.

Chapter 2

"You Cannot Do What You Would."

Much of the scripture we quote regularly alludes to the need for a discipline of fasting. Galatians 5:17 states, "For the **flesh** lusteth **against** the Spirit, and the Spirit **against** the **flesh**: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would KJV." **You cannot do what you would.** You have a serious problem going on inside of you and it is hindering your success. The New Living Translation says it this way, "The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict." There is a never-ending battle going on in you for control of your gifts, talents, and influence in this realm. **Your choices are never free from conflict.**

With this in mind we should take another look at the importance of fasting.

Remember first that fasting is not punishment but a discipline. We should not approach the fast with dread but with an earnest expectation that something good will come out of it.

Chapter 3

Types of Fast Found in Scripture

There are several types of fasts found in scripture, the most memorable being the forty-day fast of Jesus in the wilderness. This fast, it appears, only allowed for water. We gather from the statement that afterward he was hungry but his thirst is not addressed.

The next fast we will look at is Esther's' fast in Esther chapter 4. Esther is about to put her life in danger in hopes that she might save Israel. She tells her Uncle Mordecai that she is willing to risk her life only if the rest of the Jewish people will fast for three days, eating or drinking nothing-morning or night. She is specific about the terms of the fast, no food, no drink, morning nor night. This is important because it tells us that some fasts have different terms. Many people erroneously think that a fast always means no food or drink. The number of days and the object of the fast vary depending on the leading of the Holy Spirit. We always want to line up what we do for God with His written Word.

There are many examples of fasting in the Old and New Testament. The last one we will look at is found in Daniel Chapter 10. Here we find Daniel seeking the Lord concerning the visions he had been given and the time when they would be fulfilled.

His preparation to hear from God consisted of fasting from pleasant bread, meat, and wine; neither did he anoint himself. This fast lasted for 21 days, at the end of which he received a messenger from God. This is the fast I challenge

you to consider to start the New Year. This type of fast can be fashioned to fit each individual. For some pleasant bread may mean giving up cakes and pastries, for another it may mean giving up white bread and eating only whole grains, for yet another it may mean no bread at all. The key is to subdue the flesh and open up your spirit to God. You know what you like and the things that control you.

Chapter 4

Fasting Suggestions

Not eating meat may be the most difficult for many, though it may prove most beneficial both physically and spiritually. There are variations to this as well, which include eating only fish, which is not the same as other meats. There are also soy meat substitutes. You may say, "What is the point?" or, "Isn't that cheating?" I can tell you from many years of fasting that what ever you commit to will be challenging enough as long as you give up something that you feel you can't do without.

For those of you on medication and with an ongoing illness, consult your doctor and let him know the type fast you plan to take. Most doctors know the benefits of fasting and will probably be helpful in deciding the terms of your fast.

For those of you who want my suggestions, first of all give up sugar foods. This means reading labels; Drinks should have 15 grams of sugar or less. Drink mostly water,

use the low sugar drinks or no sugar added natural juices once or twice a day to keep up your stamina if you have to work during your fast. Cut out all cookies, cakes, chips, and other unhealthy snacks. Eat plenty of live foods like garden salads, or fresh fruit. Cabbage is good for your digestive system so eat it raw or boil it with some seasoning. If you cook your vegetables do not use meat for seasoning.

Remember that these are only suggestions, if this is your first or second time fasting or fasting for 21 days; giving up meat and sugar may be enough to discipline your flesh. Pray about it, the Holy Spirit will give you confirmation and guidance in deciding the terms. Then after you begin the fast, use the time you would usually dedicate to standing in front of the fridge to communicate with God; praying and listening for instruction and wisdom from Him.

In closing, I want to encourage you to allow the hope of getting closer to God to give you energy to follow through on your spiritual journey. Try to keep a smile on your face and not complain or broadcast to everyone that you are fasting. That does not mean that you can't share what you are doing with others who you want to encourage to join you. Just remember you are fasting to God, not men.

May the New Year be bright and prosperous for you.

Pastor Charles.

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Suggested Readings:

Get Healthy Through Detox and Fasting

Don Colbert, MD

The Hidden Power of Prayer and Fasting

Mahesh Chavda

