

### WHAT IS FASTING (information by Dr Bill Bright)

Fasting can include different things, but basically for our purposes today, it is going without food.

Fasting provides both release from and release into what is humanly impossible. It is the key to what seems to be the impossible.

The purpose of fasting is to draw a person from the natural realm into the spiritual. It is the seeking of the fulfilment of the purposes that God intended for humankind. The experience of a new freedom and release from the oppression of Satan, with a release into peace of mind and soul as its end.

It is vain for a person to fast for the purpose of self gain, to be revered by men for merely selfish reasons. The desire must be from a deep compassion for the suffering of humanity. It should seek the decrease of self, the increase of Jesus Christ, and must be dedicated solely to the Lord for the glory of God.

We must with all sincerity search our hearts, be repentant and confess our sins and come before our Lord with humility when we fast. This is the key to fasting and prayer. The only acceptable motive recognised by God, that releases mighty power from and into all things.

### WHY SHOULD WE FAST?

- a. There is biblical warrant for it.
- b. It allows extra time for prayer.

- c. Releases spiritual power.
- d. Brings increased emphasis on the spirit and decreases concern for the physical.

### WHEN SHOULD WE FAST?

- a. When God specifically calls.
- b. When in crisis - seeking special guidance.
- c. As a regular discipline - especially when preparing to speak, sing, play an instrument, any time when seeking a release of spiritual power.
- d. When ministering at the level of healing or deliverance.

If you do not already know of the power and importance of fasting, here are some very important facts:

- Fasting was an expected discipline in both the Old and New Testament eras. For example, Moses fasted at least two recorded forty-day periods. Jesus fasted 40 days and reminded His followers to fast, "when you fast," not if you fast.
- Fasting and prayer can restore the loss of the "first love" for your Lord and result in a more intimate relationship with Christ.
- Fasting is a biblical way to truly humble yourself in the sight of God (Psalm 35:13; Ezra 8:21). King David said, "I humble myself through fasting."
- Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your true spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance, and a transformed life.
- The Holy Spirit will quicken the Word of God in your heart and His truth will become more

meaningful to you!

- Fasting can transform your prayer life into a richer and more personal experience.
- Fasting can result in a dynamic personal revival in your own life-and make you a channel of revival to others.
- Fasting and prayer are the only disciplines that fulfill the requirements of II Chronicles 7:14:

*"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*

If you fast, you will find yourself being humbled. You will discover more time to pray and seek God's face. And as He leads you to recognize and repent of unconfessed sin, you will experience special blessings from God.

Fasting has been a major emphasis in the lives of many of the great spiritual leaders throughout history. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist denomination, fasted every Wednesday and Friday and required all of his clergy to do the same. Effective ministers of God from the apostle Paul to Martin Luther to John Calvin made it a continual part of their walks with God.

None of those men had a "formula fast" that was the only "right" way. Fasting is about the condition of the heart, not the number of days. Each time that I have fasted for forty days, it was because I felt impressed by God to do so.

So, start slowly. Fast for one meal a day, or one day a week, or one week a month. Build up your spiritual muscles so that you will be prepared in a period of several months to fast for an extended 40 day period.

A partial fast is described in the book of Daniel. Although the water fast seemed to be the custom of the prophet, there was a three-week period in which he only abstained from

"delicacies," meat, and wine (Daniel 10:3).

The two primary types mentioned in the Bible are the "**absolute**" and "**supernatural absolute**" fasts. These are total fasts-no food (solid or liquid) and no water. Paul went on an absolute fast for three days following his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:9). Moses and Elijah engaged in what must be considered a supernatural absolute fast of forty days (Deuteronomy 9:9; I Kings 19:8).

So, I strongly advise you to drink plenty of liquids. Obviously, if God leads you to undertake an absolute fast, you should obey. If so, be certain, without doubt, that God is leading you.

Water-only fasts that last for more than several days need to be undertaken with complete rest and under medical supervision because of the extreme danger of over-toxification, breakdown of vital body tissues, and loss of electrolytes.

I personally recommend and practice water and juice fasting, especially if you are going to fast for an extended period of time. This type of fast will provide you with more energy than absolute or water-only fasts and still lead you into the humbling experience of denying your desire for solid food that you can chew.

When it comes to making your final decision about what type of fast is right for you, the best advice I can give you is to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. He will guide your heart and mind as to what is best for you. Remember, the most important consideration in fasting is your motive. Why are you fasting? To seek something personally from God's hand or to seek His face in worship, praise and thanksgiving?

### **Spiritual Preparation**

In preparation for this special time with God, I strongly urge you to examine your heart, and detect any unconfessed sin. Scripture records that God always requires His people to repent of their sins before He will hear their prayers. King David said:

*Come and hear, all of you who reverence the Lord, and I will tell you what he did for me: For I*

*cried to him for help, with praises ready on my tongue. He would not have listened if I had not confessed my sins. But he listened! He heard my prayer! He paid attention to it!*

*Blessed be God who didn't turn away when I was praying, and didn't refuse me his kindness and love. (Psalm 66:16-20)*

In your prayers, confess not only obvious sins, but less obvious ones as well. We call them the sins of omission as well as the sins of commission experiences. These may be experiences leaving your first love for our Lord: worldly-mindedness, self-centeredness, spiritual indifference, and unwillingness to share your faith in Christ with others, not spending sufficient time in God's Word and in prayer, a poor relationship with your spouse, your children, your pastor, or other members of your church.

Another great way to prepare for your fast is to practice what I call "Spiritual Breathing." The concept is simple. Like physical breathing, Spiritual Breathing is a process of exhaling the impure and inhaling the pure. If you knowingly sin, breathe spiritually to restore the fullness of God's Holy Spirit in your life. You exhale by confessing your sins immediately when you become aware of them, and you inhale by inviting the Holy Spirit to re-take control of your life. As an act of faith, trust Him to empower you. During the fast, spiritual breathing-constant reliance on the Holy Spirit- will enable you to resist temptation, not only to sin but to abandon your fast.

### **Physical Preparation**

Although fasting is primarily a spiritual discipline, it begins in the physical realm. You should not fast without specific physical preparation. If you plan on fasting for several days, you will find it helpful to begin by eating smaller meals before you abstain altogether. Resist the urge to have that "last big feast" before the fast. Cutting down on your meals a few days before you begin the fast will signal your mind, stomach, and appetite that less food is acceptable.

Some health professionals suggest eating only raw foods for two days before starting a fast. I also recommend weaning yourself off caffeine and sugar products to ease your initial hunger or discomfort at the early stages of your fast.