

Grace and Truth Evangelistic COGIC

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Training for Service Series: Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward. (Isaiah 58:6-8)

What is fasting?

Fasting is the discipline of abstaining from food for biblical reasons. It is often practiced to demonstrate the sincerity of our prayers.

Why should I fast?

- Because more than ever before, believers are in bondage to demonic powers and need strength to stand against sin.
- Because believers throughout the world need solutions to many complex problems and threatening situations they are facing.
- Because the Church is in desperate need of revival, and every tribe, tongue, and nation is in desperate need of evangelization.
- Because the world in general and the Church in particular are crying out for people of character and integrity-people who have found in Christ the emotional healing and strength to overcome sinful and destructive habits.
- Because the abundance of food has insulated North American believers from the realities of starvation and malnutrition in two-thirds of the world.
- Because the media has so captured the national attention that even believers are operating according to principles completely foreign to God's will for their lives.
- Because even with the abundance of food and medical technology in North America, people are not necessarily healthier.
- Because so many believers have become so entangled in economic, social, and worldly pursuits that they need to be set free to establish their testimonies and to influence others for Christ.
- Because of the growing influence of demonic forces and the diminishing influence of *biblical* Christianity in North America, and the fact that believers need protection from the evil one.

In the Bible, fasting was done in the times of national crisis. Jehoshaphat feared the imminent attack from three different nations against Judah. In crisis, he proclaimed a fast for the entire nation. In the midst of the fast, God gave Jehoshaphat and Judah Divine strategy (they worshipped, praised and sang before God!). He told them that the battle was not theirs, but the Lord's. He admonished them to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. As a result of their sincerity through fasting and prayer, God thoroughly annihilated the enemy forces (*2Chronicles, second chapter*).

In Ezra's time the Lord prompted the king of Babylon to release God's chosen people from their captivity. Once they were set free, they had to transport all of their earthly possessions back to their homeland. Ezra did not want to see the people fall prey to anyone who would lie in wait, steal their possessions, and spoil their homecoming. Isn't this what we seek after once God has saved us and set us free? We don't want to lose the liberty or gifts that God has given to us. This is why Isaiah 58:8 says, "the glory of the Lord shall be your rereward". The word rereward means "rear guard". That is, while you have come out of bondage, God will "watch your back" so that the devil can never come from behind and take you back in. The bible says Ezra was ashamed to go back to his captor (king Artaxerxes of Persia) and ask for protection on the way back home. So what did he do? He proclaimed a fast to seek the "right way", for the people and for their possessions. Scripture proclaims that God intreated (heard) them, answered their prayers for protection, placed His Hand on them and delivered them all enemies who were lying in wait (*Ezra, 8th chapter*).

The Jews of Esther's day were nearing the day of their extermination, thanks to an evil plot by Haman. The word got to her by her cousin Mordecai that Haman convinced the king to issue a decree that all the Jews be killed. Once a king issued a decree, nothing could reverse it. Esther sent word back to Mordecai to fast three days and nights for her, because she was going to approach the king and appeal to him, which was completely unlawful and punishable by death. God worked through the obedience of Mordecai, Esther and her handmaidens. He troubled king Ahasuerus, gave Esther favor with him, and eventually destroyed the enemy (Haman) on their behalf (*Esther, 4th chapter*).

David fasted when being pursued by Saul, and later when demonstrating his grief in the deaths of leaders and loved ones. Daniel fasted for wisdom and understanding after receiving a vision for the kingdom of Persia. Although the prince of Persia (a stronghold demon) held up his answer for three weeks, God sent an angel (Michael) to release the blessing.

Jesus fasted in the face of the greatest temptation, and found wisdom to overcome. This launched the greatest ministry ever on record.

Who should fast?

Every Christian and every church should fast. If every Christian fasted, the results would shake our society like a hurricane bending a small tree. Christians can then demonstrate that we live differently (sanctified), our faith is imperative, and that God works in our *daily* lives.

If all of our churches fasted, we could move forward in evangelism and reach out in feeding and helping others. God could then pour out His Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28).

We will answer the questions in following weeks on:

- How to fast
- If its mandatory to fast
- When to fast
- How long to fast

We will also examine in detail the nine types of fast described in Isaiah 58 and all the benefits fasting brings.

Grace and Truth Evangelistic Church will be a model of victorious, overcoming believers in our natural and spiritual lives, and break bondages and grow closer to God through fasting.

Grace and Truth Evangelistic COGIC

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Training for Service Series-Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough-August 5, 2003

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. (Isaiah 58:6-8 AV)

Last week we examined some of the reasons we should fast. We saw the results of fasting in times of national crisis and grief. In the Bible, people fasted for individual needs, when facing spiritual decisions, or during periods of distress. We should fast to seek the Lord's pleasure, and not our own. However, when showing our serious intention to do the Lord's will through fasting, the benefits of Isaiah 58 manifest themselves in our lives.

When Elijah spoke of the Lord's judgement on King Ahab, it was a dismal message. The Bible says there was none like Ahab, who sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord (whom his wife Jezebel stirred up), and did abominably by following idols. Ahab's judgment was to be cut off from God, his posterity would dry up, and the dogs would lick his blood. As a result of Ahab's fasting (even after he was pronounced guilty, convicted, and sentenced by God), God took notice:

And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house. (1 Kings 21:27-29)

To reiterate, every blood bought Christian ought to fast. Along with the question of *why?* which we examined last week, the **"how to"** is one of the most asked questions relating to fasting.

"This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting"(Matt. 17:21).

These "twins" (prayer and fasting) should never be separated, and is one of the best guidelines for how to fast. Prayer during fasting keeps you focused on what the will of the Lord is, and binds any distractions from taking you off course from your goal.

Jesus cast a demon from a boy whom the disciples had failed to help. Apparently they had not taken seriously enough the way satan had his claws set in the youth. The implication is that Jesus' disciples could have performed this exorcism had they been willing to undergo the discipline of fasting. Modern disciples also often make light of this discipline, and we could cast out demons (according to Matthew 28) if we take part in the self-denying practice of fasting and prayer.

The fasts described in this study are merely suggestive of a variety of ways to practice this helpful discipline. There are probably as many ways to fast as there are to pray—there is no set number in either case. The following are taken from “What the Bible Says About Healthy Living”, Dr. Rex Russell, Regal Books, 1996.

1. The *normal fast* is going without food for a definite period during which you ingest only liquids (water and/or juice). The duration can be 1 day, 3 days, 1 week, 1 month or 40 days. Extreme care should be taken with longer fasts, which should only be attempted after medical advice from your physician.
2. The *absolute fast* allows no food or water at all, and should be short. Moses and Jesus fasted for 40 days; but this would kill anyone without supernatural intervention, and should never be attempted today. Be sure to test the spirit that tries to talk you into a 40-day fast, even if it includes liquids.
3. The *partial fast* is one that omits certain foods or is on a schedule that includes limited eating. It may consist of omitting one meal a day. Eating only fresh vegetables for several days is also a good partial fast. Elijah practiced partial fasts at least twice. John the Baptist and Daniel with his three friends (Shadrach, Meshach and Ebednego) are other examples of those who participated in partial fasts. People who have low blood or other conditions might consider this kind of fast.
4. A *rotational fast* consists of eating or omitting certain families of foods for designated periods. For example, grains may be eaten only every fourth day. The various food families are rotated so that some food is available each day.

GOD’S PURPOSE FOR FASTING

It’s important to learn the kinds of fasts that *do not* please God as it is to understand those fasts He desires. God people in Isaiah’s day had been fasting, but without results. The reason, God says, is that they ignored the way fasting should change their lives, treating it as an empty ritual:

Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. (Isaiah 58:3-4)

God’s people in that day (as in our day) considered worship to be merely private. All of the focus on fasting was on the personal dimension. God rebuked this concept:

Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? (Isaiah 58:5 AV)

The purpose of all worship, including fasting, is to change the worshipper in ways that have social and interpersonal impact (inward and outward). We worship not just to gratify ourselves, but also to become empowered to change the world!

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Training for Service Series-Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough-August 19, 2003

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. (Isaiah 58:6-8)

We've examined in the previous weeks God's purpose for fasting, why we should fast, and suggested ways to fast. As a Christian, the enemy will try to make you view fasting as some mindless chore, another grave and boring consequence of giving your life to Christ. After all, you can't kill, you can't bear false witnesses, you can't do this, and you can't do that. Living for the Lord is just pure denial of every thing that is fun or precious to you, he (satan) would have you to think. This ploy is just another way to keep you from experiencing the full manifestation of what God *wants* you to have in life (John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it more abundantly*).

Fasting is not mandatory. Nor is being saved or sanctified. However, our faith, or lack thereof always yields results, whether positive or negative. We are considered *free moral agents*. In other words, we can react to God's Word and his directions any way we choose. We have more than enough examples in His Word to see just how we should react to this discipline of fasting. God is compassionate enough to make this discipline available so that we can be strengthened spiritually and overcome barriers that would otherwise keep us from living a victorious Christian life.

Let's look at Isaiah 58 again. God says He has chosen the fast (don't we want to follow what God chooses?):

1. Loose the bonds of wickedness.
2. Undo heavy burdens.
3. Let the oppressed go free.
4. Break every yoke.
5. Give bread to the hungry and provide the poor with housing.
6. Allow the people's light to break forth like the morning.
7. Cause our health to spring forth speedily.
8. Cause our righteousness to go before us.
9. Cause the Glory of the Lord to be our rereward (or "rear guard").

Elmer Towns illustrates the significance of fasting through nine biblical characters in his book, "Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough-A guide to nine Biblical fasts". This overview gives us a model we will examine in detail over the next few weeks, and are good suggestions for fasts that we can use and adjust to our particular life needs as we seek to grow closer to God.

1. The Disciple's Fast

Purpose: "To loose the bands of wickedness" (Isa. 58:6)-freeing ourselves and others from addictions to sin.

Key Verse: "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. 17:21)

Background: Jesus cast out a demon from a boy whom the disciples had failed to help. Apparently they had not taken seriously enough the way Satan had his claws set in the youth. The implication is that Jesus' disciples could have performed this exorcism had they been willing to undergo the discipline of fasting. Modern disciples also often make light of "besetting sins" that could be cast out if we were serious enough to take part in such a self-denying practice as fasting-hence the term "Disciple's Fast."

2. The Ezra Fast

Purpose: To "undo heavy burdens" (Isa. 58:6)-to solve problems, inviting the Holy Spirit's aid in lifting loads and overcoming barriers that keep ourselves and our loved ones from walking joyfully with the Lord.

Key Verse: "So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer" (Ezra 8:23)

Background: Ezra the priest was charged with restoring the Law of Moses among the Jews as they rebuilt the city of Jerusalem by permission of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, where God's people had been held captive.

Despite this permission, Israel's enemies opposed them. Burdened with embarrassment about having to ask the Persian king for an army to protect them, Ezra fasted and prayed for an answer, and the Lord gave him the *right* answer.

3. The Samuel Fast

Purpose: "To let the oppressed (physically and spiritually) go free" (Isa. 58:6)-for revival and soul winning, to identify with people everywhere enslaved literally or by sin and to pray to be used of God to bring people out of the kingdom of darkness and into God's marvelous light.

Key Verse: "So they gathered together at Mispah, drew water, and poured it out before the Lord. And they fasted that day, and said there, 'We have sinned against the Lord'" (I Sam. 7:6).

Background: Samuel led God's people in a fast to celebrate the return of the Ark of the Covenant from its captivity by the Philistines, and to pray that Israel might be delivered from the sin that allowed the Ark to be captured in the first place.

4. The Elijah Fast

Purpose: "To break every yoke" (Isa. 58:6)-conquering the mental and emotional problems that would control our lives, and returning the control to the Lord.

Key Verse: "He himself went a day's journey into the wilderness...He arose and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights" (I Kings 19: 4,8).

Background: Although Scripture does not call this a formal "fast", Elijah deliberately went without food when he fled from Queen Jezebel's threat to kill him. After this self-imposed deprivation, God sent an angel to minister to Elijah in the wilderness.

5. The Widow's Fast

Purpose: "To share [our] bread with the hungry" and to care for the poor (Isa. 58:7)-to meet the humanitarian needs of others.

Key Verse: *And* the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah. (1 Kings 17:16)

Background: God sent the prophet Elijah to a poor, starving widow-ironically, so the widow could provide food for Elijah. Just as Elijah's presence resulted in food for the widow, so presenting ourselves before God in prayer and fasting can relieve hunger today.

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Training for Service Series-Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough-August 26, 2003

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. (Isaiah 58:6-8)

We started an overview of fasting through nine biblical characters as illustrated by Elmer Towns in his book, "Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough-a guide to nine biblical fasts. We will complete the model today. Remember, these are good suggestions for fasts we can use for *our* particular life needs (wickedness, burdens, oppressions, yokes, hunger, lack of shelter, poverty, health issues, unrighteousness, or God's glory leaving our lives).

By this time in our study, you may have been impressed to start fasting and praying so that God would be glorified in your life and every need is met. There is no time like the present, and there really is no time to wait. If we want to reprove the works of darkness, expose the devil, bear fruit in our lives, and walk victoriously, fasting and prayer is imperative. One of the promises in Isaiah 58 is that our light would "break forth as the morning...". When we shine our Light, it exposes the enemy (like a thief, or a roach), and it causes him to run. Paul placed emphasis on walking closely to God when he wrote to the church at Ephesus. Fasting and prayer keeps the Christian from being "asleep".

Eph. 5:14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

21 ¶ Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

There was the day that people outside of holiness feared the God of our salvation. What is worse is that now it seems that there are people in the church who don't fear (respect) God. Fasting and prayer brings about respect for our God and keeps us submissive to His perfect will.

Let's further examine the effects of fasting:

6. The Saint Paul Fast

Purpose: To allow God's "light [to] break forth like the morning" (Isa. 58:), bringing clearer perspective and insight as we make crucial decisions.

Key Verse: “ And he [Saul, or Paul] was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank” (Acts 9:9).

Background: Saul of Tarsus, who became known as Paul after his conversion to Christ, was struck blind by the Lord in the act of persecuting Christians. He not only was without literal sight, but he also had no clue about what direction his life was to take. After going without food and praying for three days, Paul was visited by the Christian Ananias, and both his eyesight and his vision of the future were restored.

7. The Daniel Fast

Purpose: So “thine health shall spring forth” (Isa. 58:8)-to gain a healthier life or for healing.

Key Verse: “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank” (Daniel 1:8).

Background: Daniel and his three fellow Hebrew captives demonstrated in Babylonian captivity that keeping themselves from pagan foods God had guided them not to eat made them more healthful than others in the king’s court.

8. The John the Baptist Fast

Purpose: That “your righteousness shall go before you” (Isa. 58:8) – that our testimonies and influence for Jesus will be enhanced before others.

Key Verse: “ He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink” (Luke 1:15).

Background: Because John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus, he took the “Nazarite” vow that required him to “fast” from or avoid wine and strong drink. This was part of John’s purposefully adopted lifestyle that designated him as one set apart for a special mission.

9. The Esther Fast

Purpose: That the “glory of the Lord” will protect us from the evil one (see Isa. 58:8).

Key Verses: “Fast for me.... [and] my maids and I will fast.... [and] I will go to the king...[and] she found favor in his sight” (Esther 4:16; 5:2).

Background: Queen Esther, a Jewess in a pagan court, risked her life to save her people from threatened destruction by Ahasuerus (Xerxes), king of Persia. Prior to appearing before the king to petition him to save the Jews, Esther, her attendants and her cousin Mordecai all fated to appeal to God for His protection.

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Training for Service Series-Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough-Sept. 2, 2003

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward. (Isaiah 58:6-8)

The fast that God has chosen is the tool to make ordinary believers extraordinary believers. It is the tool that makes natural, carnal Christians into supernatural, Spirit-led Christians. In this portion of our study, we will dig deeper into the significance of the nine biblical fasts in Isaiah 58 one by one, illustrated through character study in Elmer Town's "Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough". The first in this installment is "The Disciple's Fast".

The Disciple's Fast

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness..." (Isa. 58:6).

Many Christians are helpless victims to "besetting sins" (Heb 12:1). Besetting sins are not common sins of neglect, or sins of rebellion, where the person says, "I don't care what God says, I'm going to do what I want anyway". Besetting sins are habitual sinful behaviors or attitudes that victimize and enslave people (in other words, you sin when you really don't want to). To beset means to worry, stress out, beleaguer, trouble or torment. *If the devil can always make you think that you are just a banana peel slip away from backsliding, you can never move forward into God's higher calling on your life.* You may be a Christian, a disciple (follower) of Christ. Yet, some Christians are in bondage to alcohol, drug, sex and tobacco addictions. Others struggle with compulsive eating, extramarital affairs and lying. Any sin that can't be broken with ordinary "willpower" can be termed a besetting sin.

The first thing to remember (and the thing that the devil wants you to keep forgetting) is that Jesus died on the cross for all sin, including "besetting" sin. His blood is what destroys sin, and delivers from death and hell. Remember, there is "life" in the Blood (physically so, and spiritually so). Jesus came that you might have life, and that more abundantly (John 10:10), so you don't have to be in bondage.

The Disciple's Fast is called so because it stems from the account in Matthew 17. Jesus cast a demon from a boy whose father couldn't get results from His disciples. They were unsuccessful because of their lack of faith in dealing with such bondage. Jesus said the problem was so severe that it couldn't be treated by ordinary means. "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting," He said.

Some people are unable to quit smoking or break their homosexual relationships. Although they weep, pray sincerely and seek deliverance, they remain in bondage. The Disciple's fast deals with these types of bondages.

Why are we in bondage?

Besetting sins beset us because we believe satan's lie. We believe Satan's lie about sin more than we believe the Word of God. What does satan trick us into believing?

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1. | I tried to stop before, and I just can't break this habit. |
| 2. | I don't want to do this, but I can't help it. |
| 3. | I need an answer, but I can't find it. |

The Word of God tells us that there is "no temptation that hath taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Because we believe satan's lie, we cannot see that there is a way of escape. Although we can change our desires and find the answers, we believe we are powerless because we have *surrendered* our wills to satan rather than to God.

How can I break bondage in my life? How can I regain control?

<p><i>When you take control of your physical appetite, you develop strength to take control of your emotional appetite.</i></p>

By controlling what you eat, you determine that you will control your life for God's purpose. When you make a vow and reinforce it with the Disciple's Fast, you move into the strength of decision making. In this fast you control your physical appetite to strengthen your spiritual appetite. In this fast, you:

1. make a life-freeing choice to be delivered.
2. recognize that an external power (demon) is responsible for your bondage.
3. confess your previous lack of faith.
4. specifically state your besetting sin.

When Jesus told the disciples "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting", these verbs denote *continuous action*. This means you should take up a lifestyle of prayer and fasting. Fast continuously until you get a breakthrough. Again, fasting and prayer can't be separated. God's Word is true. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matt. 7:7).

Why does it seem to take so long?

God could answer immediately. He knows beforehand that we will pray in faith, so He could prepare the rain clouds ahead of time. But God sees our perspective. We need to pray often and fast continually to build up our "most holy faith" (Jude 1:20), and our "spiritual character" (integrity).

The longer we fast, the more we obey God. The longer we abstain from food (our greatest *natural* desire), the more spiritually determined we become. After a time, our faith grows to trust God for greater miracles in our lives.

Prescription for deliverance

1. Renounce counterfeit control of your mind.

This requires recognizing and renouncing any control over your mind that is not from Christ. This control could come from an ungodly influence in your home, family, mass media, books, movies, music, occult, cults, other

religions, or any combination of these. To experience the abundant life promised in John 10:10, renounce (condemn and separate from) these influences by praying audibly: “I renounce(those things holding you in bondage), in the name of Jesus Christ.”

2. Acknowledge self-deception.

Stop lying to yourself, God and others. Some of us are so successful at deceiving ourselves to our sinful nature that we don't realize the damage it does to us. I John 1:8 states that “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”. Pray “I acknowledge (those areas where you have deceived yourself about sin in your life).

3. Forgive to Overcome Bitterness.

Some people or circumstances in your life may have ushered you into bondage. Forgive others so you can overcome bitterness and gain freedom. *This is divine spiritual strategy that frees you from bondage.* It is a choice *you make* to be free. We could seek revenge and succumb to the hurt the devil wants us to stay in bondage with. Or, we can forgive and be liberated. Pray, “I forgive (those who have hurt or wronged you in some way.)

4. Submit to God's Authority.

This step involves *overcoming rebellion in your life by submitting to the authority of God and those He has placed over you.* See Romans 13, Heb. 13, Eph. 6, I Peter 2 and 3, and Daniel 9. God has placed all of us “under authority” of government, church leadership, parents, husbands, employers and God. Pray, “I submit to (the specific authority in your life).

5. Take Personal Responsibility.

Tell God you are sorry, and mean it. To break bondage, confront pride with humility. See I John 1:9, John 8:36. Pray, “*I'm* sorry for (specific sin).

6. Disown Sinful Influences.

Get away from acquaintances and “friends” that usher you into sinful activity. This may sound easier said than done, but recognize that you have been crucified, buried and raised with Jesus Christ and you now sit in the heavenlies (2Cor. 4:14). Also, tell the devil (and his agents) publicly that you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 5:24). Then claim the Blood of Jesus over the devil (I Cor. 6:20; I John 1:7). Pray, “I disown (the negative influence in your life).

While preparing for the Disciple's Fast, your aim is to achieve freedom from addiction, or a besetting sin. Your affirmation is in I Cor. 10:13, “There is no temptation that has taken you....”. Vow to commit yourself to this fast, write down the date and time you will start and commit to it. The bands of wickedness will be broken in your life.

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Training for Service Series-Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough-September 9, 2003

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. (Isaiah 58:6-8)

Many of us are familiar with “Murphy’s Law”, if it can get any worse, it will. To a Christian, the devil wants to make you think that problems are your lot in life, and if you would only live for him, he would eradicate problems. He(the devil) also wants you to think that because you have problems, God doesn’t care about you or doesn’t hear you, or your life in Christ doesn’t merit an answer to prayer, or you are not “Christian” or perfect enough to get a response from God, or you are not doing the right work or enough work for God, or you are not in God’s will, or any other number of lies that he has tricked us into committing to memory.

Truth be told, everyone has problems. Being a Christian does not exempt us. But as we grow in God, we should learn *how* to respond to problems and gain the victory over them so that we can be fruitful, and give God the Glory out of our lives.

Andrae’ Crouch penned the classic ballad, “Through it all....through it all...I’ve learned to trust in Jesus, I’ve learned to trust in God....Through it all...Through it all...I’ve learned to depend upon His Word.” One of the verses exclaims, “If we never had a problem, then we wouldn’t know that God could solve them”. We have to know that for a Spirit-filled believer, problems come so that we can overcome *them*, not so they can overcome *us*.

Job stated “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.”(Job 14:1). None of us welcomes trouble into our lives, but since it is a fact of life, how does the sanctified believer approach our problems? This installment of “Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough” suggests the type of fast Ezra used after being freed from Babylonian captivity, or, “The Ezra Fast”.

The Ezra Fast

“to undo the heavy burdens...” (Isa. 58:6)

Recall the problem that Ezra had. The Jews travelled back from captivity in 538 B.C. King Cyrus of Persia gave them permission to go back to their homeland (Jerusalem) and rebuild the Temple. The surrounding nations caused trouble, so the work of building went slowly, and it even stopped for several years. (This is typical of the type of some problems we have today. There are external forces hindering the progress in our lives.) The Temple was finally finished 515 B.C.

Ezra gathered a second group of people on the banks of the Ahava River on the way back to Jerusalem when he realized he had a major problem. Leaving King Cyrus he told him that “God takes care of everyone who truly worships him, but He gets very angry and punishes anyone who refuses to obey”(Ezra 8:22). But along the path

to their homeland was thugs, gangs and thieves, and Ezra was responsible for the whole multitude of people and their belongings. They collectively possessed a treasure, which included over 7,500 pounds of gold. He thought it would be very embarrassing to go back to the king who previously had held him captive, and ask him for help. Ezra was “on the spot”, “up against the wall”, the “spotlight” was on him and he needed a solution fast.

Fasting for an answer was required in Ezra’s case. But not just a personal fast. Private problems require personal fasting. **Group problems require the entire group to fast. The circle of fasting should be as large as the circle of concern. In other words, whomever the problem affects should fast together for an answer.**

The Ezra Fast was a group fast. Here he did several things. First he:

1. Chose those who were going to be involved. Those involved should be committed to seeing the problem for everyone solved. In the end everyone learns how to trust God *together*. Then, he asked everyone to
2. Share the problem. We have to share responsibility and not take the easy way out and put undo burdens on any individual or group of individuals. Ezra said, “I proclaimed a fast...that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us” (Ezra 8:21). The people following Ezra fasted because they were scared. They wanted safety for themselves and their children. The greater the problem, the more likely people will fast with intensity and pray with sincerity. Ezra also knew that the people should:
3. Fast seriously. Again, during fasting, you need to agonize (take the physical and time consuming effort) in prayer. Ezra’s fast was “that we might afflict ourselves before our God” (Ezra 8:21). You need to take into account how serious your problem is, and respond to it with the same (if not greater) level of intensity. We can’t expect a breakthrough for serious problems with a nonchalant approach. Ezra also encouraged the people to:
4. Fast *before* attempting a solution. Our natural approach to problem is to brainstorm, and then choose a solution from our own conventional wisdom. After we’ve exhausted every conceivable natural effort, then we *may* decide to commit to fasting and prayer. Ezra did something before discussing the problem with his elders: “I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there abode we in tents three days” (Ezra 8:15). Your timing is critical when you face life-changing decisions in life. Fasting and prayer before you attempt a solution gives you clarity, direction, discernment and insight that you otherwise may not get.
5. Fast on site. God told Abraham to walk throughout the land He was going to give him (see Gen. 13:17). God instructed Joshua to walk around Jericho before the battle had begun (Joshua 6:3-5). Ezra brought the people face to face with their problem- he brought them to the banks of the river before launching out into the wilderness. “Beside the Ahava River, I asked the people to go without eating and to pray” (Ezra 8:21). When you have a problem, don’t run away from it. Face it and conquer it.
6. Fast for Step-by-Step Guidance. Many times we look for a “once and for all” solution to our problem. God builds faith in us many times by showing us solutions battle-by-battle until the war is won. Large problems should be broken down into smaller problems, and if they can be solved one by one, we can solve the larger problems. Ezra called a fast “to seek of [God] a right way” (Ezra 8:21). They went without food and asked God to protect them. They had a tremendous amount of money, but during the fast, God gave Ezra a plan. He divided up the treasure and distributed it among the 12 priests, so that some of their possessions might get through even if some were lost. Not only would this plan protect the entire amount from thieves, but it would make each of the 12 priests accountable. Fasting keeps you from making silly decisions as well. Ezra was spiritual, but not stupid.

Change cause problems. Differences cause problems. Circumstances cause problems. In other words, “Stuff happens”. Preparing for the Ezra fast your aim should be to solve a problem that conventional means cannot solve. Vow to examine all the facts to understand the problem, and ask God to give you insight into the causes of the problem and a solution. After you follow the principles God shows you, and you do everything *you* can do (after seeking God), accept the results within the providential power of God (all things work together for good to them who love God, and are the called according to His purpose.).

Start thanking God right now for His solution.

Grace and Truth Evangelistic COGIC

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Training for Service Series-Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough-September 16, 2003

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. (Isaiah 58:6-8)

The fast that God has chosen is designed to minister to the total man, mind, body, soul and spirit. It will also usher in individual and corporate anointing. One of our prayers while fasting should be that God blesses others while he's blessing us. What a great time in history it is when God's people experience His outpour together! Your outlook on life (as well as those around you) improves, your faith (as well as those around you) increases, your favor (as well as those around you) abounds, and there is a forward progression or movement for all the people! This is what true revival is, and this is what happened in Samuel's time. Continuing our study on receiving the complete fullness of God in our lives, let's take a look at the "Samuel Fast".

The Samuel Fast

"...to let the oppressed go free.. (Isa. 58:6).

In the book of Judges we read how God's chosen people continually rejected him and turned to idols. Each time, God allowed the enemies of Israel to attack and defeat them. Every time this occurred, they would turn back to the Lord and cry out for help. In answer to their prayers, God sent special leaders called judges, who, in turn, restored the people to righteousness. Consequently, Israel was able to defeat their enemies again.

As long as a righteous judge lived, Israel would serve God. But when he or she died, they rejected the Lord again, and fell back into the vicious cycle of idolatry and defeat. In these days, Israel didn't have a king, and "everyone did what they thought was right" (Judges 21:25).

Samuel was the last judge of Israel. He was also a prophet and a priest. He initiated a nationwide revival through fasting. We can then look at the Samuel Fast as a fast for revival and evangelism. This fast can be a tool for freeing those who are oppressed, and healing those who are rendered ineffective by sin in their spiritual walk.

Samuel did not introduce the fast for revival to Israel without requiring serious preparation. He required that the people put away the foreign gods they had accumulated and commit themselves wholly to God. Preparation today is much the same way. These are some things that the corporate body needs to do to prepare for this fast.

Recognize your bondage.

Before revival can really arrive in a body of believers (or a community), we absolutely must recognize the source of our bondage to sin that hinders revival. There are habits, demonic influences, offenses, and people's

memory of their past that create the need for revival. Whatever the situation, we need to identify it, not be blind to it, and ask God to remove it. The solution to any problem begins with the recognition of need.

Pray for God's Presence Among His People.

Many churches are like the church at Laodicea in Revelation 3 that has Jesus Christ on the *outside* of it. He said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me". (Rev. 3:20). The church is much more than a building and people. The true church is the presence of Jesus Christ in the midst of his people. In Samuel's day, the Philistines attacked Israel and stole the Ark of the Covenant, which was the dwelling place for the presence of the Lord. One of the priests killed during this raid was Phinehas, whose wife gave birth to a child, naming him Ichabod, meaning "the glory has departed from Israel! Because the ark of God has been captured" (I Sam. 4:21).

You may still possess your salvation, but the glory has dried up out of your life. Confess this, and ask God to infuse his presence back into your daily life.

We should gather together when seeking revival. Samuel wanted the people to gather at Mizpah to experience the outpour of God. In the New Testament, the people gathered in the upper room. It's not the geography that's important, its getting people of the same mind and objective together that God responds to. "... They were all with one accord in one place...."

Be sure God's Leaders Are in Place

At the foot of the Cross, we are all equal. Historically, however, revival flowed through leadership that God appointed. When God gave birth to a nation, he chose Abraham. When famine struck Egypt, he chose Joseph to be governor and save the people from starvation. When God needed a deliverer for Egypt, he chose Moses. When Moses died, he raised up Joshua. When there were Judges, God used Deborah, Gideon, Jehud and Samson. After the judges, He raised up a shepherd boy to be king-David. When Israel backslid in other times, God raised up prophets to correct them. When we pray for revival, God's leaders have to step up to the plate, lead by example, pray for God to raise up more leaders(because the harvest is truly ripe), and use the leaders that are already in place.

Repent

I. Samuel 7:2 states "all the people of Isreal mourned and sought after the Lord", once they realized their sins. When Isreal lamented after the Lord, Samuel tested them. He said, "If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and Ashtoreths" (I. Sam. 7:3). The evidence of your sincerity and true repentance is seen when you stop sinning.

When we fast and pray for revival, we have to confront sins of omission and commission, those known and unknown. How can sin be unknown? Backsliders are blind to sin. Because they have willfully chosen to turn away from God, they become willfully ignorant of their obligation to him. This is why the psalmist prayed, "Search me O God, and know my heart... And see if there is any wicked way in me (Psalms 139:23,24). Backsliders are also careless about their sin. But God can show hidden sin to the believer, that sin that is holding the blessings of God back. When the prodigal son came to his senses, he understood that his father's servants were better off than he was. It was only when he got hungry, that he gravitated back toward his father's house. Fasting makes us hungry both naturally *and* spiritually.

Acknowledge the Power of God's Word

Paul told the church at Corinth, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone that believes (Rom. 1:16). Study God's Word and see where great revival occurred.

- Under Jacob. Jacob had his entire house put away false gods and serve the true God (Gen. 35:1-4)
- Under Samuel. The people responded to Samuel and put away their false gods, and their hearts were changed to serve the true God. (I. Sam.7:3-6)
- Under Moses. Revival happened when complaining Israel saw God open up the Red Sea. (Exodus 14:31-15:21).
- Under David. When the Ark of the Covenant was brought into Jerusalem the first time (see I. Chronicles 15,16;29), and at the dedication of the materials used in building God's temple(I. Chron. 29)
- Under Solomon. At the dedication of the Temple(I. Kings 6-8).
- Under Asa. He even displaced his own grandmother because of her idolatry (I.Kings 15:11-15)
- Under Jehoshaphat. The king led a revival when he cleansed the temple (see 2Chron. 19)
- Under Elijah. This took place after the contest with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (2 Kings 18:21-40)

There are many other instances of revival in God's Word that we can draw from and will in weeks to come.

Pray when fasting for revival and evangelism, " I believe in the power of God to revive individuals and people (Psalms 85:6). I believe God will pour Himself out on His people (Acts 2:17) and send times of refreshing from His presence (Acts 3:19). I believe when people humble themselves, pray, seek God and turn from wickedness, God will respond (2 Chron. 7:14). Therefore I will fast and pray for revival and soul winning.

Commit to a day, date and time to start and stop the Samuel Fast.

Grace and Truth Evangelistic COGIC

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Training for Service Series-Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough-October 28, 2003

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. (Isaiah 58:6-8)

The latest installment in this series on the importance of fasting and prayer identifies fasting out of your own personal need for the need of someone else. This is a very selfless fast, a fast of intercession. It is called the “Widow’s Fast”, because it is named after the widow described in the 17th chapter of 1st Kings. The “Widow of Zarephath willfully gave up her last food to meet a humanitarian need in the life of another.

The Widow’s Fast

“...Is it not to deal the bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?” (Isa. 58:6,7).

The Near East was suffering a drought. To judge the people of Israel, God had shut up heaven. *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months (James 1:17)*

We don’t know much about the widow except that she was one of many widows in the land. She went about gathering sticks to cook her small evening meal. Life was difficult but manageable when her husband was alive. Times went from bad to worse when her husband passed away, and she hardly had enough to make ends meet *before* the drought, now it was close to impossible.

She only had enough food for one last small meal for her and her son. Then like so many before her, she prepared for starvation to take its deadly toll on them both.

A voice of a stranger, strained by thirst, calls out to the widow, “Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink”. The widow was compelled to help because of the condition of the stranger. But just as she was going to fetch water, the stranger added, “Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand (I Kings, 17:10, 11).

Has anyone ever asked you to give some thing that you barely had enough for yourself? How did you feel?

How was this woman going to respond to the need of a complete stranger? What she had was not enough to keep herself and her son alive. How could she give the little she had to a stranger?

She explained to the stranger that there was no bread in her home (this is similar to the usual answer we would conveniently give to someone if we didn’t have to give). All the widow had was a little bit of oil and a little flour. “Don’t be afraid”, the stranger encouraged. “Just first make me a portion, and then make the rest for you and your son”. Look at her decision. Would she die without her meal, or give to someone she didn’t even know? She concluded she was going to die anyway, with or without the meal, so she gave per the stranger’s instructions. Little did she know that she was feeding the man whom God would use to end this terrible drought.

Many times we need to realize that the little we have sometimes is more valuable in the hands of a God who has everything than our own hands.

Scripture reveals a strong emphasis about the concerns of God's people for the physical needs of those around them. It is not surprising that providing for people in need should become an important aspect of the discipline of fasting.

The Widow's Fast enables us to see God meet the needs of others, especially humanitarian needs such as food and clothing.

In the New Testament, we see others who sacrificed for the needs of others. In Luke the 21st chapter, there is a widow who placed her last two mites into the Temple treasury that was designated just for the poor (Luke 21:3,4). She gave all that she had. This widow was willing to sacrifice everything, even her necessities, just to help others.

Many times we cut ourselves and others off from life-changing blessings because we won't release the small amount we have for the greater good, not realizing that we can gain something that will never run out.

In the book of John, the 6th chapter, we find that the apostle Andrew found a young boy willing to give up his lunch consisting of five barley loaves and two small fishes so that 5,000 hungry people could be fed. Someone else made a similar sacrifice when Jesus again fed another 4,000 who had been hungry for three days (Mark 8:1-9).

Fasting for the needs of others (The Widow's Fast) is a long-standing tradition among true Christians. Before observing (going on) this particular fast, you need to prepare yourself adequately. You need to allow this fast to minister to you first so that God can use you to minister to others. Again, it is a very selfless endeavor. As you go through this fast, several steps ought to occur.

1. Become "Others" Oriented.
2. Recognize your own blessings.
3. Use Some of your own Grocery money.
4. Fast and pray for guidance.
5. Pray for those you help.
6. Identify with Other's suffering.
7. Consider a Long-Term Investment.

Many effective mission ministries are born and sustained through this type of discipline. The aim of the Widow's Fast is to ultimately divert funds to meet the needs of others. Vow to fast and pray for the people or group of peoples you specifically identify. Be sure to ask God for the need you want him to meet in your own life as you fast. Remember the promise made to the widow of Zarephath. *"For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth."* (1 Kings 17:14)

Grace and Truth Evangelistic COGIC

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Training for Service Series-Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough-December 2, 2003

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. (Isaiah 58:6-8)

This week's lesson is one of the most intriguing for those of us who face important decisions on a frequent basis. It also challenges us if we *really* are sincere about performing the perfect will of God in our lives. Because life presents us all with major decisions at some time or another, we can all benefit from what is called the "Saint Paul fast". The decisions that we make in our lives can redirect our entire lives and destinies, and the lives and destinies of people around us. A decision about whom to marry, for example, can make us or break us.

If we knew the future, it would be easier to make decisions. Be we don't, so God promises that the fast He desires will cause His "light [to] break forth like the morning" (Isa. 58:). This implies that if we focus on the will of God as opposed to our own will when we make decisions, God will give us clearer perspective and insight to make the *right decision* at the *right time*. One author gave an excellent observation about making decisions:

1. The wrong decision at the wrong time is a disaster.
2. The wrong decision at the right time is a mistake.
3. The right decision at the wrong time is unacceptable.
4. The right decision at the right time is success.

Consider the Saint Paul fast.

The Saint Paul Fast

"....Then shall thy light break forth as the morning...." (Isaiah 58:8).

The origin of the St. Paul fast is found in the book of Acts, the ninth chapter. Let's read it:

- ¶ And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,
- 2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.
- 3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:
- 4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?
- 5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.
- 6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.
- 7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

Have you ever known anyone like the former Saul of Tarsus? Thoroughly convinced that they are doing the right thing while doing the wrong thing? Self-inspection may be required here. Only someone who knows the future dangers, rewards, heartaches, joy or pain of our lives can help us make the right decisions. If we could talk to such a person when making decisions about *anything*, life would be so much easier. Jesus Christ is that person.

Saul had a narrow view of who God was (Just a god to the Jews), and was so persuaded that the movement Jesus Christ started was so dangerous, that he consented to the death of one of God's true servants (Stephen) and started out on a crusade to rid the world of other Christians on the way to Damascus. Because Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, He knows our beginnings and our endings. He knew that if he changed the mind of Saul, Saul would be one of His most effective agents for the spreading of this "good news" of the Gospel.

During the Saint Paul fast, God can speak to us in a variety of ways. In Damascus, God sent a Christian named Ananias to the house where Saul was staying. Ananias originally had reservations about going to meet Saul because he knew of Saul's background. But God persisted with Ananias because he had a much greater plan for his life and Saul's life than either could imagine. Once in Saul's house, Ananias placed his hands on Saul the former persecutor, and he received the vision to become Paul the apostle.

While on this fast, look and listen diligently for ways to God to speak to you. God may or may not speak to you audibly, as some heard Him in Scripture, but He will help you in making your decisions. First, the Lord has given us principles for living in the Word of God. For example, we don't have to pray about whether to marry an unsaved person (see 2 Cor. 6:14), nor do we have to pray about whether to have sex outside of marriage (see Exodus 20:14). In addition to His Word, God provides many other resources for decision making.

- He directs us by counsel with friends (see Prov. 11:14).
- He sovereignly guides (see Rom. 8:28).
- He directs us inwardly (see Acts 16:6; Rom. 8:14).
- He directs us by opportunities (see I Cor. 16:9).
- He directs us when we have a yielded spirit (see Rom. 12:1,2).
- He directs us through our spiritual gifts (I Cor. 7:7).
- He directs us through our common sense (see Prov. 16:9).
- He guides us through prayer.
- Most importantly, God directs us through fasting.

In this fast, we focus on our choices according to God's will instead of food, and praying our decisions through to successful conclusions.

We need to consistently go through the previous checklist, and not get dependent on any one factor *more* than fasting and prayer.

The Saint Paul fast is for gaining insight and wisdom. Paul gained insight and wisdom from this type of fast, and it changed the course of his life and so many others to this day. It changed the direction of Christianity from persecution of the Church to the explosive growth of the Church.

The following are several principles we need to follow to experience God's clarity and direction in our lives. **1) Make time to listen to the voice of Jesus.** Jesus will not deceive or misdirect us. Its in our best interest to

listen for His voice first, and let everyone else's voice be secondary. **2) Ask and Answer Questions about Yourself.** Am I doing the will of God? Have I been submissive to Him? Am I being obedient to His Word? Do I read and study His Word? In quietness, let God speak to your conscious. Once we see Him, we will see our answers. **3) Recognize the truth.** Many times we are "shut up" to our own thinking. Settled in "our ways". God said,

"For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts". (Isa. 55:9,10).

Sometimes God speaks with loud authority. Other times He speaks with a still, small voice. We have to listen to hear Him. When fasting, we tell God we are listening for an answer.

Often we try to justify ourselves and our decisions. We try to make things go our own way. We don't look at all the facts, and we don't understand the facts we do look at because we are blinded by our presuppositions. We think we are never wrong. The more we look at facts, read our Bible, and listen to the heart of God, the more we will realize that our answers and our perception of truth may not be what we originally thought. We can even lie to ourselves about the truth, knowing the truth, but truth, like a hot stove, always burns us when we touch it. **4) Stop self-effort and yield to God.** There is a time for initiative. There are other times to stop getting in the way and let God work it out. The Saint Paul fast is one of those times. **5) Pay attention to the physical.** Steal away and let God have all of your attention **6) Pay attention to the spiritual.** Submit your spirit. Search God with your whole heart. Allow God to search your heart. Allow the Holy Ghost to teach you **7) Obey what God teaches you. 8) Be willing to be patient. 9) Be open to insight from others.** If Paul hadn't received Ananias, the history of mankind would be different. **10) Prepare to be misunderstood.** Always remember that when you hear from Jesus, there are others around you who don't.

The aim of the Saint Paul fast is for wisdom and decision making. Vow to delight yourself in the Lord (Psalms 37:4), seek first His kingdom (Matt. 6:33), and present yourself to Him so you can prove His will in your life (Rom. 12:1,2). Again, determine what you will withhold, what days and times you will fast, and pray that God gets the glory out of your decisions.

Grace and Truth Evangelistic COGIC

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Training for Service Series-Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough-December 9, 2003

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. (Isaiah 58:6-8)

When we begin fasting for physical health and healing, we must realize that it is God who heals. His name Jehovah Rapha means, "I am the Lord who heals you" (Exod.15:26).

We enter the Daniel Fast for two physical reasons: 1) as therapy when we are sick and need healing, or 2) as prevention to keep us from becoming sick or getting a disease.

Let's look at the "Daniel Fast".

The Daniel Fast

"... and thine health shall spring forth speedily...." (Isa.58:8).

The background of the Daniel Fast is outlined in Daniel 1:1-15:

- 1 ¶ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.
- 2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.
- 3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring *certain* of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;
- 4 Children in whom *was* no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as *had* ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.
- 5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.
- 6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:
- 7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel *the name* of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.
- 8 ¶ But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.
- 9 now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

- 10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which *are* of your sort? then shall ye make *me* endanger my head to the king.
- 11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,
- 12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.
- 13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.
- 14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.
- 15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

After taking captive Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Nebuchadnezzar's plan was to acclimate the boys Babylonian bureaucracy and diplomacy so that they could be leaders in Babylonian government. This included giving the finest delicacies and wine from the king's own provisions (see Daniel 1:5). This food was not acceptable to these friends, who were Hebrews. So Daniel proposed to the king's servants that they be allowed to "fast" from the king's meat, and to eat only vegetables and drink only water (v.12). If, after 10 days they were not in better health than their Babylonian counterparts, Daniel promised that they could be dealt with as the Babylonian guards wished. At the end of the 10-day test period, Daniel and his friends were healthier in body and mind than the men who were served food from the royal palace. As a result of his faithfulness, Daniel lived a long and useful life. He lived until the reign of King Cyrus of Persia, 73 years after being captured by Nebuchadnezzar. He was over 90 years old when he died.

When the Lord said, "I am the Lord who healeth thee..." He was promising preventive healing. He promised that he wouldn't send the diseases on His children that he sent on the Egyptians (Exod. 15:26).

Preventive medicine is like the mother who gives her children vitamins and bundles them in warm clothing before sending them off to school in the snow. Curative medicine is like putting the children to bed, providing medicine and rest.

An example of God's preventive healing power is the Old Testament law prohibiting eating blood and animal fat (see Leviticus 3:17). Recent medical research seems to show that bacteria and disease reside primarily in blood and fat. God wanted his people to enjoy good health. Rich foods and desserts aren't best for our health, either. Those who enter the Daniel Fast eat only necessities to 1) cleanse the digestive system, 2) rest the body and 3) renew the system.

God has promised that prescriptive healing can come by faith and prayer: "The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up" (James. 5:15). Faith and prayer must be joined. Faith is an instrument of healing when it is joined with prayer. The Daniel Fast is based on the foundation of faith, prayer and fasting. It is God who heals, by our faith.

The physical health you seek from God may be more than an answer to prayer. Your physical health may be linked to any of the following factors:

- a. *Your food choices.* When you enter the Daniel fast, you not only modify your diet, but you also begin praying for God's wisdom to make appropriate choices of food in your diet, adding some and deleting others. After you have prayed for wisdom, begin learning about proper diet by reading books, listening to audio tapes, and talking to knowledgeable people.

- b. *The level of your spiritual commitment as reflected in constant prayer during the fast.* It is not enough to do without food; you must pray during your Daniel Fast that God would give you the strength of your commitment to stay on the fast. In case of illness, you must also pray for God to touch your physical body with healing; that the disease will be flushed out of your body; and that by eating the proper food you will be able to build up your body.
- c. *Your time commitment.* Be sure to fulfill your fast to the conclusion of your commitment. If you make a 10-day commitment to God, keep it. Don't stop on the ninth day. You made a spiritual commitment to God for 10 days; therefore don't violate your fast. As you do your part by sticking to your fast commitment, God will do His part in giving strength and health to your body and soul.
- d. *Your testimony commitment.* This fast is a statement of faith to God that you want Him to heal your body. It is also a statement of faith to yourself and to other people. Make a dual commitment in your Daniel Fast for physical strength to keep the fast to the end of your commitment, and faith and emotional strength for your spirit.

Things to remember:

The Daniel Fast will lead to spiritual insight. The results of fasting were ongoing in the lives of Daniel and his three friends. "To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding" (Dan. 1:17). The knowledge God gave them was apparently the reward of their fast. Withholding food does not make us smart. God gives wisdom and knowledge to those who have the self-discipline to withhold food and to spend their time praying, reading His Word and seeking His will.

The Daniel Fast is longer than one day. Your poor health/sickness developed over a period of time, therefore it will likely take some time for your diet adjustments to produce a renewed state of health.

The Daniel Fast is a partial fast. Although other fasts involve no food or drinks for one to three days, the Daniel Fast usually does not eliminate all food and water.

The Daniel Fast includes healthy food. Inasmuch as "the body heals itself" you must eat basic foods during the Daniel Fast to strengthen the body so it can heal itself.

The Daniel Fast requires abstinence from "party food." There may be times to enjoy party food, but the Daniel Fast is a return to basic nutritional necessities.

The Daniel Fast is for health and healing. Believe God to give you physical, mental and emotional nature in which to glorify Him. Pledge to honor Him in every area of your life. Commit yourself to God's healing and health and fast and pray for it.