

FASTING FOR FREEDOM

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Isaiah 58:6; Matthew 17:14-21

Why would a pastor issue a call to abstain from eating and enjoying our pleasures during a time such as this? To deny oneself the things we want and enjoy may seem ridiculous to most. However, we fast as a form of worship. Fasting is what we call extravagant worship. Fasting is focusing on God. **Luke 2:37** It is giving God undivided attention at a time when people and pleasures are clamoring for our attention. You need for God to move in on your life and do some things that He has not been able to do while you were distracted. You live daily with an insatiable hunger for more than this world can provide. Fasting is removing those distractions so that you can go deeper in God. .

Fasting is a spiritual discipline. It opens us up to a deeper relationship with God and positions us before Him so that He can change and free us. Lent is all about self examination and being honest with ourselves. If we are truly honest, all of us are bound by something. **Galatians 5:3** We maintain our freedom for a moment, but then we cave in only to start the cycle of sin, guilt, and shame again. Why are dealing with the same old thing when we are wonderfully saved?

We are dealing with what Elmer Towns calls, besetting sin. Besetting sin is not ordinary sin or sins of rebellion. **Hebrew 12:1** Besetting sins are habitual sins that make us feel hopeless and powerless. They make us feel worthless. We have been delivered from sin, hell, death, and the grave but we still find ourselves bound by smoking, drugs, lust, bitterness, unforgiveness, and greed. What is greed? It is buying clothes and shoes when you don't have money to pay your bills. You don't have anymore room for anything new but you buy something new anyway. It is continuing to eat when you aren't hungry. You are overweight and still overeat. We still lie, lust, and cheat. **1 Corinthians 10:13** You are not unique. Your temptations may be shared by others. The way the enemy works with us is that he makes us feel as if we are the worst Christians on earth because we think nobody is struggling with these same temptations. Satan is the father of lies. You cannot believe him. The only way he can control you is through his deception. **John 8:44, Romans 7:18-19** When you believe his lies, you lose all hope. In the text, Paul explained why we are so bound by besetting sin. Our ordinary way to free ourselves from besetting sin is to launch a frontal attack. We rely on our own will power only to find ourselves morally bankrupt again. We cannot free ourselves by our own will.

You need more than faith. This kind of sin does not go away except by prayer and fasting. You haven't even realized the grip that Satan has on you. It's a mind thing. He finds a crack in your character; a proclivity. The problem with sin is it has your address and is lurking at your door. It's looking for an opportunity to trip you up and pull you in. It comes in your favorite size and color. Satan has a foothold on you. A foothold is an opportunity to gain space. As long as he controls your mind he has you. He keeps us in denial then in fear that someone else will find out. The enemy has a chain around our minds. He won't allow us to come out and we don't believe that we can.

Fasting is another powerful tool and weapon in our arsenal. It is a way to break the enemy's grip. A good reason to fast is to get free. In the text, many of the people fasted symbolically as some of us are doing. They were doing it to appease God but not to get rid of sin. We don't fast to manipulate God or to move His hand in our favor. When we fast, there should be some evidence. You can't be the same person after a fast. How many times are you going to fast and pick up the same bad habit? When you control your physical appetite, you can control your external appetite. There are certain things that should be happening when you are fasting for freedom.

- **We make a free choice to be delivered.** John 5 You have to make the choice. Do you want to be free from your anger, lying, lust, and infidelity? What God wants to know is will you make a conscious decision to be free. Do you want the same things God wants to give you? Wake up, stand up, and make a decision today. Give God permission to come inside of you and make changes. **Galatians 6:8** There is a constant conflict going on inside of us between the flesh and the spirit. Which one is going to win? The answer is the one you feed. When we fast and starve the flesh, we diminish the flesh. When we sow to the spirit through fasting, praying, studying, and worshipping, we feed the spirit. Only the spirit can cleanse your lying and cheating heart. Only the spirit can help you forgive those you have vowed to hate the rest of your life. Only the spirit will make you live holy and right.
- **You have to recognize the external nature of your bondage.** There are outside forces and family influences. Some of us were brought up in God-less environments. You have no regard for others because you grew up that way. You don't have home training. You are nasty to those who are nice to you because people have been nasty to you all your life. You have to recognize the external influences like music, television, movies, and experiences. When does the cycle end? We have to renounce the external influences and plead the blood of Jesus to break the cycle. Renounce counterfeit influences and make different decisions. The real influence in your life should be the Word of God.
- **We all have influences but you have to take responsibility for your own actions.** You have to specifically admit that you have a problem. The Holy Spirit is calling you right now. Don't deny Him. The enemy wants us to believe that God isn't speaking to you. You have to admit your weakness. You must realize that you need God. Then you have to accept God's strategy to free you. Fasting is the way that God shows us how to break the grip. How long do you fast? You fast until you get free. There are many repeat offenders because we have not made up our minds to be free. The very thing you have been holding onto for security is killing you and robbing you of your freedom. You will have to get real with God and put that thing on the altar. He wants to change you and make you brand new. Everything God has for us fits just right but in order for the new to fit right you must take off the old. **Matthew 6:33** It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Gal 5:1

Peace

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