

Prayer and Fasting in the Life of the Christian

BY RONNIE FLOYD

Prayer and fasting is one of the most neglected spiritual disciplines in the life of Christians. We know that prayer and fasting was not only a part of the lifestyle of many major leaders in the Scripture, but even in the life of Jesus Christ. What is it?

Fasting is abstinence from food with a spiritual goal in mind. It is when you neglect the most natural thing your body desires, which is food, in order to pursue the God of Heaven to do something supernatural in your life. Prayer and fasting is not a hoop you jump through in order to try to catch the attention of God. It is far more significant than a self-determined tactic to get God's attention. We cannot manipulate God.

Fasting places our focus on God alone, nothing else. Through sacrificing food, we are reminded of the need to deny ourselves continually. As our bodies are cleansed internally through fasting, our lives become more cleansed by the grace of God. Fasting points us to the holiness of God. Consequently and simultaneously, it also makes us aware of the sinfulness of ourselves.

When Should You Pray and Fast?

You should fast when they are led by the Holy Spirit to do so. This fast may be for a day, a few days, a week, twenty-one days, a month, or up to forty days. Or, it could be a meal a day for one week. I don't want to get sidetracked on all of these issues, but I want you to consider when you should pray and fast.

When You are Desperate

I have practiced prayer and fasting ever since my days in college. I was never taught about prayer and fasting. What I learned, I learned through Scripture. I had practiced fasting for several years before 1995. I fasted for one day, three days, and even up to a week. For many years, I practiced fasting one day a week. In 1995, everything changed for me. I developed an enormous desperation for God to do a mighty work in me, my church, and America. I believe God spoke to me early one morning when I was before Him. Under God's specific leadership, I believe He instructed me to pray and fast forty days for spiritual revival personally, in my church, and for our nation. I was sick and tired of seeing what man could do; I wanted to see what God could do. After I processed the challenges of fasting for that length of time, I began to fast for forty days, drinking only water and 100% juice. To make a long story short, those forty days changed my life. From that experience, I wrote a book entitled, *The Power of Prayer and Fasting*.

When You Need Direction

It is amazing to see what God does when He aligns your spirit with the Holy Spirit of God. Nothing does this like fasting. Your mind, will, emotion, and body fight against fasting. But when God leads you to fast, your spirit comes alive. You are

automatically more in tune with God and His Spirit. You begin to see what He wants you to see, feel the way He wants you to feel, and sense what He wants you to sense.

As you immerse yourself in the Word of God during a time of fasting, you become alive to His will. You begin to see and sense what God is saying to you. As God speaks to us through the Word, it is prayer and fasting that can prepare us to hear and embrace the Word of God.

When I need direction about major matters in my life, family, or church, I set aside a time for prayer and fasting. Therefore, when I pray more because I eat less or eat nothing, I am able to begin to see where God is leading me in my life and ministry.

When You Need a Miracle

Fasting helps us seek God in complete humility. Fasting helps us abide in the secret place. The more humble we are before God, the more we become convinced that God alone is the answer for everything.

Let's face it: At times in life, family, and ministry, we find ourselves up against the wall in desperate need for a miracle. This is not a bad place because it usually forces us to know that God alone is the only answer to the need.

In 1990, my wife, Jeana, was diagnosed with cancer. After one major surgery, some supporting surgeries, radiation treatments, and six months of horrible, extreme, aggressive chemotherapy, my wife was healed from cancer. Since that year and the successive treatments, she has never had any kind of cancer at all. This is a miracle. To God alone be the glory!

In 1990, we had two little boys, a large growing church, and many demands on our lives. When she was diagnosed, I pursued the God of Heaven in desperation. During all of 1990, I fasted one day a week for my wife to be healed. God gave me a word about her healing from Isaiah 43:1-3. Weekly, I would fast and pray for my wife to be healed, stating this text again and again before the Father. Daily, I would carry an index card with Isaiah 43:1-3 written on it. When I had any fear or doubt, I would call out this scripture before God. God healed my wife.

Some may question whether God can do miracles. I do not. He can do anything, anytime, anywhere, with anyone. Through excellent medical care and treatment, and extraordinary prayer and fasting, God healed my wife. Miracle!

Therefore, I want to encourage you to take up a level of fasting in your life and ministry. For many of you, this is a new discipline. For others, it is a reminder about a neglected discipline. And for others, it is a blessing because you know the power of prayer and fasting. In my book, *The Power of Prayer and Fasting*, you can learn about this entire spiritual discipline in much greater detail. I hope you will pursue God with prayer and fasting.