

**Sermon:** FASTING - A JOURNEY TO SPIRITUAL BREAKTHROUGH AND RENEWAL.

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**Place:** St John UMC, Prospect, Ky

### **Introduction:**

Imagine engaging in a profound practice that brings you into an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit. That's what fasting is - a dynamic kingdom practice that supercharges your spiritual growth. Getting close to the Holy Spirit makes you stronger in your faith and opens doorways for God's power to flow within you and through you, playing an extraordinary role in your life and the church's life!

### **What is the fast of the Lord?**

Fasting is a kingdom practice that strengthens our spiritual connection with God by getting closer to the Holy Spirit. Fasting helps us grow spiritually and allows more of God's power to work in and through us.

Therefore, fasting is not just missing a meal, and it's not dieting. Fasting demands replacing meals with the reading of the scriptures and prayer. Fasting demands dedicating time to meditation.

### **The Biblical Key of Fasting:**

Fasting in Hebrew (צום, Tsom) and Greek (Νηστεία, NESTEIA): The act of self-denial, or abstaining from food in this context.

**I. The True Fast of the Lord:** A gesture meant to humble oneself before God, breaking our Spirit of rebellion and independence.

The Purpose of Fasting: Increasing our spiritual capacity through intimacy with the Holy Spirit.

- Fasting is the willful abstaining from natural pleasures for spiritual purposes.
- Fasting is a personal commitment to renounce the natural to invoke the spiritual.
- Fasting is the dedication to a period to devote oneself to the spiritual priority of prayer without food.

### **II. Benefits of Fasting:**

- Fasting changes us.
- Fasting does move the hand of God in our favor.
- Fasting increases our spiritual capacity.

- Fasting breaks habits and spiritual bondage.
- Fasting quiets the heart to hear God's voice.
- Fasting brings Godly intimacy.
- List of Spiritual benefits (Humility, Conquering Spirit of delay, Overcoming obstacles, Breaking demonic bonds, Sensitizing us to God's voice, Unleashing power to overcome temptations, Preparing us for spiritual warfare.

**Fasting breaks the Spirit of delay.** Daniel 9:11-12; 10:1-3.

The Prince of Persia is the demonic principality that delays God's response and vision for us, and it can only be overcome through fasting and prayer. That's why Daniel had to fast. If you have any situation that is delayed, declare fasting and prayer, and the Spirit of delay that holds back your answer will be overcome and conquered.

In the Book of Daniel, Chapter 10, a heavenly messenger was sent to Daniel but was delayed by a spiritual being called the 'Prince of Persia.' Daniel had to fast and pray for 21 days before the messenger could deliver the message he was sent with.

Here, the 'spirit of delay' represents any forces or circumstances that obstruct or delay the realization of prayers, blessings, or progress in one's life. The "spirit of delay" refers to a perceived demonic force or influence believed to hinder or delay a person's progress, blessings, or responses to prayers.

### **Scriptural Insights into Fasting:**

- Examples of fasting across the Bible.

### **III. Biblical fasts organized by length of time:**

**1-Day Fast:** In the Book of Jonah, the people of Nineveh fasted for one day to show their repentance towards God.

- **Jonah 3:5 (NIV):** "The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth."
- In the Book of Judges, the men of Gibeah fasted for a day after a civil war.

**Judges 20:26 (NIV):** "Then all the Israelites, the whole army, went up to Bethel, and there they sat weeping before the Lord. They fasted that day until evening and presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the Lord."

**3-Day Fast:** Esther fasted for three days before approaching the king.

- Esther 4:16 (NIV): "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, **I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.**"
- Saul (who later became the Apostle Paul) fasted for three days following his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. **Acts 9:9 (NIV):** "For three days he was blind and

did not eat or drink anything. **First Love: "We need to teach new believers to fast since day one."**

**7-Day Fast:** When King Saul and his son Jonathan died, the men of Jabesh-Gilead fasted for seven days.

- **1 Samuel 31:13 (NIV):** "Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days." **Period of mourning!**
- David fasted for seven days when his child by Bathsheba became ill. **2 Samuel 12:16 (NIV):** "David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth on the ground."

**10-Day Fast:** Daniel and his friends fasted for ten days by eating vegetables and drinking water.

- **Daniel 1:12-15 (NIV):** "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food and treat your servants in accordance with what you see. At the end of the ten days, they looked **healthier and better nourished** than any of the young men who ate the royal food."

**21-Day Fast:** Daniel undertook a partial fast for three weeks.

- **Daniel 10:2-3 (NIV):** "At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over."

**40-Day Fast:** Jesus fasted and was tempted by the devil for forty days and nights.

- **Matthew 4:1-2 (NIV):** "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry."
- Moses fasted for 40 days and 40 nights when he went up to Mount Sinai to receive the commandments from God.

**Exodus 34:28 (NIV):** "Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments."

Please note that fasting in the Bible is not only about denying food but often includes a spiritual component such as prayer, repentance, or mourning. The duration and nature of the fast can vary greatly, but its importance and value remain deeply significant.

Please note: The decision to fast should be guided by spiritual insight. It is a deeply personal act of devotion, reflection, and connection with God. While these examples provide evidence of its historical use, the implementation or duration of a fast should be considered with care and intention.

#### IV. Quotes on Fasting:

**St. Augustine of Hippo** has shared valuable insights on fasting as part of his extensive contributions to early Christian thought. Here's a relevant quote:

"Fasting cleanses the soul, raises the mind, subjects one's flesh to the spirit, renders the heart contrite and humble, scatters the clouds of concupiscence, quenches the fire of lust, and kindles the true light of chastity."

In these words, Augustine captures the profound spiritual benefits of fasting, highlighting its role in purification, humility, and spiritual illumination.

## **V. Closing**

- Reinforcing the importance of a God-guided fast.

- Reminder: Fasting should be an integral part of ministry, must be carried out with the correct intent, and delivers us from demonic influences.

## **VI. Prayer for the Fasting Journey**

"Dear Lord, as we embark on this journey of fasting, let it bring us closer to you—humbling us, breaking the bondage of sin, conquering the Spirit of delay in our lives, and sensitizing us to hear Your voice clearly. May You guide us through this journey and grant us the spiritual breakthrough and renewal we seek."

## **VII. Benediction:**

"May the Spirit of the Lord be upon us, strengthening us as we fast and pray. Self-denial may break us physically, but with each day of fasting, may our spirits become stronger and our faith in the Lord even more cemented.

As we journey through fasting toward spiritual breakthrough and renewal, may we find favor in the sight of the Lord and let His face shine upon us. Amen."