

BUILDING CAPACITY SERIES

# FASTING

*Unlocking the Supernatural*



“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face’  
Matthew 6:16-17

Isn't it interesting that when Jesus was talking to His disciples He did not say “if” but “when” you fast? Which means the expectation is that we are to fast at some point. There's a lot said about prayer but not necessarily as much is said about fasting, even though the combination of the two done with understanding does amazing things in the life of a believer.

This series we will look at why we should fast, the benefits to us (physical and spiritual) and some of the types of fasts we can undertake using illustrations from the Bible.

Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit will open our understanding and give us the grace to see the purpose of fasting from His perspective and also give us the grace to out into practice what He reveals to us.

Stay Connected!



## Day 1

### Why Fast?

'Moreover, when you fast...' Matthew 6:16

Very simply, fasting is abstaining from food for a period of time. Because it causes us to give something up, fasting may be viewed with some hesitation, probably because the focus is on what is being given up, rather than what is being gained in return. There are actually quite a number of benefits of fasting, both for the body and the spirit. When the focus of the fast is spiritual the emphasis isn't simply on not eating, but on what spiritual goal the person wants to achieve from the fast.

'Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4

When the focus of a fast is spiritual, what we are doing is toning down the flesh so that the voice of the spirit is louder. Remember, we are spirit beings who live in a body and as such periods of abstinence from food give us the opportunity to focus on our spirit. When the focus of the fast is spiritual rather than a physical detox, it's critical that we don't focus simply on not eating but increasing our time in prayer and study of the word. If we neglect to include prayer and study of the word when fasting, then we may just be engaging in a hunger strike. This means that there has to be some intentionality in our fasting – what is the focus of the fast, how much time are we dedicating to prayer and the word during this period?

'But as for me... I humbled myself with fasting....' Psalms 35:13

The Bible is full of examples of people who fasted for various reasons (transitions, deliverance, breakthrough, revelation, etc.), but the foundational reason is to humble ourselves before the Lord. It's from this position of humility that the Lord intercedes on our behalf to bring us into what we're seeking His face for. As we dig deeper into the different types of fasts we can undertake, it's important we remember the statement Jesus made, "when you fast" (Matthew 6:16) which tells us that He expects fasting to be part of our spiritual journey.

**Prayer:** Lord please give me understanding of why I should fast and the benefits available to me when I do.

## Day 2

### Spiritual Authority

'So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.'" Mark 9:29

One of the benefits of fasting for a believer is that as we tone down the flesh, we gain access to greater spiritual authority. There are certain situations we will face that require prayer and fasting to take authority over and access the solution to the issue. Remember a fast without prayer is simply detoxing the body, but when consistent prayer is added you create pathways in the spirit to access growth and authority.

'And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?"' Mark 9:28

In the scripture the disciples performed the activity they were used to but this particular time the demon resisted them. It took a greater level of authority to cast it out. Perhaps there is a situation you are facing that seems to defy all the methods you've tried, no matter how seemingly intelligent or well thought out they may be. Assuming you are praying and are yet to see any change perhaps it is time to add fasting to your prayers.

'Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! ... Then the devil left Him..." Matthew 4:10-11

'...in fastings often...' II Corinthians 11:27

When Jesus had fasted for 40 days, He was tempted by the devil, yet was able to resist and send him away, and guess what: the devil obeyed. Apostle Paul clearly walked in a very high level of spiritual authority and he also noted that he fasted often. These two examples show that there is a strong link between fasting and spiritual authority.

The Bible shows us illustrations of fasts ranging from 1 to 40 days, yielding amazing results, but it would be foolhardy to just jump in without first committing the fast to the Holy Spirit and asking Him to reveal to you specifically how you should go about it. There isn't a one-size fits all for every situation so we must be led by the Spirit since it's more of Him that we are seeking. One thing that is clear is that fasting should be a staple in our lives. As the days become darker and more uncertain, we need to tap into the access effective fasting makes available to us in order to walk victoriously in the days to come.

**Prayer:** Dear Holy Spirit, please show me how to fast to gain victory over the situations I'm facing.



## Day 3

### Deliverance

“Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise...” Esther 4:16

After engaging in the fast, Esther received favour from the king and secured deliverance for the Jews, which means somethings had shifted in the realm of the spirit. One of the results that fasting brings about is deliverance or breakthroughs. This is typically a water only fast (though some do a ‘dry’ fast as in Esther’s case) that lasts about 3 days. By the third day, the body is less able to take any unnecessary distractions leaving the mind free to focus on the things of God. Spiritual senses function effectively and thus we’re able to pray more accurately and make the right declarations to achieve the focus of the fast.

“And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah... Now all Judah, with their little ones, their wives, and their children, stood before the Lord. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel...in the midst of the assembly.” II Chronicles 20:3, 13-14

When Jehoshaphat was about to be attacked by stronger nations he immediately called for a national fast. During the fast, someone received a clear word from the Lord and the strategy for victory. Though the strategy did not make sense in the physical realm, the people of Judah understood that the Lord would only come through for them using His own methods. And He gave them victory as they obeyed.

Sometimes when we’re about to take a decision or are at a crossroads and don’t know what to do, fasting brings clarity to us as we’re able to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying without interference. We’re also more pliable to following His instructions as the activities of our minds are subdued so we’re less likely to over analyse what God may be telling us to do. How long should you pray for – ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

**Prayer:** Lord help me to add fasting to my prayer when I’m seeking your face. You have shown me through the lives of others that when I do this in sincerity I will definitely see results.

## Day 4

### Revelation

'In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.'  
Daniel 10:2-3

Another benefit of fasting is supernatural revelation and understanding. We see this illustrated in the life of Daniel when he took a 21 day fast, limiting the type of food he ate. At the end of the fast, he received a vision and deep insight regarding it. It's one thing to see what is coming, it's another to know what to do about it. Daniel's life demonstrates to us that fasting gives us deep insight not only about what is going on now, but also what is to come.

'Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel...talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand.'" Daniel 9:3,21-22

The 21-day fast wasn't the first time Daniel fasted. We see in the Bible that fasting and prayer was part of Daniel's lifestyle and his life was full of divine revelations and deep understanding. At every point in time, he knew what to do, even in times of danger. It's important though that we understand Daniel's heart as he engaged in these fasts.

'Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.'" Daniel 10:12

What makes the real difference in a fast is the intention of our heart. There's no point denying or restricting what we eat if we don't humble our hearts before God and have a clear heart towards those around us. Fasting for any length of time while being unkind, unforgiving, or still engaging in practices that are not pleasing to God, will be beneficial to our body, but won't bring the spiritual results we're seeking.

**Prayer:** Lord, please help me humble my heart before you as I fast. Help me recognise the things that may hinder my prayer and fasting from being effective and help get rid of them.

## Day 5

### Transitions

'And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry... From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" Matthew 4:2,17

Nothing in life is static and we all transit from one level, assignment, season, location to another at various point in our lives. Transitions are sensitive times and shouldn't be taken causally using 'head knowledge'. Imagine finding out later that you've ended up with the wrong job, role, location, etc. We need to fast to know the right path to take as we move from one season to another.

Before Jesus began His public ministry, the Bible tells us that He was led by the Holy Spirit into a 40-day fast, which was what equipped Him for the work ahead. The critical point to note here is that He was led by the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit who prepared Jesus, does the same for everyone He intends to send on an assignment. The Holy Spirit knows All things so He knows what we need to be well prepared for the next stage of our lives. We have to put Him in the driving seat and listen to His instructions about our fast so we're not just engaging in a hunger strike that may end up causing damage to our physical bodies.

'how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.' Acts 10:38

As believers we have the Holy Spirit resident in us, but when we fast we are able to activate the power needed for us to transit effectively and powerfully from one season to another. If Jesus needed to fast before starting His public ministry, we certainly need to do so when we're transitioning. Fasting ahead of taking starting anything new not only gives clarity on what to do, but the spiritual enablement to do so effectively.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me not to take transitions for granted and to always seek your face first.



## Day 6

### Assignments

'As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.' Acts 13:2-3

The early believers understood the power of fasting before embarking on a new project/assignment and in the place of prayer and fasting to receive clear instructions from the Holy Spirit. Why is this important? When we are in alignment with the Holy Spirit's instructions concerning our assignment, He provides the enablement to carry it out successfully despite the challenges we may face. The same Holy Spirit who prepared Jesus, Barnabas and Saul also prepares everyone He intends to send on any assignment.

'... they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia... they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.' Acts 16:1,6-7

Not every assignment that appears good is necessarily in line with the Holy Spirit's agenda. The same Spirit who sent Paul on various assignments also stopped him from preaching in certain locations. Nothing wrong with preaching, but according to the Holy Spirit's agenda Paul wasn't meant to be in those locations at that time. It's in the place of fasting and prayer that we get clarity on what doors are opened by God and which ones are opened by either us or the enemy. Paul lived a life of regular fasting (2 Cor 11:27) so he was able to stay connected to what the Holy Spirit was doing/saying per time.

'...Help us to interpret our lives correctly...' Psalms 90:12 TPT

As we fast regularly, we strengthen our fellowship with the Holy Spirit as He leads us through various assignments in life. Our spiritual ears are opened to hear His guidance and correction so we can stay on the pathway He has in mind for us. We're not told how long Paul fasted for, just that he fasted often which means it was part of his lifestyle. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to lead us in the pattern of fasting we need per time, per assignment so we can accurately interpret what He's saying to us.

**Prayer:** Lord please show me the doors I should walk through and the ones to walk away from.





## Day 7

### Transformation

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. Romans 7:15

We all have areas in life/character that requires improvement or complete transformation. We may struggle with some areas that seem to constantly defy all our self-help and will power. Paul understood this dilemma – some things we know we shouldn't do but we just can't seem to help ourselves. This is where adding fasting to prayer and making other external adjustments makes the difference, because we can't achieve inner transformation without the help of the Holy Spirit.

'So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.' Galatians 5:16-17

It isn't denying yourself food that makes the difference. It's toning down the flesh so that the Holy Spirit can do His work transformative work in our lives that makes a difference. There is a constant struggle going on internally in everyone and the one we empower is the one that will win. When we add fasting to our prayer and Bible study we're reducing the power of the 'flesh' and amplifying that of the Holy Spirit in our inner man. As the Holy Spirit goes to work unhindered in us, He works on those appetites, character traits etc. that are hindering us from fulfilling God's agenda for our lives.

'When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came.' Luke 4:13

Fasting for transformation isn't a one-off event, the devil is always for looking an opportunity to trip us up and if we're not on our guard, those old habits will return. This is why Jesus said 'when you fast' because He knows that for us to walk victoriously it has to be a lifestyle.

**Prayer:** Lord help me to yield all the areas I'm struggling with to you, knowing that only you have the power to bring true transformation in my life.



## Day 8

### Spirit Led

'Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. May your gracious Spirit lead me forward on a firm footing.' Psalms 143:10

We have looked at some of the benefits of fasting and today we're looking at 3 critical areas in the actual process of fasting following Biblical examples. Ideally we should plan a fast in partnership with the Holy Spirit. Asking the Holy Spirit to lead on how to fast (partial, water only, etc) and for how long. This is critical as He is the one that will bring about whatever outcome we're looking for. We should also ask Him in advance to take away hunger pangs and distractions and also reveal to us the prayer and Bible study patterns needed for the period.

'For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.' Matthew 4:2

Be on your guard! Coming out of a fast is just as important as entering one. As soon as you end the fast expect temptation to come. The enemy doesn't want you to reap the rewards of fasting so he will do whatever he can to distract you. However Jesus has shown us the way to deal with these temptations – respond with the word of God. This is why Bible study is critical during the fast. If fasting beyond a day, please ensure you're drinking a lot of water. When Jesus fasted for 40 days the Bible tells us he was hungry and not thirsty and the devil tempted Him with food not drink. This tells us that Jesus had likely been drinking water throughout. The body needs water to function effectively especially during a fast in order not to damage vital organs so let's keep this in mind.

'Commit your actions to the Lord, and your plans will succeed.' Proverbs 16:3

Fasting is not meant to be an end in itself. In the place of fasting we will be given insight, understanding, strategies etc which have to be executed. The next step is for us to ask the Lord to help us retain the transformation and execute the strategies received. The enemy is not on our side and will try and frustrate us so please don't get discouraged. Continue maintaining close fellowship with the Holy Spirit to enforce the victory you've already won.

**Prayer:** Lord, teach me my specific strategy for starting and enforcing the successes gained in fasting.



## Day 9

### Acceptable Fast

'We have fasted before you!' they say. 'Why aren't you impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don't even notice it!' "I will tell you why!" I respond. "It's because you are fasting to please yourselves. Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers.' Isaiah 58:3 NLT

One of the things we should be mindful of is that the Lord is interested in how we relate to others while fasting. He took note that while some were fasting, they were being cruel, withholding what rightfully belongs to others, acting spitefully, speaking insulting or disparaging words, rumour mongering. It all matters to the Lord.

'What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me.' Isaiah 58:4 NLT

When fasting, we need to watch not just we put in (food), but what comes out of us (our words and actions). Our fasting doesn't make God more or less who He is, it's meant to bring us into a position where we are taking our eyes off the flesh and yielding to Him for His intervention. When all we do is deny ourselves of food and don't also seek to actively walk in love, then we will not get this intervention.

"No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help... Then when you call, the Lord will answer. 'Yes, I am here,' he will quickly reply..." Isaiah 58:6-9

We see from the verses above that what God is looking at isn't the content of our bellies but of our hearts. How do we treat others? What's our heart disposition towards generosity and selflessness? It's a journey but when the Lord sees that we genuinely want to please Him, then the Holy Spirit begins to work in us, changing us to look like the ultimate model, Jesus Christ so that the changes in our character will last even after the fast.

**Prayer:** Lord help me check my heart so my fasting will be acceptable to you.



## Day 10

### The Fasted Life

“And when you fast... But when you fast...” Matthew 6:16-17

As we round this series up, let's reflect on what Jesus said – “when you fast”. Fasting should be a lifestyle for a believer, not the last line of action in a crisis. The same way we should plan to have a regular prayer life, we should also plan to have a personal fasting life. There are three critical reasons we need to have a fasting lifestyle.

'When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came.'  
Luke 4:13

The devil is always looking for an opportunity to overpower us and this can only happen when we're in a spiritually vulnerable state. Fasting helps us curb excesses when there is abundance and encourages us to lean on the Lord's supply when things may not be so well. The devil is always checking us out and fasting acceptably helps us ensure we don't give him any room to misdirect or trip us up.

'Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit's power....' Luke 4:14

As we walk with the Lord, we should be maturing in the things of the spirit. Fasting helps us tone down the flesh so the Holy Spirit can continuously do His work in us. When we try and get fit physically we won't go to the gym for 4hrs once in 90 days and expect changes. But when we exercise regularly even for just 15mins a day we will see the difference. The same principle applies to our spiritual growth. Better to do a little often than a grand exercise infrequently.

'Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him...' Colossians 2:7

In fasting combined with prayer and Bible study, our character is continuously being developed taking the focus off ourselves, needs and wants. We are more able to see things from God's perspective and are more willing to live and love beyond what is convenient for us. Our priorities are transformed constantly until we really start looking more like Jesus in our character and actions. This is the ultimate goal.

**Prayer:** Dear Holy Spirit, teach me how to live a lifestyle of fasting. You know my weaknesses and how best to lead me and mature me. I put my trust in you and commit to cooperate with you.



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