

# Proper Spiritual Fasting

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When I came into contact with the Worldwide Church of God in the early sixties, I had never heard the word "fast." I didn't know what it meant. Never heard of it! And growing up in a family where my dad grew up on a ranch where meat and potatoes were the staple of the day, the word "fasting" was not in the vocabulary. It just didn't happen.

And when I came in contact with the Church, the subject of fasting was quite often talked about. And I learned very quickly that in the fifties and the sixties, the rule of thumb back in those days that if you didn't fast once a month, you were considered somehow a second-class Christian. And the general rule was that we should be fasting once at month at least. And, so, it was part of a group I believe sincerely seeking God, trying to obey the Bible, trying to follow God and draw closer to God. And in the fifties and sixties, that was something that was emphasized—the whole subject of fasting. However, in the seventies as things began to change a little bit in the seventies, fasting was viewed by some as Pharisical and by some as being, "Well, that's physical and we're spiritual. And we really don't need to do that as much." And, then, of course, if you were here in the eighties, fasting was totally ignored—just never talked about!

And with what's happening in the Church today—God's greater Church of God—what is happening in the greater Church of God, what has happened to us here locally, what's happening in the world today, I think it's time that maybe we should consider fasting or reconsider fasting.

I'll have to admit my human side hates to fast. That's my human side. I don't want—it's just something you do not want to do humanly. Now, spiritually that should be a different story and we'll get into that through the sermon. But in these past two years, Dorothy and I have been forced to fast more than at any other time that we can remember. And I say "forced" because we needed to get closer to God, and "forced" because of the circumstances over the last couple of years if we were going to survive those, we needed to be closer to God. And, so, one of the tools God gives us to get closer to Him is fasting.

So, let me ask the question and nobody has to stick up fingers or anything, but: How often have you fasted in the last year? Just think about it. Then, related to that, let me ask the question: Are you as close to God as you would like to be? Because I'm here to tell you that there's powerful connection between those two—being close to God and fasting. We're going to talk about that.

So, the subject, the title, if you would like to write it down, is that *"Proper Spiritual Fasting is a Key to Overcoming and Becoming Closer to God."* *"Proper Spiritual*

*Fasting is a Key to Overcoming and Being Closer to God."* And I use the word on purpose "Spiritual" Fasting" because we will define that as we go forward.

So, Point Number One:

Let's establish the fact. Let's ask the question: What is our most powerful drive? Some people might say, "Money." Some people might say, "Power." You could say, "Breathing." And, of course, that's very powerful. If you shut off our airways, we're going to panic in a real hurry, but for most people breathing is something you do that you don't even think about.

**I. But if we stop drinking and we stop eating, in a very short order it has a profound effect on our whole bodies and our minds.**

And the fact is that eating and drinking are pleasurable, very pleasurable. A cold beer on a hot day is just—Benjamin Franklin said, "We know God loves us because God is a loving and benevolent God because He created beer." Benjamin Franklin said that (laughter). So, you can tell the man loved his beer!

And we don't have to talk about food because we all love to eat. We love the steaks and the salads and the desserts an all of that. We have to go no further than count up the television ads and how many are about food or about drink? A high, high percentage because it is such a powerful force in the lives of all of us; we're human—food and drink.

Now, with that in mind, let's ask the question: What did Satan use to deceive mankind? I don't know if you've ever thought about that. Go back to Genesis chapter 3. We'll read the first six verses. What did he use? Because Satan's no fool; Satan is very smart. And we're going to see that he used food to deceive and turn Adam and Eve. Genesis 3:1:

**Genesis 3:1.** *Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the [Eternal] God had made. (KJV)*

"Subtle" means devious, very intelligent, but devious.

**Genesis 3:1b.** *And he said unto the woman, Yea, [has] God said, [You] shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (KJV)*

And he's setting her up. Verse 2:

**Genesis 3:2.** *And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:*

*3) But of the fruit of the tree which is in the [middle] of the garden, God [has] said, [You] shall not eat of it, neither shall [you] touch it, lest [you] die. (KJV)*

Now in verse 4, the serpent begins to discredit God. And he says to the woman:

**Genesis 3:4b.** *[You] shall not surely die: (KJV)*

"God's not telling you the truth. He's not giving you the whole picture." Verse 5:

**Genesis 3:5.** *For God [does] know that in the day [you] eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and [your going to be like Him, you're going to know] good and evil. (KJV)*

Verse 6; notice this which is relative to our sermon today.

**Genesis 3:6.** *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes... (KJV)*

It was wonderful to look at. And if you've ever smelled a fresh—we think it's an apple but—any kind of fresh fruits or vegetables and you smell them, there's that factor also. And then:

**Genesis 3:6b.** *... a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit, and [she ate it], (KJV)*

The important point is that Satan used this powerful drive to deceive human beings. And he knew how powerful it was.

Now let me just give you a synopsis in the rest of Genesis.

We won't turn there, but in Genesis 9 we find that Noah got drunk with disastrous consequences. So, Noah loved his alcohol.

We find in Genesis 25—we won't turn there, but in verse 28 if you want to look it up later—we're told that Isaac loved Esau, but do you remember why he loved Esau? Because "he did eat of his venison"! And so, there was a bond between father and son, the bond itself was food. He loved the smell of it. He loved to eat it. He loved the camaraderie with his son over this venison. And then later on in that chapter, what did Esau sell his birthright for? It was a meal! It was food.

And I think we've all been to the point sometimes—not in fasting—but we've had a delayed meal or for whatever reason, we're just ravenously hungry, "And if I don't get something in the next five minutes, I'm going to have a meltdown here!"

And that's where Esau was because he was not ignoring his flesh. He was yielding to his flesh and he was willing to give up a birthright for one meal.

Now we're going to find out that Israel—I hate to say it; it sounds crazy, but this is human nature—Israel loved food more than they loved God. That's a sad, sad commentary, but it's true. Let's go to Exodus 16 and we're going to read verses 2 and 3. And we're just reading a few, two verses actually, but it is over and over and over again with Israel and their love for food above their love for God. Exodus 16 verse 2:

**Exodus 16:2.** *And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:*

3) And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the [Eternal] in the land of Egypt, (KJV)

But notice what they were longing for!

**Exodus 16:3b.** ...when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; (KJV)

They were saying back then even though they were in abject slavery, they worked horrible, horrible hours and under horrible conditions, the fact is that they had food and they had bread and they could stuff their bellies and that made up for all of that in their minds. And they were angry with God that they were a little bit hungry now out in the desert. They weren't totally satisfied. And they accused Him of "Bringing them out into the wilderness to kill them with" what? "Hunger." They were hungry.

Look at Numbers chapter 11, a second [example]. We'll read verses 4 through 6. Again, wandering in the wilderness, Israel having a problem lusting for food, Numbers 11:4:

**Numbers 11:4.** And the [mixed] multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who [is going to] give us flesh to eat? (KJV)

Remember God had given them manna and they weren't happy with that. Verse 5, notice what they remember. Notice what was on the forefront of their minds!

**Numbers 11:5.** We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; (KJV)

"Good, wonderful fish dinner! Oh, man!"

**Numbers 11:5b.** ...the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the [garlic]: (NKJ)

"And there's nothing quite so nice as smelling garlic! Oh it's good!" But that's what their mind was on.

But then they say:

**Numbers 11:6.** But now [because we don't have all of this] our [lives are just drying up]: there is nothing at all, beside this [crummy] manna, [God] that you're giving us]. (KJV)

And so, they were disparaging God because He didn't satisfy their lust for food in the way that they wanted. And their mind was on their belly. And as a result you can clearly see that if they had a choice between God and hunger or God and manna versus going back to Egypt and being filled to the full, they would go back to Egypt in a heartbeat! As long as their bellies were full and as long as they

could eat what they wanted and enjoy the fine food and smells and all of that that God provides for us as human beings.

And, in our experience, on the Day of Atonement—I marvel at this—but when we're sitting around talking before and after services, what is the main subject discussed on the Day of Atonement? It's food. Invariably! You can't go five minutes in a conversation on the Day of Atonement without the subject going back somehow to food because of our hunger; because of, frankly, our lust and desire for food.

Now, God gave us that in part to help us survive, but with most of us, food is far more than that. So, the fact is that it's something we have to be careful about.

I remember at one Feast, Dorothy and I were Detroit—excuse me—in Seattle and we were taking an afternoon wandering around where the Space Needle is. And there is a gigan—there was; I'm not sure if it's still there—but a gigantic food court within about a block of the Space Needle. And we thought, "Well, we'll go check this out."

And so, we started walking in and this woman came out who was probably 5' 4", maybe 5'5" and she had to be every pound of three hundred pounds to the point that her arms rested on her chest out like this. And she had—her tongue was kind of hanging out of her mouth because she had and her eyes were glazed over because she had sampled the food court to the full and she had—this chocolate éclair and she was stuffing it in her mouth. And you just thought, "Oh, my!" It shows you very graphically how powerful this drive is.

And, as we all know, a high percentage of the Western World, particularly the United States, are overweight and obese. And it just shows again the power of this drive!

Now look at Christ's view. What is Christ's view of this drive and food and drink? Look at Romans chapter 14 and verse 17 because Paul is telling us, inspired by God, inspired by Jesus Christ something very important that we as God's people at the end of this age need to understand and put at the forefront of our minds. Romans 14 and verse 17:

***Romans 14:17.*** *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; (KJV)*

Let's understand that!

***Romans 14:17b.*** *...but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy [spirit]. (KJV)*

The fruits of God's spirit! God's spirit is so far above the joys of the eating and drinking that there's no comparison, but sometimes we lose sight of that fact. And it's hard for humans to internalize the fact that the Kingdom isn't meat and drink. And we need to put food and that drive in its proper priority. And the world, of course, has it way out of proportion. We know that.

Now in fasting, what we're doing is setting aside this most powerful of drives. We're saying, "I'm going to put my desire for food and drink on the shelf." And in doing so, God learns a lot about us, as we're going to see. Or if we decide not to put this drive on the shelf and just yield to it by not fasting, God learns a lot about us too. In other words, if we fast and make fasting a part of our lives, do we give ourselves to God during this time? Of course! Do we submit to God? Do we use fasting as a time to recommit to God? Of course! Or do we ignore fasting? And make excuses for why we can't fast or won't fast or don't fast? Or if we do fast, do we get in a bad attitude about it? Again, that tells God a lot about us by whether or not we fast and what our attitude is when we do fast.

So summarizing Point Number One:

**I. Food is one of the most powerful drives in our lives. And fasting is involved in this obviously.**

Now, Point Number Two:

**II. We want to talk about two types of fasts.**

There is a "Heath Fast." When I first came into the Church, fasting was quite common. And the Church was more involved, Brethren were more involved, the ministers were more involved in health and making recommendations about health. And people had organic gardens and all of that. So, there were Health Fasts that were common in the Church.

And I found out—this newcomer that didn't know what the word "fast" meant—that there were certain kinds of fasts where people avoided certain foods for a period of time—a day, two days, three days, whatever, or longer. People would say avoid carbohydrates for a period of time—a week or two maybe. Or some people would avoid red meat for a period of time. Or forbid! Some people would go without coffee for a period of time (laughter). And I know that's anathema to most Church members—to go without coffee—but that was quite common. So, one time of Health Fast was avoiding certain foods for a period of time.

Another kind of Health Fast was eating only certain food or drinking only certain liquids for a period of time. I remember in the mid-sixties one popular fast was a grape fast. That was where you just ate grapes for a period of time. Sometimes I went on a grape fast. I was a newbie in the Church and I don't know, three or four days. So, you eat nothing but grapes. You can eat as many as you want. And so, the theory being that the roughage from the grape would clean out your system. And it did! You eat nothing but grapes and your pipes are pretty slick after a few days. The liquid in the grapes gave you the fluid you needed. And then the sugar in the grapes gave you the energy you needed. So, it was kind of a common fast back then.

There were these people who went on juice fasts—a certain type of juice. They would not eat anything and have juice fasts for some period of time. Others only used water and just had a water fast. Some people used distilled water. Some people used mineral water. And that was common in the Church.

But my point is these are Health Fasts. They are not mentioned in the Bible and they are not our subject today. And if people want to go on a Health Fast, that's fine, but it is not a Spiritual Fast. And we need to understand the difference.

So, let's talk now about a Spiritual Fast under Point Number Two, Two Types of Fasts.

Now Christ said that his disciples would fast. His servants would fast. Let's go to Matthew chapter 6 and verse 17. He's talking about your conduct during a fast, but we want to emphasize the point that Christ said "His servants, His disciples would fast." Matthew 6 and verse 17, He says:

**Matthew 6:17.** *But [you], when [you fast], (KJV)*

He didn't "if" you fast, but:

**Matthew 6:17b.** *...when you fast, anoint [your] head, and wash [your] face; (KJV)*

In other words, don't have a hangdog kind of attitude to let the world know that you're fasting. Be positive. Be happy. "Don't put on a show," is what Christ is saying.

Jump to chapter 9 and we'll read verses 14 and 15. The disciples of John came to Christ and they had a question.

**Matthew 9:14.** *Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we [John's disciples] and the Pharisees fast oft, but [your] disciples [don't] fast [at all]? (KJV)*

It's a legitimate question. Verse 15:

**Matthew 9:15.** *And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? (KJV)*

Meaning, he was there with them and it was not their time to mourn. "But," notice what He says!

**Matthew 9:15b.** *... the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, (KJV)*

That's already happened we know. But notice:

**Matthew 9:15 continued.** *... and then shall they fast. (KJV)*

That's a Commandment. "Then shall they fast" because Christ is no longer physically walking with them. The implication is "I want you to fast so you can be close to Me and close to the Father." We'll see in a minute.

The Hebrew word and the Greek word for "fast"—they're very similar—means to be afflicted, to be oppressed, to be humbled, or to be bowed down low.

And obviously a few hours into a fast, you feel that way that way real quickly. It takes the starch out of most of us. It takes the haughtiness and the ego out of most of us just a few hours into a fast.

So, we see now that there are two types of fasts—a Health Fast that we're not talking about and a Spiritual Fast. That leads us to the Third Point.

### **III. What is a proper Spiritual Fast?**

What is it? Because I believe today God's people are confused. I was told here a couple of weeks ago that God's people are thinking things that I don't know where they get, but it seems like a logical subject to cover: What is a proper Spiritual Fast?

If you like to outline, Point A under this:

#### **A. It is a set time without food and without water.**

There seems to be some confusion in the ranks about that—a set time without food and without water.

Let's go to Exodus chapter 34. We're going to cover two verses. There are many, many, many that we could cover, but this establishes the point. Exodus 34 and we're going to read verses 27 and 28. Moses is up on the mountain top. God is ready to give Him the Ten Commandments, but we're talking about food and drink. Exodus 34 verse 27:

***Exodus 34:27.** And the LORD said unto Moses, Write [you] these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with [you] and with Israel. (KJV)*

Verse 28:

***Exodus 34:28.** And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; (KJV)*

A day and a night, meaning a full twenty-four hour period, forty of them! But notice this!

***Exodus 34:28b.** ...he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. (KJV)*

So, we see here that in the very beginning that fasting to get close to God, to do God's will involves going without water and without food.

Now let's go to Esther chapter 4 and verse 16, right before Job. And Esther, as you recall, and Mordecai were in dire straits. Their lives were on the line. Esther



realized this and she asked for a fast. Esther chapter 4 and verse 16, we're going to break into the context and Esther is now speaking. She says:

***Esther 4:16.*** *Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: (NKJ)*

There's no break. You can't take a five-minute time-out, chug a gallon of water and, then, pick up the fast again.

***Esther 4:16b.*** *I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. (KJV)*

But she wanted to be close to God before this happened.

So, with this understanding—and there are many other Scriptures we could quote, and in fact, as we go forward we will hit a couple more of them—the fact is if you take liquid during a Spiritual Fast, that Spiritual Fast ceases and it becomes a Health Fast. We need to understand that. It's the same with food obviously. A Spiritual Fast, we go without food and we go without water.

Now there is a qualification. I want to be very clear about this. If someone is on essential medication—and I emphasize the word "essential" medication—if you are a diabetic and you need to take some medication, if you have serious heart problems and you need to take medication, and on and on and on, then you take just enough water to get the medication down. Or if the label on the medication says you need to take it with food, then what you do is take a tablespoon of yogurt, put that pill right in the middle of the tablespoon of yogurt and take it down. Just get it down. That coats your stomach so that you don't have some kind of adverse reaction. That is a qualification.

Now, what I'm not talking about is somebody who gets a headache during the fast and they take a couple of aspirin and wash it down with a quart of water. We're not talking about that. That's a copout and God obviously looks at that mindset and would not be pleased.

So Point A is:

**A. It is a set time without food and without water.**

Point B:

**B. It is a set time dedicated to getting closer to God.**

It's a time where you put this drive on the shelf. And you say, "God I'm going to do without this most important of drives and I'm going to dedicate this time, my time, and myself, to getting close to you."

Now look at Joel chapter 2. We're going to start with verse 1, Joel chapter 2. We're very familiar with this Scripture. We read it at the Feast of Tabernacles many times. Joel chapter 2 verse 1 and verse 2 talks about a warning going out. Joel 2 verse 1:

**Joel 2:1.** *Blow [you] the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD [comes], for it is [near] at hand;  
2) A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there [has never] been the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. (KJV)*

A warning about evil and trouble to come! Now notice their response, verse 12:

**Joel 2:12.** *Therefore also now, [says] the [Eternal], (KJV)*

During this trouble, God says, "Here's what I want you to do."

**Joel 2:12b.** *...turn [you] even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, (KJV)*

So, we can see here that fasting and turning to God are tied together because the fasting humbles us and we're not so haughty and self-exalted and we begin to realize who we are relative to God and it's easier to turn to God.

**Joel 2:12b.** *...turn [you] even to me with all your heart, (KJV)*

And we're supposed to love God with all our heart. Therefore, we should turn to God with all our heart and fasting is a way to do that.

**Joel 2:12 continued.** *...and with weeping, and with mourning: (KJV)*

Because of their sins and our sins. Verse 13:

**Joel 2:13.** *And rend... (KJV)*

"Rend" means tear.

**Joel 2:13.** *And [tear] your heart, and not your garments, (KJV)*

To it was their tradition to pull down on a cloak and tear the cloak as a sign of repentance, but He says, "I want your heart torn from the inside."

**Joel 2:13b.** *...and turn unto the LORD your God: (KJV)*

Turn to Him through fasting.

**Joel 2:13 continued.** *...for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and [repents] him of the evil. (KJV)*

So the fact is we're told here in verse 12 and 13 during the fast what we do is get our mind off ourselves even when we're so hungry or thirsty and we turn our mind to God. Now that says a lot to God. When we're willing to give up this most powerful of drives for food and drink and ignore that and say, "God, I want to get closer to You," with our mind on God.

Notice verse 15. It talks about how a fast should be conducted. He says:

**Joel 2:15.** *Blow the trumpet in Zion, (KJV)*

Notice these next three words.

**Joel 2:15b.** *...sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: (KJV)*

And notice verse 16. The word "sanctify" is repeated!

**Joel 2:16.** *Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, (KJV)*

Now remember the whole nation is fasting. So, the fast is sanctified; the people are sanctified.

**Joel 2:16b.** *...assemble the elders, gather the [kids], and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth... (KJV)*

Those who are just married or about to be married:

**Joel 2:16 continued.** *...and the bride out of her closet. (KJV)*

It means it covers everybody.

But he says, the people are sanctified and the fast itself; that means the time itself devoted, is sanctified.

Now the Hebrew word for "sanctify" is Strong's 6942 and it's the Hebrew word *qadash* (*kaw-dash'*). And it means to set apart for a holy purpose.

So the people are set apart during a fast for a holy purpose. Meaning: as we fast individually, we are set apart. And also the time is set apart. The people and the time. You commit your time to God during a fast. You commit yourself to God during a fast. And it is, in a way, an act of worship because what you're saying is "I'm going to stop eating and everything that goes with eating, the preparation, the clean up and all of that. I'm going to take this time and I'm going to devote it to getting closer to God." And in that sense during that time, we should pray more; we should study more; we should meditate more. And it is, in a way, an act of worship. It's a time to set aside our biggest drive and then, seek and submit to God.

So, Point Be is:

## **B. It is a time dedicated to getting closer to God.**

Now, Point C, let's talk about:

### **C. The length of a fast**

Now, we already saw in Exodus 34 that Moses fasted forty days and forty nights. I mean he was a monster of a man! We're not in that category. And, obviously, God, I think, intervened and helped in that case. We saw that Esther and her servants fasted three days three nights. I think most of us are not in that category either. We would be a pile of Jell-O on the floor after three days and three nights.

And the point I'm making is that: It is not a fast if it doesn't cover at least a day and a night—**it is not a fast.**

Let's go to Isaiah 58 and verse 5.

There are some people who say, "Well, I'll fast during the night and I'll eat during the day." That is not a fast because you're asleep eight hours of the twelve. And so, that, as we're going to see, is no sacrifice or vice versa—I'll fast during the day and stuff my face at night. The Muslims do that and that's not a fast.

Isaiah 58 and verse 5, notice what Christ, the God of the Old Testament, is saying. He's asking a rhetorical question:

***Isaiah 58:5.*** *Is it such a fast that I have chosen? (KJV)*

Well, the answer is "Of course!"

***Isaiah 58:5.*** *a day for a [person] man [or a woman] to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? [Will you call] this a fast, (KJV)*

But notice this!

***Isaiah 58:5.*** *... an acceptable day to the [Eternal] (KJV)*

Twenty four hours! And I'm telling you it says the word "afflict" here and it means just what it says. It cannot be done by missing one meal. And apparently there is some confusion. Some people think that "I can wake up in the morning and eat breakfast. I'll skip lunch and then I'll eat dinner. And that's a fast."

Now many of us do that. You know you miss a meal; your working or whatever. That's no fast! That doesn't afflict anybody. And, yet, people—God's people—today kid themselves by thinking "I can miss a meal and somehow I'm fasting to God." It's not an acceptable fast.

Now that being said, on the other hand, as a caution because of our weakened state as a nation, as human beings on this earth, if you plan to fast beyond thirty-

six hours, I would recommend that you get professional guidance and professional help. Because some people depending on your health condition and things you might not even be aware of, if you enter into a fast, you can get into trouble. Just be careful about that. I would seek some advice from people who know what they are doing.

But to fast twenty-four hours is a minimum in a fast because you can't afflict your soul after twelve or sixteen or eighteen. And we've seen the Scriptures in Exodus and Esther and there are many others who talk about at least a day, at least a day.

So we see the length of a fast, if you put all the Scriptures together—and I'm just hitting the high spots is at least a day. And it can be longer depending on your experience with fasting, how long you've fasted before, but it should be at least twenty-four hours.

Point D:

#### **D. The proper approach to a fast**

Let me give you the wrong approach first. And this approach I've witnessed and seen with my own eyes. At the start of a fast—we'll take Atonement because it's a fixed time and it starts at sundown and goes until the next sundown.

I've seen people start a meal a half an hour before sundown and just jam as much food and as much water into their gullets as they can get right before the clock ticks down to sundown. Just trying to jam as much in as they can! So, that you start the fast with a stomach sticking out to here with the idea that "I'm not going to suffer as much down the road during the Day of Atonement."

And then I've also seen—believe it or not—I found out after the fact that—this was a couple of decades ago—but some people on the Day of Atonement with an hour or hour and a half left before sundown went to a pizza parlor. Stood in line on a Holy Day, during holy time, ordered a pizza, took it home, fired up the oven, got it in there. And they were watching the clock tick down until the nanosecond after sundown and then that pizza was ready and on the table in ten seconds and they were scarfing it down!

Now let me ask the question of these two examples. What message does that send to God? What are you telling God when you do that?

You're saying, "God, I want to minimize this as much as I can. I want to eliminate as much pain and suffering as I can. And I want to do the least amount possible to satisfy you on the Day of Atonement." That's what it says.

And as we've seen godly examples, God says, "That is not an acceptable fast."

Now the correct way is: To eat quite some period of time before you start the fast. So that you're not rushing around at the last second jamming food and all of that down your throat.

Because we should pray to start a fast! That should be an absolute requirement, in my opinion, to start a fast because you're dedicating your time to God. You say, "God, I am starting a fast now. I am dedicating this time to you. I want You to show my sins and my faults during this time I'm dedicating to You. I want to draw closer to You. I want to find out what Your will is." (We'll get into that a little bit later on some of the things that we want to look at or find out in a fast.)

And then, we should at the end of the fast, when we decide to close the fast after at least a day, we want to pray to end the fast. Thank God for the fast. Ask God to open our mind as we go forward after the fast to show us what we need to do and to give us the strength we need to follow through maybe on some of the understandings that we came to during the fast.

So, we should pray to start a fast; we should pray to end a fast; and we should spend extra time during the fast studying and praying. And I'll give sermon on this down the line, but on meditating, because it's a tool we don't often talk about, but it's very important during a fast to meditate on our lives and where we are and how we relate to God and all of that.

So, we see here that there is a proper Spiritual Fast. And it involves attitude; it involves time; and it certainly involves going without food and drink.

Now we get to the Fourth Point. We want to ask a question.

#### **IV. What should be the purpose of a proper Spiritual Fast?**

Why should we do it in the first place? What is the purpose of fasting a spiritual fast to God?

Again, if you like to outline, Point A—and we've covered this already—is to:

##### **A. Draw close to God**

We read it in Joel chapter 2. He said, "Turn you to me with all your heart with fasting." So, the time is spent getting close to God. And the world, you see, apart from fasting, the world intrudes on us; television intrudes on us; our jobs intrude on us; and the world and Satan behind the world want to get us away from God. What fasting does is give us time to dedicate ourselves to getting closer to God.

Isaiah 59 verse 2, we're told—we won't turn there, but—"your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hid His face that He doesn't hear."

Now, do you remember what David did when he was found out? Remember in court Nathan said, "You are the man."? And that was probably nine months to a year after he committed those sins and all of a sudden now, he found out that God's not kidding. God didn't wink at his sins because he was a king. God didn't give him a pass because of his office. And, then, at the same time, this child, this

new child that was a result of that activity with Bathsheba became seriously ill. And what do we find? We won't turn there, but you can read the account in 2 Samuel 12. David turned to God with fasting. And undoubtedly what he did is he realized "I'm far away from God!" To do that sin and to hide it for a year and to pretend it didn't count, he got far away from God during that year. And, then, he had his son who was sick unto death. And he fasted, obviously, to get close to God in hopes that by getting close to God maybe God would spare the child, which God did not do obviously. And he had to pay a price for that. But the fact is David turned to God in his time of crisis to get close to God because he realized how far away he had come.

Let's go to Matthew 7 and verse 7, the Sermon on the Mount. This is what we need to do during a fast—trying to get close to God. God says, "Don't kid yourself! Don't play games with me. He said:

***Matthew 7:7.*** Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and [you] shall find; knock, and it shall be opened... (KJV)

So what should we ask for in a fast? Ask for the mind of Christ (Philippians 2 and verse 5). "Give me the mind of Christ. Give me more of Your spirit please. Give me more of the love that you have," because we're told love is above all the gifts. And so, during a fast we need to start asking and seeking and knocking to have more of God's spirit, more of the mind of Christ, more love, more compassion, more patience, to be a better husband, to be a better father, to be a better friend, to be closer to God. That is the purpose. The main purpose of a fast is to draw close to God.

A Second One, Point B, and this is one that was in the forefront of our minds as we were fasting over these last couple of years, and that is to:

### **B. Seek God's will**

What do You want me to do? We come into situations all the time—Greg Gaetzman and the job situation that he has. "Do You want me to stay? Do You want me to leave? What do You want me to do?"

Look at Acts chapter 13 and we'll read the first three verses. The Church in Antioch didn't know what to do. So, they fasted about it, seeking God's will. Acts 13 verse 1, notice this.

***Acts 13:1.*** Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; [We know some of them.] ... Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul [that we know today as "Paul"]. (KJV)

So, these men were in the Church and they were prophets; they were teachers. Verse 2:

**Acts 13:2.** *As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy [spirit] said [it put in their minds], Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*

3) *And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. (NKJ)*

But they didn't know what to do. "We have these prophets. We have these teachers. There are needs out in the land. What do we do?" So, they all got together and they fasted seeking God's will. What does God want us to do? And it came to them—we're not told exactly how. Was it a vision? Was it a dream? Did they hear something? Or was it just something put into their minds? But the consensus of the people was that they should separate these two men and send them on their way to serve God's people. They fasted and they prayed.

And what fasting does, you see—and I'm telling you this from experience—fasting opens up your mind to see what God wants you to do. It opens up your mind to be in harmony with God and Jesus Christ. It opens up our mind to have more of the same mind of God. When you're humbling yourself, food and drink are not present; you're at your weakest state; you're down on your knees praying and beseeching God; you're knocking, you're asking, you're seeking to see what God wants you to do in a certain situation. And fasting opens up the human mind to be in harmony with God's mind.

So, Point B:

**B. The purpose of fasting is to seek God's will.**

Point C, this is one that we've all been through before is:

**C. Beseeching God for His help and His intervention.**

This is usually at a time of crisis—beseeching God for help and intervention.

And we understand that. Those of you who are married and have children, there are times when your child is sick or your mate is sick as we read about with David. You beseech God for His help and His intervention. Let's go to 2 Chronicles chapter 20. This was a trial upon the whole nation. And Jehoshaphat was the king at the time in Judah. And he called a fast because they were in a crisis. 2 Chronicles 20, we'll read, start in verse 1.

**2 Chronicles 20:1.** *It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to [do] battle. (KJV)*

The implication here is they were greatly outnumbered.

**2 Chronicles 20:2.** *Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There [comes] a great multitude against [you] from beyond the sea on this side Syria; (KJV)*



Verse 3:

**2 Chronicles 20:3.** *And Jehoshaphat feared, (KJV)*

Now notice what he did.

**2 Chronicles 20:3b.** *[He] set himself to seek the [Eternal], (KJV)*

He wanted to get closer to God. And notice what he did. What was the tool that he used in order to do that?

**2 Chronicles 20:3 continued.** *... and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. (KJV)*

The whole nation fasted!

**2 Chronicles 20:4.** *And Judah gathered themselves together, (KJV)*

To do what?

**2 Chronicles 20:4b.** *... to ask help of the [Eternal]: (KJV)*

They beseeched God for help.

**2 Chronicles 20:4 continued.** *[And] even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the [Eternal].*

*5) And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the [Eternal], before the new court,*

*6) And said, (KJV)*

Now notice what he said! Notice his mind and how he is viewing God. He has an accurate picture of God at this point. He says:

**2 Chronicles 20:6b.** *O LORD God of our fathers, [are You not] God in heaven? (NKJ)*

That's a rhetorical question. Of course, He is!

**2 Chronicles 20:6 continued.** *...and [rule] not [You] over all the kingdoms of the heathen? (KJV)*

"These armies out here, all these heathen, don't You even rule over them?"

**2 Chronicles 20:6 continued.** *...and in [Your] hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand [against You]? (KJV)*

Notice he understands all this.

**2 Chronicles 20:7.** *[Are] not [You] our God, who [did] drive out the inhabitants of this land before [Your] people Israel, and [gave] it to the seed of Abraham [Your] friend for ever?*

8) *And they dwelt therein, and [They've] built [You] a sanctuary therein for [Your] name, saying,*

9) *If, when evil [comes] upon us [which it was doing that day], as the sword [as it was doing that day], judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in [Your] presence, (for [Your] name is in this house,) (KJV)*

But notice this last phrase what they were doing.

**2 Chronicles 20:9b.** *... and cry unto [You] in our affliction, then [You will] hear and help. (KJV)*

They called a fast seeking God, (1) to hear, and then, to help.

And we have many examples of that need in the Church. Look at little Alyssa. There is a need—a real need for us to fast to get close to God. Because in a case of a child—and there have been many cases in the Church—that little child is innocent. That little child hasn't committed sins. That little child hasn't done the things that adults do—totally innocent. So, if God allows this to happen, maybe it is to wake us up; maybe it is to get us on our knees; maybe it is to get us to start fasting again as a Church so that we get on our knees and beseech God for intervention and help just as Jehoshaphat did here.

And notice Matthew chapter 4. Christ needed help. He was about to enter in the biggest test He had as a human. He was about to enter into it and notice what He did. Matthew 4:1.

**Matthew 4:1.** *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be [tested] of the devil. (KJV)*

This is crunch time. Verse 2:

**Matthew 4:2.** *And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward [hungry]. (KJV)*

What an understatement! Forty days and forty nights as a human being, I guess you were hungry! But notice the fasting occurred before the testing. The fasting prepared Him for the testing.

**Matthew 4:3.** *And when the tempter came to him, he said, If [You] be the Son of God [deriding Christ], [then,] command that these stones be made bread. (KJV)*

And Christ could have done that, of course. But the fact is, once again, what did Satan do as he did with Eve and with Adam? He appealed to this gigantic powerful force in a human being. But notice what Christ's attitude was. He answered him in verse 4 and said:

**Matthew 4:4b.** *It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that [proceeds] out of the mouth of God. (KJV)*

And so what we're saying in the fast is "God, I'm putting aside this bread, this food and this drink and I need Your help. I'm beseeching You for help. I want to be close to You. I have sinned. I've been wayward. I want to be close You and I'm asking You to listen to me and to hear my appeal."

So the Third is to:

**C. Beseech God for help and for intervention.**

Point D, the Fourth is:

**D. We fast to see our sins and to turn from them.**

To see our sins and to turn from them! One of the biggest problems we all have as Christians is seeing ourselves. We see sins in others very clearly. You know the example Christ gave about the beam. That can actually mean "rafter." We see the sin in other people, but we don't see the sin in ourselves. We're ready to pick the little speck of dust out of somebody's eye. "Oh, it's so horrible and so evil." And we've got this rafter in our eye that we don't even acknowledge or see. And so to see our sins and to be able to turn from them is one of the purposes of fasting.

Look at Jonah chapter 3. Remember God called Jonah and Jonah ran away. And Jonah didn't want to do what God wanted him to do. And after all that, Jonah is now given the commission to go prophesy to Nineveh. Jonah 3 verse 1:

**Jonah 3:1.** *And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,  
2) Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid [you].  
3) So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the [Eternal]. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. (KJV)*

That means it took three days to walk across the city. It was that big! Verse 4 of Jonah chapter 3.

**Jonah 3:4.** *And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, (KJV)*

He was a third of the way across the city.

**Jonah 3:4b.** *... and he cried, and said [to the people], Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. (KJV)*

So, he began to prophesy. Now, notice the reaction of the Ninevites. They could have pooh-poohed him and said, "Who is this God that you represent? We don't know anything him." But notice what their reaction is in verse 5.

**Jonah 3:5.** *So the people of Nineveh believed God, (KJV)*

And guess what they did?

**Jonah 3:5b.** *[They] proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.*

6) *For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe [down], and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. (KJV)*

The leadership of the city fasted and prayed and humbled themselves. Verse 7, notice he took action.

**Jonah 3:7.** *And he caused it to be proclaimed and published [throughout] Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: (KJV)*

This is another example of going without water! But here, they're going above and beyond. They're saying, "Not only the humans in Nineveh are going to fast, we're going to make the animals fast too."—the dogs, the cats, the goats, the chickens because they were serious! Now this is going above and beyond, but it shows an attitude of this is serious stuff. "We want to obey God."

Verse 8:

**Jonah 3:8.** *But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, (KJV)*

They even put sackcloth on the animals! On the donkeys!

**Jonah 3:8b.** *... [They said] and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, (KJV)*

"Oh!" This is a wakeup call. This is a two-by-four between the eyes.

**Jonah 3:9 continued.** *... and from the violence that is in their hands.*

9) *Who can tell [if we do this, if we take this action, who can tell] if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? (KJV)*

In other words, they began to see their sins—violent sins! They knew. And the fasting helped them understand this. Verse 10:

**Jonah 3:10.** *And God saw their works, (KJV)*

Not their words! People talk about fasting, but do they actually do it? He says:

**Jonah 3:10.** *And [they] saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not. (KJV)*

Because they went above and beyond; they saw their sins; they turned to God; and they repented.

And this is what we need to do! One of the great purposes of fasting is to see inside ourselves and what we need to change. We can't change anybody else. We can't put a gun to somebody's head and make them do anything, but we can make ourselves change through the power of fasting and getting close to God.

So, we've seen four purposes of a Spiritual Fast:

- A. To draw close to God;
- B. To seek His will;
- C. To beseech Him for intervention and help; and
- D. To see our sins and to turn from them.

That's the Fourth Point.

The Fifth Point, talking about today:

**V. Some people in the Church fast, but they fast with a wrong attitude.**

And this is something we need to clear up in God's Church. It's not enough just to fast, but we have to fast with a right spirit, with a right attitude. So, let's cover some areas where we can fast with a wrong spirit.

The first one is to fast for:

**A. Self-righteousness**

Now, frankly, this is not common today, because, frankly, God's people don't fast that much. But, it was common more in the fifties and in the sixties. Notice Luke 18 and we'll begin in verse 9. This is the account in the Temple where the Pharisee and the Publican were both praying. And the Pharisee was self-righteously telling God how wonderful he was. Notice what he said.

**Luke 18:9.** *And he spake this parable unto certain [people] which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:*

*10) Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.*

*11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, (KJV)*

Meaning the prayer didn't go any higher than the top of his head. God wasn't listening to this at all.

**Luke 18:11b.** *God, I thank [you], [I'm] not [like these] other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this [creep of a human, this] publican [over here]. (KJV)*

Notice what he said!

**Luke 18:12.** *I fast twice in the week.* (KJV)

Oh, what righteousness! Oh, he should be given a kingship! He should be elevated into the throne room of God because of his righteousness! And, as I said, that's not too common today, but there are some.

Point B, a Second One, and this is true of many.

### **B. People fast because of guilt.**

They know God wants them to fast and they know it needs to be done, but it comes like a chore. It's like mowing the grass or taking the garbage out. "I've got to get it in. I've got to do it."

And the longer you go without doing it, the more guilt you feel. So then, you're impelled to fast, but it becomes mechanical. It becomes superficial. You go through the motions because you know you need to get it in or otherwise you're going to be in trouble with God. Like a little kid, "If I don't take the garbage out, Dad's going to whack me." And it's that same attitude in fasting because it's done because of guilt.

And so, guilt builds up very quickly. So, we go through a fast, do the minimum amount required. And then, afterwards, we can feel good about ourselves again. And we go on our merry way. That is selfish—the least possible! And it misses the whole point about fasting as we talked about—the four reasons to fast. It misses that whole point.

A Third, Point C, is a fast—this is very common, a very common error.

### **C. People fast to get.**

They fast for selfish reasons because they want to get something. What they do is they fast because they want God to do what they want God to do. They want this job, or they want this promotion, or they want this raise. Or they're dating somebody and they want this person to love them, or whatever it might be. They want God to do something for them.

Let's go to Isaiah chapter 58. We were there earlier. Isaiah is condemning Israel because of their attitude in fasting. Isaiah 58, we're going to read verses 3 and 4.

**Isaiah 58:3.** *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and [You don't even see us? They're saying to God.] wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and [you don't even take any] knowledge [of it]? Behold, [This is God's reply.]*

*in the day of your fast [What do they do?] [you] find pleasure, and [you] exact all your labors. (KJV)*

"You don't dedicate your time to Me! You're not seeking Me."

**Isaiah 58:4.** *Behold, [you] fast for strife and debate, (KJV)*

Meaning: There is an argument and so they're fasting because they want to win the argument. Or there's a debate with somebody, a conflict with somebody and so they fast in order to win the conflict. They fast to get.

**Isaiah 58:4b.** *... and to smite with the fist of wickedness: (KJV)*

In other words, they fast to get their own way. And even their own way might not be God's way. And He says:

**Isaiah 58:4 continued.** *... [you] shall not fast as [you] do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. (KJV)*

"I'm not going to listen to that kind of fast because it's selfish."

Look at Zechariah chapter 7, right before Malachi, two books before the New Testament. Zechariah chapter 7 and we're going to read the first six verses. Now, we'll break into the context. Judah is in captivity in Babylon. They've been in captivity for seventy years. They are wailing and crying because they want to go back to their land. They don't want to be slaves. We break into the context.

**Zechariah 7:1.** *And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the [Eternal] came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu; (KJV)*

So, this is in the ninth month.

**Zechariah 7:2.** *When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the [Eternal], (KJV)*

They wanted to seek God, beseech God, but notice.

**Zechariah 7:3.** *And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the [Eternal] of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years [seventy years]?*

4) *Then came the word of the [Eternal] of hosts unto me, saying,*

5) *Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When [you] fasted and mourned in the fifth and [the] seventh month, even those seventy years, (KJV)*

Now what happened is there was a tradition in the exile that in the fifth month and in the seventh month, they would fast to God in order to be freed from their

slavery and be able to go back. It's not commanded in the Bible, but it was a tradition among the exiles, but they were fasting for the wrong reasons.

He said, "When you fasted in the fifth and the seventh month here," at the end of verse, 5:

***Zechariah 7:5b. ... did [you] at all fast unto me, even to me? (KJV)***

"Or were you fasting for yourself?" He's asking.

***Zechariah 7:6. And when [you] did eat, and [when you] did drink [even when you weren't fasting], did [you] not eat ... and drink for yourselves [and do it in a selfish manner]? (KJV)***

Fasting to get God to do what you want God to do?

Rather, you see, rather than fast to get, as we said earlier, we need to seek what God's will is. Maybe God doesn't want us to do what we want to do. Maybe He has another plan for us. And so, we need to understand that.

Selfish motivation is not an acceptable fast to God! We want to seek God's will. We don't want to get. So let's understand that. Fasting to get and fasting for self-righteousness and fasting out of guilt are not proper fasts. They are not the right attitude that we should have.

Point Number Six:

## **VI. Today, too many in the Church don't fast except for the Day of Atonement.**

There are many that that is the only Day that they will fast all year long is the Day of Atonement. Why? I've heard all the excuses and I'll give you some.

They say, "Well, when I fast, it hurts. I get a screaming headache. It just kills me. Or, I get nauseated and I start throwing up. And I know God doesn't want me to have a headache and doesn't want me to be nauseated. So, the solution is not to fast. And you just endure the Day of Atonement and gut it out."

I know one lady just went to bed for the whole Day of Atonement. She didn't go to services, didn't pray. She just went to bed, pulled the sheets over, waited twenty-four hours, and then, reappeared in civilization to get through this fast.

And why do we have headaches and why do we get nauseated? Generally, because we're addicted to something! Coffee? Soda pop? I had a friend in Texas who was six foot five, weight two twenty-five and he had a liter of Coke in his hand at all times. And he could not get three hours into a fast without a screaming headache. You see that puts a damper on your fast.

So, what we need to do is take care of our health first. And if we have any addictions, we need to stop those addictions. We need to fix those, fix our



health, so the fast will go easier and, therefore, be more meaningful. If you have your head inside a toilet, it's hard to pray and study. So, we need to fix our health so that doesn't happen during the fast.

Another excuse is "I get in a bad attitude." And I had a fellow tell me once, he said, "Every time I start to fast, within an hour or two," he said, "I get this stinking, rotten attitude and I know God doesn't want me to be in a bad attitude. So, therefore, the solution is not to fast." And there was this logic. It was perfectly logical to him. The fact is that he's in a bad attitude because he's hungry and thirsty!

And so, what we have to do is, as one of the commercials said: Just do it! Just go ahead and do it. Force yourself to do it. It's like forcing yourself to tithe or forcing yourself to keep the Sabbath in the early beginning of our conversion. Once you do it and once you get through it, then you understand the benefits of it. But this fellow never got started. Do first, and then the attitude will change. God will help you because if you say, "I'm going to do this because I want to get close to God," God will help.

The third reason people don't fast is they say, "I don't need to. I'm with this group that they're the only group that's going to the Place of Safety. They're the only group that's going into the Kingdom of God. Everybody else is going into the Tribulation. So, as long as I stay with this group, I'm fine. I don't need to fast." Now what does that say? A big neon sign goes over. It says, "L-A-O-D-I-C-E-A-N. Laodicean!"

What happens is fasting interferes with the lusts and they don't want to fast.

If we're not regularly fasting, we need to change that.

Seventh and Last Point:

### **VII. Proper fasting opens our eyes to see our sins.**

We can change ourselves. Nobody else can. It opens our eyes to see ourselves, to see the Church, to see the nation. Look at Isaiah chapter 58 and verse 6. Isaiah has a lot to say about fasting. We were there earlier in Isaiah 58.

***Isaiah 58:6.*** *Is not this the fast that I have chosen? (KJV)*

Another rhetorical question, but notice this is the proper fast.

***Isaiah 58:6b.*** *... to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that [you] break every yoke? (KJV)*

Now there are two themes here.

The first one is to Loose the Bands of Wickedness. That's sin, the hold of sin on us. To see how far we fall short personally, to see how worldly we are, and to

seek, rather, how we can be more like God. And to fast to see as a Church, are we morally where we should be as a Church? Are we honest? Are we truthful? Are we just in what we do as a Church? So one is to Loose the Bands of Wickedness.

The second theme, it says in the rest of that verse is to Undo Heavy Burdens and to Let the Oppressed Go Free. The "Oppressed" is us! Sin oppresses us. And if we can see the sins and get rid of them, we can go free. And that "you break every yoke." If you've seen a yoke of oxen, a yoke is a big, heavy thing. And that weighs us down as sins do.

And so, we need to understand that to "undo the heavy burdens" and "let the oppressed go free" and to "break every yoke," those are the lusts and sins that bind us. And they're the long-term sins and weaknesses that we all have and we have to overcome.

We can see in a fast. We can see what prevents us from having a happy marriage. We can see what we're doing wrong in raising our children. We can see why we're unsuccessful in providing for our families. We can see why we have a negative attitude instead of a positive attitude. We can see why we're unhappy instead of being happy. All of those things! How we can be better husbands, better wives, better fathers, better mothers, better friends. We can see that in a fast.

So the Seventh Point:

### **VII. Proper fasting opens our eyes to see ourselves.**

So let's wrap this up now.

We need, as a Church, to return to a spirit of fasting. We've gotten away from it for decades. We need to return because we need to be closer to God as the end time unfolds.

And I'm telling you that those who do not fast, won't have faith as much as they should. They won't have the peace that they should. They won't be used as effectively by God to serve other people. And they won't receive the blessings that God is ready to give to a Church or to individuals that have an attitude of fasting.

Christ said in Matthew 7, remember what He said? "If your son asks you for bread," He says, "Are you going to give him a stone—any of you?" He said, "Or if he asks for a fish," is he going to give him a snake? Or He says, "If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give good gifts to you who ask?" And I say, ask through fasting, beseeching God.

And if you look in the Bible—we don't have time, but if you look in the Bible—every renewal in the Bible has been accompanied by fasting. Every time there

has been a turnaround, a nation, churches, whatever, there has been a spirit of fasting.

So, if you want to change long-standing problems you have had, if you want to change who you are—your very character, your very nature—if you want to change that, then fasting is an essential tool to do that. And proper fasting elicits a powerful, powerful response from God.

We're here in Isaiah 58. We read verse 6. Look at verse 8. In a proper fast, look at what happens!

**Isaiah 58:8.** *Then shall [your] light break forth as the morning, [your] health shall spring forth speedily: (KJV)*

That's physical health as well as spiritual health because there are physical benefits from fasting.

**Isaiah 58:8b.** *... [your] righteousness shall go before [you]; the glory of the [Eternal] shall be [your rearguard (as the newer translations say)]. (KJV)*

Look at verse 9, God's response to somebody who fasts:

**Isaiah 58:9.** *Then [shall you] call, and the [Eternal] shall answer: (KJV)*

If you call during a fast, God will answer. And He says:

**Isaiah 58:9b.** *Here I am. If [you] take away from [you] the [middle] of the yoke, [and] the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; (KJV)*

Just stop that! And notice the change in the individual in verse 10:

**Isaiah 58:10.** *And if [you] draw out [your life] to the hungry, (KJV)*

Get the mind off the self and seek others who have needs.

**Isaiah 58:10b.** *... and satisfy the afflicted soul [meaning mind off the self]; then shall [your] light rise in obscurity, and [your] darkness be as the noonday: (KJV)*

We begin to have the loving, giving, serving attitude that Jesus Christ had.

And, then, in verse 11, we become closer to God. Notice this!

**Isaiah 58:11.** *And the LORD shall guide [you] continually, (KJV)*

Now these are all verses of Isaiah 58 that are talking about fasting and the results of fasting.

***Isaiah 58:11.*** *And the LORD shall guide [you] continually, and satisfy [your] soul in drought, and make fat [your] bones: and [you shall] be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. (KJV)*

And we know that water is a symbol of God's holy spirit.

So, let's understand that we, as God's Church, as God's people, need to return to a spirit of fasting. And we have to use this powerful tool that God has given us to get closer to God as we approach the end time.