

NINE
REASONS FOR
FASTING

by Jentezen Franklin

LEARN FROM GREAT MEN AND WOMEN OF THE BIBLE WHO EXPERIENCED THE POWER OF FASTING.

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST NEED TODAY? DO YOU NEED WISDOM, POWER, HEALING, OR PROTECTION? THE BIBLE TELLS OF MEN AND WOMEN WITH THE SAME STRUGGLES THAT YOU FACE TODAY. THEY SOUGHT GOD'S FACE THROUGH PRAYER AND FASTING FOR THE DIFFERENT SEASONS OF THEIR LIVES . . . AND SO CAN YOU.

ONE: THE DISCIPLES FAST

"The Disciples Fast" is a fast that frees you from addictions to sin or besetting sins as referred to in Hebrews 12:1. Besetting sins are those that ensnare us and hinder us from achieving God's purpose for our lives.

In Mark, chapter 9, Christ's disciples were frustrated because they could not cast out an evil spirit. Jesus said, *"This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting"* (Mark 9:29). Through fasting we can break free from the addictions and habits that are not pleasing to God. *"Is this not the fast that I have chosen; To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke?"* (Isaiah 58:6).

Lisa from Georgia, wrote: "I overcame a lifetime of smoking and am 17 months free from nicotine addiction." Suzan from Perry, Florida, sent this praise report: "I fasted in January for my mother to be delivered from an addiction to alcohol. She is now free from the desire for alcohol . . . with NO physical withdrawal symptoms. This is a miracle. Praise God!"

TWO: THE EZRA FAST

"The Ezra Fast" is found in the Book of Ezra, the eighth chapter (Ezra 8:21). Ezra had been given silver and gold to take back to Jerusalem from King Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:14-17). But there was a problem – thieves!

Maybe you feel like thieves have stolen what belongs to you financially. When Ezra faced an uncertain financial journey, what did he do? He declared a fast and God answered his prayer! If you will fast, pray and obey God's commandments, He said you will be blessed (Deuteronomy 28:2).

THREE: THE SAMUEL FAST

When the Phillistines were preparing to attack Israel, Samuel declared a fast for national revival, Samuel told the people to fast and seek God to return His presence to the nation (1 Samuel 7:3).

Our society today critically needs believers who will take "The Samuel Fast" — a fast for national revival.

"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). We can return God's presence and glory to our personal lives and our nation . . . if we fast, pray and seek Him now.

FOUR: THE ELIJAH FAST

One of the most powerful fasts is "The Elijah Fast." It breaks negative emotional feelings and habits. When Jezebel sent word that she wanted to kill Elijah . . . he became so distraught that he was an emotional wreck (1 Kings 19:4). He was depressed . . . even suicidal.

That's when an angel came to Elijah and instructed him to journey back into the presence of God. The Bible says that Elijah fasted for 40 days and 40 nights as he returned to Horeb, the mountain of God. God delivered Elijah from feelings of suicide and fear. He gave Him hope, courage and direction. Whether you suffer from emotional bad habits, a negative self image, fear, insecurities, depression or some other emotional bondage, fasting will help open your heart and mind to hear . . . the still, small voice of God.

FIVE: THE WIDOW'S FAST

"The Widow's Fast" is about meeting the humanitarian needs of other people while

you are fasting. In 1 Kings 17:10-16, we read the vivid story about a woman with very little who helped the man of God, Elijah. It was all part of God's plan.

The widow made a choice to fast so that someone else could eat. The book of Isaiah puts it this way, ". . . *is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out . . .*" (Isaiah 58:6-7).

Today, you can meet the humanitarian needs of other people while you're fasting by using the money you would normally feed yourself with to help a food bank, support world missions or give to some other ministry that is helping the needy. When you do that, it pleases God and He will meet your needs. In the story of the widow, God multiplied the meal in her barrel to last for THREE AND A HALF YEARS!

SIX: THE PAUL FAST

Are you faced with a major life decision and don't know what to do? Maybe you have a job opportunity . . . a broken relationship . . . or an unfulfilled dream. God has provided a way you can discern His voice—"The Paul Fast." Saul was going the wrong way in life. He was hunting down followers of Christ and persecuting them when the light of God's truth knocked him off his path (Acts 9:3-6).

Saul headed to Damascus and "was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank" (Acts 9:9). Saul didn't know what to do. But he fasted for God's divine direction. Then God sent the disciple Ananias to Saul with guidance (Acts 9:17). Through this process Saul became Paul, one of God's chosen disciples. Through his fast, Paul got the direction he needed and so can you.

Angela of North Little Rock, Arkansas, needed a job when she began her fast. "I was

believing God for a new job. I received a call from the CEO of a company offering me a full-time position with a salary increase and benefits. I thank God! Fasting really works!"

SEVEN: THE DANIEL FAST

When we look at "The Daniel Fast," this fast is a partial and a prolonged fast that yields health and healing. Found in Daniel, chapter 10, the Daniel Fast is a fast from meats, sweets, breads and any drink but water for 21 days (Daniel 10:2-3).

Daniel and three others refused to eat the king's meat and they *"appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies"* (Daniel 1:15). Daniel and his men were healthier!

EIGHT: THE JOHN THE BAPTIST FAST

John and his disciples fasted often, according to Matthew 9. He was on the Nazarene diet, which fasted alcohol all the time. He ate little more than locusts and wild honey (Matthew 3:1-4). Because of John the Baptist's constant fasting, I believe he had a greater testimony and influence on the lives of people in his generation than any other man (Matthew 11:1), (John 1:6-7).

Jodi of Thibodaux, Louisiana, wrote: "I chose to join in the 21-day fast. For many years, I have been praying for (my sister's) marriage

and her salvation. She gave her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ on the 21st day of the fast! What a super release of His favor!"

Maria from Quezon City, Philippines, said that by the third week of her fast, she received invitations to teach outside of her church. "It was like what you said about God just opening doors for ministry. Fasting now is a way of life I cannot do without."

NINE: THE ESTHER FAST

"The Esther Fast" is the fast for "protection against danger." We live in a world full of predators, disasters and evil. But don't live in fear. God has provided the blessing of protection.

Esther was in a very dangerous position. Her uncle Mordecai discovered a plot by Haman, one of the king's advisors, to destroy her family. When he asked for Esther's help, she knew it was very dangerous to approach the king without being called for. She could lose her life. So Esther declared a three-day fast for God's protection (Esther 4:16).

Haman wanted to hang Mordecai on the gallows he was building in his courtyard, but God turned it around and the evil conspirator was hanged instead, on his own gallows! When you fast and pray, God will extend His protection to you and your household.

REASONS TO FAST RECAP

THE DISCIPLES FAST – freedom from addictions to sin.
THE EZRA FAST – for help with financial troubles.
THE SAMUEL FAST – for national revival.
THE ELIJAH FAST – for negative emotional feelings and habits.

THE WIDOW'S FAST – humanitarian needs of others.
THE PAUL FAST – major life decisions.
THE DANIEL FAST – health and healing.
THE JOHN THE BAPTIST FAST – influence on others.
THE ESTHER FAST – for protection against danger.