



# Mid-Week

**Bible Study and Prayer  
Wednesdays 6:45pm – 8pm**



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## How to Recognize a Hypocrite pt. 3 (Secret Fasting)

*John Wesley said, "When you seek God with fasting added to prayer, you cannot seek His face in vain."*

**Matthew 6:16-18 (NKJV) [with notes]**

**<sup>16</sup> "Moreover, when you fast [not IF you fast – He assumes that this would be a part of the life of the believer. It is a legitimate act of Christian devotion], do not be like the hypocrites [play-actor], with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces [they make their faces unsightly] that they may appear to men to be fasting [they make their faces unsightly]. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.**

**<sup>17</sup> But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,**

**<sup>18</sup> so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.**

Donald Whitney has said, "In most Christian circles you will rarely hear fasting mentioned, and few will have read anything about it. And yet it's mentioned in Scripture more times than even something as important as baptism (about seventy-seven times for fasting to seventy-five for baptism). Christians in a gluttonous, self-indulgent society may struggle to accept and to begin the practice of fasting. Few disciplines go so radically against the flesh and the mainstream of culture. Of course, there are some people who, for medical reasons, cannot fast. But most of us dare not overlook fasting's benefits in the disciplined pursuit of a Christ-like life."

**I. WHAT IS FASTING?** Fasting means going without food, drink or certain pleasures for the purpose of seeking God – for a time of spiritual seeking after God. Now, fasting is not mere dieting. Now, some people fast for health reasons, and I think that's a good idea; I think many of us could do that, many of us should do that. What we're talking about now is bringing our hearts, and our lives, into such a burning focus—seeking the heart, the face of God—that we set aside food and other pleasures to seek God. In the Bible, God links fasting with spiritual purposes. We find such phrases as prayer and fasting, watching and fasting, worshipping and fasting.

**II. EXAMPLES OF FASTING** The only fast imposed by law on the Jews was that of the day of atonement ([Leviticus 16:31](#)). There are, however, other notable Old Testament examples of fasting, often as a means of expressing national repentance. The whole nation fasted after the civil war with Benjamin ([Judges 20:26](#)). Samuel made the people fast after they had gone after the false god Baal ([1 Samuel 7:6](#)). In the time of Nehemiah the Jews fasted because of their sins ([Nehemiah 9:1](#)). Moses fasted for forty days to prepare himself for a fresh revelation of divine truth from God ([Exodus 34:28](#)). The Lord Jesus fasted for a like period prior to His confrontation with the devil ([Matthew 4:2](#)). The Lord did not command us to fast, but neither did He discourage the practice. It is taken for granted in the sermon on the mount that we will fast.

### **III. TYPES OF FASTING**<sup>a</sup> The Bible describes several types, though we have given the labels:

**A normal fast** is abstaining from all food, but not from water. Furthermore, [Luke 4:2](#) says that Jesus "ate nothing" during His forty-day fast, but it does not say He drank nothing. Since the body can normally function no longer than three days without water, we assume that He drank water during this time.

**A partial fast** limits food but is not abstention from all food. For ten days Daniel and three other Jewish young men had "vegetables to eat and water to drink" ([Dan. 1:12](#)). Historically, Christians have observed partial fasts by eating much smaller portions of food than usual for a certain time and/or eating only a few simple foods.

**An absolute fast** is the avoidance of all food and liquid. We're told that Ezra ([Ezra 10:6](#)), Esther ([Est. 4:16](#)), and the Apostle Paul ([Acts 9:9](#)) abstained from all food and drink for a short period of time.

**A supernatural fast.** When Moses wrote of his meeting with God on Mount Sinai, he said, "I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water" ([Deut. 9:9](#)). [First Kings 19:8](#) may be saying that Elijah did the same thing when he went to the site of Moses' miraculous fast: "So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God." These fasts required God's supernatural intervention and are not repeatable apart from the Lord's specific calling and miraculous provision.

**A private fast** is what Jesus was speaking of in [Mt. 6:16-18](#) when He says we should fast in a way not to be noticed by others.

**Congregational fasts** are described in [Joel 2:15-16](#): "Blow a trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly." At least a part of the congregation of the church at Antioch was fasting together in [Acts 13:2](#), as evidenced by Luke's words, "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting."

**National fasts.** Here is the response of King Jehoshaphat to an invasion: "Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah" ([2 Chron. 20:3](#)). The Jews were called to a national fast in [Neh. 9:1](#) and [Est. 4:16](#), and the king of Nineveh proclaimed a fast in response to the preaching of Jonah ([Est. 3:5-8](#)).

**There was one regular fast** that God commanded under the Old Covenant. Every Jew was to fast on the Day of Atonement ([Lev. 16:29-31](#)). While they were in Babylon, the leaders of the Jews instituted four other annual fasts ([Zech. 8:19](#)).

**IV. THINGS TO AVOID WHEN FASTING** - The *why* is just as important as the *what*. [Zechariah 7:5](#) says, "Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me--for Me?'" It's certainly possible to fast with the wrong motives. If you fast to be seen of men, to boast about it, to brag about it, the only reward that you will have is that you will be seen of men, and they will hear you boast and brag about it.

- 1. Exhibitionism** - It's not wrong to let others know that you're fasting. As a matter of fact, Joel said, we are to sanctify a fast, set aside a fast, call a solemn assembly. Nothing wrong with letting people know that we fast. Nothing wrong with letting people know that we pray. Nothing wrong with letting people know that we give. But, we do not pray, we do not fast, we do not serve God, to be seen of men.
- 2. Legalism** - Avoid being a legalist about it. Don't get the idea that, if you fast, you can get God indebted to you, that somehow you can buy a blessing from God. Or, on the other hand, God is so cruel, God is so vengeful, that God will not do anything for you until He sees you suffer. Avoid legalism. Fasting lays hold of God's grace; but, remember, you cannot buy a blessing.
- 3. Ritualism** - Avoid ritualism. You can fast as a ritual. The Pharisees did. But, God did not hear their prayers. As a matter of fact, their prayers were an abomination. And yet, they fasted as a ritual.

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<sup>a</sup> Donald Whitney

**4. Asceticism** - Avoid asceticism. What is asceticism? That is just simply turning ourselves into a religious recluse, or pious monks. Getting off, somehow, abusing our bodies, thinking—being ascetic—that we can earn the pleasures of God. Jesus was not that way. As a matter of fact, they accused Jesus of being a wine drinker and a glutton. Jesus attended parties. Jesus was easy to be with. Little children wanted to come and sit on His lap. Jesus was not a pale, sanctimonious, religious recluse. Avoid asceticism.

**5. Egotism** - Avoid egotism. The Lord Jesus told about a man who went into the temple and prayed, and he said he prayed thus, with himself: "Lord, I fast twice a week. What a good boy I am!" Now, he didn't say the last part, but that's what he meant. "What a good boy I am! Lord, you ought to be so proud of me." Now, of course, people have abused fasting, and perhaps that's the reason that fasting is not done as much as it ought to be done in the modern church. But, Satan, I believe, engineers those abuses, because he knows how powerful true spiritual fasting and prayer can be. Real fasting—as I say—brings us to God; it centers on the Lord.

**6. Self-Denial for a Time to Earn the Right to Live it Up**<sup>b</sup>. Example: Mardi Gras, which means "Fat Tuesday" in Latin. You deny yourself of something beginning on Ash Wednesday which is 40 days before Mardi Gras. Then on Mardi Gras, you have earned the right to sin big because of your previous self-denial. Such a concept is pagan and abominable in the eyes of a holy God. I asked a college classmate why she denied herself during Lent and she replied, "I think I should deny myself for a period so I can indulge myself later." She said she denied herself spinach but she really didn't like spinach anyway.

**V. WHAT FASTING WILL DO FOR YOU**<sup>c</sup> - Whenever you fast, you should do so for at least one of these purposes. Notice that not one of the purposes is to earn God's favor. We cannot use fasting as a way to impress God and earn His acceptance. We are made acceptable to God through the work of Christ Jesus, not our work. Fasting has no eternal benefit for us until we have come to God through repentance and faith ([Eph. 2:1-10](#), [Titus 3:5-7](#)).

**1. It Will Strengthen Your Prayer Life** - [Ezra 8:21-23 \(NKJV\)](#)<sup>21</sup> Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions.<sup>22</sup> For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, "The hand of our God *is* upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath *are* against all those who forsake Him."<sup>23</sup> So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.

Ezra said, "We didn't want to go to the secular and pagan king and say, 'We need help,' because we'd already made our boast of our God." And, he said, "God, we need you to make a way for us, and for our children, and for our substance. We fasted and prayed, and God heard us." I'm telling you, folks, that when we fast and pray, we add a dimension to our prayers. Heaven bends an ear, when we pray with fasting. Why is that? When we fast and pray, we're giving notice to Heaven that we are in earnest.

[Joel 2:12](#) - "Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."

[Jeremiah 29:13](#) - And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

Half-hearted religion is an abomination to God; fasting shows that we are seeking God with all of our heart.

Now, why does fasting strengthen prayer? Because, fasting brings faith into focus. Fasting is like a string tied around your finger. My mama taught me, when I was a little boy, if there's something you want to remember, something you want to do, just tie a string around your finger, and every time you see it, you say, "Why did I put that there? Oh yeah, I was supposed to do thus and such." And, fasting is like a spiritual string tied around your finger. When you fast, you get hunger pangs. And, you begin to head toward the refrigerator, or the closet, or where those crackers are, or whatever's up there in your closet,

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<sup>b</sup> Bill Bennett added this one.

<sup>c</sup> Donald Whitney

and, you say, "Wait a minute. I can't do that, I'm fasting." And, then you say, "Well, now, why am I fasting?" And then, you turn your heart to God, and you pray. It just simply brings your faith into focus. Andrew Murray said this: "Fasting helps to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, to sacrifice ourselves, to attain what we seek for the Kingdom of God."

**2. It Will Help You Conquer Self** - Many of us probably do not realize what slaves we are to the flesh and to our self-nature. We've been taught to pamper ourselves. Many of us will be shocked at our slavery to food. Did you know, in the Bible, that pride and eating too much are linked together? We often talk about the wickedness of ancient Sodom, and we say, "Sodom was so wicked because of the Sodomites—the homosexuals—in that city." But, here is what God says about Sodom in [Ezekiel 16:49](#): "*Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her...*"—pride, gluttony and laziness; that's what the sin of Sodom was "*neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy*" ([Ez 16:49](#)). Now, obviously, God says, in other places, that the sin of Sodom was also homosexuality. But, many times, those of us who are full of pride, and gluttony, and laziness look judgmentally upon those that who commit these other sins. Many of us are guilty of the sin of gluttony, and, you know, when we seem to have so much, when we can go to the refrigerator, or when we can go to the restaurant, or when we can go to the shopping center, and buy what we want, when we want, do know what we do sometimes? We forget God.

**Deuteronomy 8:11-14 (NKJV)** <sup>11</sup> "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,  
<sup>12</sup> lest--*when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them;*  
<sup>13</sup> and *when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied;*  
<sup>14</sup> *when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;*

*Adrian Rogers said: I have seen that happen so heartbreakingly many times as a pastor. I have watched young lawyers, young doctors, young entrepreneurs, who, when they're starting out, are in the Young Married departments of our Sunday School and our church. They're so faithful. They're here to do those things. And then, God begins to prosper them, and they get more and more, and then they say, "You know, we've got enough for retirement, now what else can we do? Well, we can get us a condominium over here, and we can do this, and we can do that." And then, the first thing you see are these people are spending less time at church, and the very blessings that God has given them are the very things that turn their hearts away from God, and slowly but surely they forget God. And, I look back and I say, "Oh, I would to God to have that young doctor, to have that young lawyer, to have that young entrepreneur that I knew before he got rich, before he had enough money to satisfy his own needs and forget the Lord God that made him!" I've seen it happen so many times, and fasting reminds us one more time of just who we are and what we need from Almighty God.*

**3. It Will Hold Back the Judgment of God** - Nineveh was an ungodly, lasciviously wicked place, a stench in the nostrils of God. He sent Jonah to stay 40 days, and Nineveh will be destroyed. Look what happened when Jonah preached. [Jonah 3:5](#): "*So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them*". And, in [Jonah 3:10](#): "*And God 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*". Now, Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria, and it was ready for judgment, and yet God showed mercy. [Jeremiah 18:7, 8](#)—"*At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them*". When man repents of sin, God repents of judgment.

**4. Fasting Stops and Subdues Enemies** - **2 Chronicles 20:1-4** - <sup>1</sup> It happened after this *that the people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and others with them besides the Ammonites, came to battle against*

Jehoshaphat. <sup>2</sup> Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, from Syria; and they are in Hazazon Tamar" (which is En Gedi). <sup>3</sup> And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. <sup>4</sup> So Judah gathered together to ask help from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

**2 Chronicles 20:22** - Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.

God's people fasted, prayed, and praised. They did not overcome these armies with greater armaments, with swifter horses, with stronger shields—they did not have that. But, they had Almighty God.

**2 Chronicles 20:29** - And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of *those* countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel.

We've got a secret weapon—the Lord God, the Holy Spirit—and it comes with fasting and prayer. I am so grateful for the movement for fasting and prayer that has come.

**5. Fasting Brings Wisdom and Guidance - Acts 13:2-3** - <sup>2</sup> 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."

<sup>3</sup> Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away.

If you have a great decision that you need to make, you need to fast and pray. I believe that one of the secrets of the growth of the early church—the early church grew exponentially—one of the secrets of the growth of the early church was in fasting and prayer. When we fast, iron gates seem to yield, and in the early church, the shout of victory was everywhere.

**6. Fasting will Shatter Strongholds - Isaiah 58:6** - "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?"

We have some people that are oppressed. There are people in the congregation tonight who are bound with invisible bonds of fear, and bitterness, resentment, and habits, and perversion, and lust, and pornography. They're bound, and we need to fast and pray to set the captives free.

## VI. HOW TO COMMENCE, CONTINUE AND CONCLUDE A BIBLICAL FAST<sup>d</sup>

**2 Chronicles 7:14** says, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." Dr. Bill Bright said once, "I believe the power of fasting as it relates to prayer is the SPIRITUAL ATOMIC BOMB that our Lord has given us to destroy the strongholds of evil and usher in a great revival and spiritual harvest around the world."<sup>i</sup> Well, how you begin and conduct your fast will largely determine your success. There are 7 basic steps you should take if the Lord leads you to fast.

### Step One - Prepare Yourself Spiritually

The very foundation of prayer and fasting is REPENTANCE. Fasting must take place in the spirit of 2 Chr. 7:14 – brokenness, prayer, surrender and total confession. Psalm 139:23-24 says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." This must be obeyed. As you prepare yourself spiritually, let me offer these specific suggestions:

- 1) Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make a comprehensive list of your sins (Proverbs 28:13).
- 2) Confess every sin. Call that sin the way God calls it, ask for His forgiveness – then accept His forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
- 3) Seek the forgiveness of God and from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you (Matthew 6:14-15; Mark 11:25).
- 4) Make restitution as the Word of God instructs you (Matthew 5:23-24).

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<sup>d</sup> Bill Bennett

- 5) Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit as He promised (Ephesians 5:18; Luke 11:13).
- 6) Surrender your body fully to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Master (Romans 12:1-2).
- 7) Expect the devil to intensify the battle between your body and soul (1 Peter 5:8).

### **Step Two - Set Your Specific Objective**

Why are you fasting? Is it for some lost person, backslider, child, or sick person? Is it for family or church problems? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify your specific objectives. You cannot fast in generalities, but specifics.

### **Step Three - Make Your Commitment**

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus assumed that His followers would fast (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14-15). However, He did not prescribe the kind of fast. He entered into the extreme fast – 40 days without food and water. I doubt anyone would be led to do this, though if you are led to, you should not totally be without water and fruit juice. Determine these questions:

- How long will you fast – one meal, one day, a week, several weeks, forty days? Beginners should begin slowly, building up to longer fasts.
- What kind of sustenance will you consume? Water only, or water and juices? What kind of juices and how often?
- How ill you limit physical and social activities?
- How much time will you devote to prayer and God's Word each day?

### **Step Four - Prepare Yourself Physically**

#### **A. Before you begin your fast:**

- 1) Consult your physician, especially if you take prescription medicine or have a chronic ailment.
- 2) Do not rush into the fast.
- 3) Eat smaller meals before beginning a fast.
- 4) Avoid high-fat and sugary foods.
- 5) Eat raw fruit and vegetables for 2 days before starting to fast.

#### **B. While you are fasting:**

- 1) You are abstaining from all solid foods.
- 2) Withdraw your medication only under physician's supervision.
- 3) Limit your activity.
- 4) Exercise moderately (walk one to three miles daily).
- 5) Rest as much as schedule will permit.
- 6) Be prepared for temporary mental discomforts (such as impatience, crankiness and anxiety).
- 7) Expect some physical discomforts, especially on the second day. You may have hunger pains, "blahs," or dizziness, weakness, tiredness or sleeplessness.
- 8) If you feel hunger pains, increase your liquid intake.
- 9) If you fast only one day, you will probably not experience much difficulty.

The first two or three days are usually the hardest. But as you continue the fast you will likely experience a heightened sense of well-being both physically and spiritually. Above all, you will experience a communion and intimacy with Jesus and the Holy Spirit as you have never known.

### **Step Five - Put Yourself On A Schedule**

#### **Morning:**

- Begin your day in praise and worship.
- Read and meditate on God's Word, preferably on your knees.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to work in you to will and to do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).
- Invite God to use you. Ask Him to show you how to influence your family, church, community, country and your world.

- Pray that you would see His will for your life and have His empowerment to do that will.

**Noon:**

- Return to prayer and God’s Word.
- Take a short prayer walk.
- Spend time in intercession. Pray for your family, special needs, the community’s and nation’s leaders and for the unreached millions in our world.

**Evening:**

- Get alone for an unhurried time of seeking Him.
- If others are fasting with you, meet together for prayer.
- Avoid television or any other distraction (these dampen your spiritual focus).<sup>ii</sup>

When possible, begin and end each day on your knees with your spouse for a brief time of praise and thanksgiving to God. Longer periods of time with our Lord in prayer and study of His Word are often better spent alone. Dr. Julio C. Ruibal, nutritionist, pastor, and specialist in prayer and fasting, suggests a daily schedule and kinds of juices you may find useful and satisfying. I suggest you modify this schedule to suit your circumstances and tastes:

**5:00 – 8:00am:** Fruit juices, preferably freshly squeezed or blended and diluted in 50 percent distilled water if fruit is acid. Apple, pear, grapefruit, papaya, watermelon, or other fruit juices are generally preferable. If you cannot do your own juicing, buy juices without sugar or additives.

**10:30am – 12:00pm:** Fresh vegetable juice made from lettuce, celery and carrots in three equal parts.

**2:30 – 4:00pm:** Herb tea with a drop of honey. Avoid black tea or any tea with caffeine.

**6:00 – 8:30pm:** Broth made from boiling potatoes, celery, and carrots with no salt. After boiling about half an hour, pour the water into a container and drink it.

**Step Six - End Your Fast Gradually**

When your designated time for fasting is finished, you will begin to eat solid food again. But the way you break your fast is extremely important for your physical and spiritual well-being.

Here are some suggestions to help you end your fast properly:

- Begin eating gradually, but do not eat solid foods immediately after ceasing to fast.
- Try smaller meals or snacks each day.
- Break an extended water fast with fruit such as watermelon.
- While continuing to drink fruit or vegetable juices, add the following:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Day:** Add a raw salad.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Day:** Add baked or boiled potato (no seasoning).
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Day:** Add a steamed vegetable
- After this:** Begin to reintroduce your normal diet.

**Tips on Juice Fasting:**

- 1) Drinking fruit juice will decrease your hunger pains and give you some natural sugar energy. The taste and lift will motivate and strengthen you to continue.
- 2) The best juices are made from fresh watermelon, lemons, grapes, apples, cabbage, beets, carrots, celery, or leafy green vegetables. In cold weather, you may enjoy warm vegetable broth.
- 3) Mix acidic juices (orange, tomato) with water for your stomach’s sake.

Gradually return to normal eating with several small snacks during the first few days. Start with a little soup and fresh fruits such as watermelon and cantaloupe. Advance to a few tablespoons of solid foods such as raw fruits and vegetables or a raw salad and baked potato.

**Step Seven - Expect Results**

If you sincerely humble yourself before the Holy Spirit, repent, pray, seek God’s face (His will and approval), meditate upon His Word consistently, you will experience a heightened awareness of His presence (John 14:21). The Holy

**What Should I Fast?**

**F - Food**  
**A - Activities**  
**S - Sports**  
**T - Talking**

Spirit will give you fresh, new spiritual insights. Your confidence and faith in God will be strengthened. You will feel mentally, spiritually, and physically refreshed. You will see answers to your prayers, but trust God to answer in His own way and own time.

**Conclusion: Should We Repeat Our Fasting?**

A single fast is not a spiritual cure-all. Just as we need fresh infillings of the Holy Spirit (“...be habitually filled...” – Eph. 5:18), we also need new times of fasting before God. A 24-hour fast each week has been greatly rewarding to many Christians. I pray this has been beneficial to your growing intimacy with the Lord.

**Story of How a Day of Prayer Stops Locusts**

In the early spring of 1877 Minnesota farmers surveyed their lands, dreading the first hordes of locusts that had caused such widespread destruction the summer before. Another such plague threatened to destroy Minnesota's rich wheatlands, spelling ruin for thousands of families.

Suddenly Governor John S. Pillsbury proclaimed April 26 a day of fasting and prayer, urging that every man, woman and child ask divine help. A strange hush fell over the land as Minnesotans solemnly assembled to pray. Next morning the sun rose in cloudless skies. Temperatures soared to mid-summer heat. The people looked up at the skies in wonder, and to their horror, the warm earth began to stir with the dreaded insects.

This was a strange answer! Three days passed. The unseasonable heat hatched out a vast army of locusts that threatened to engulf the entire Northwest! Then, on the fourth day the sun went down in a cold sky and that night frost gripped the earth. Most of the locusts were destroyed as surely as if fire had swept them away! When summer came the wheat waved tall and green. April 26 went down in history as the day on which a people's prayer had been answered.

In the early 1950's, Josef Stalin, dictator of the former Soviet Union, indicated that he was preparing a systematic purge of Jews from the vast nation he ruled with an iron hand. Word of his plan was leaked and the world worried that another holocaust was about to begin. A pastor in London, England, was greatly burdened by the news and shared his concern for God's people with a few prayer groups. They decided to set aside a day of prayer and fasting on behalf of the Soviet Jews. They pledged themselves to abstain from food for the day as they prayed for a divine solution. Two weeks later, Stalin suddenly died at the age of 73. Sixteen of the country's most respected doctors had fought to save his life, but to no avail. While the pastor and his people assured us that they never once prayed for the death of Stalin, they did ask the Lord to do whatever it took to diffuse the situation. God's answer came in the form of Stalin's death. The purge was never carried out as the whole direction of national policy abruptly changed. Historians believe that mere chance brought about the dictator's demise and that a system for change was already in place. But there are a group of believers in London who know otherwise. They understand the importance of prayer and fasting as a means to unleash the power of God upon the world.<sup>e</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Bill Bright, 7 Steps to Successful Prayer and Fasting, p. 4

<sup>ii</sup> Bill Bright proposed this daily schedule.

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<sup>e</sup> Kerry Bauman, "The Discipline of Fasting", p. 2-3