
fasting for a breakthrough

pastor mike ware



VICTORY CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

Fasting is a very powerful and beneficial biblical principle that is often overlooked. Much is recorded in the Bible on the subject of fasting, however, the average Christian knows very little about it. Many think it is archaic, medieval and out-of-vogue. As a result, it is no longer taught or practiced in very many churches. Those who do not understand its significance settle for a bland, “no-demand” type of Christianity.

In Matthew 6:16, Jesus said, “*When you fast...*” In Matthew 17:21, He told His disciples that certain kinds of demons can only be affected “*by prayer and fasting.*” These passages tell us two things: that Jesus *expects* us to fast, and that there is great power and value in fasting.

I believe that God has a divine order for our lives. He created each one of us with three parts: a body, a soul (mind, emotions and will), and a spirit. He intended for the spirit to guide the body and the soul. Unfortunately, however, most of us allow our bodies and souls to do the leading.

Now some of you might be saying, “Pastor, my flesh is not leading me!” Yet, if you cannot roll out of bed to pray or will not miss a few meals to seek the Lord, then your flesh is leading you. If you are saying to yourself, “I already pray; I don’t need to fast,” then your mind has fooled you and is directing you.

In order for our spirits to regain control, a deeper spiritual walk and a greater amount of sacrifice is required. I believe that fasting is the key to restoring God’s divine order into our lives. Why? Because when we fast, we force the flesh to respond and the soul to obey. It puts our bodies back into the divine order that God created. When we begin exercising ourselves in prayer and fasting, all of our senses become spiritually acute. Heavenly windows and doors begin to open, God’s voice becomes crystal

clear, and His Word becomes illuminated in our hearts like never before.

Benjamin Franklin once said, "The best of all medicines are resting and fasting." We like the resting part, but it is the fasting that truly delivers us and sets clear courses for our lives. Fasting is a powerful tool that can be accessed by every Christian. When coupled with fervent prayer, it becomes a mighty weapon of spiritual warfare.

WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is the voluntarily and deliberate abstinence from food for the purpose of concentrated prayer. It is a choice, an act of the will. Through fasting you are able to make all your members subject to your spirit. Remember, either your body or your spirit is in control; you must decide which is in charge!

In the Greek language, *fasting* means "to voluntary abstain from eating." In the Hebrew language it means "to cover the mouth or afflict the soul." In other words, fasting means that you stop eating food for a given period of time so that you might cease to focus on earthly desires and turn your heart toward heavenly desires. It is a deliberate act of your will.

When we fast, we afflict our souls (mind, emotions and will) by denying our bodies of food. This is what the apostle Paul did on the road to Damascus when he became aware of his spiritual situation. Acts 9:9 says, "For three days he (Paul) was blind, and did not eat or drink anything." After that time, God responded!

King Ahab also "afflicted his soul" when he learned that the Lord planned to bring evil to him. 1 King 21:27 says, "When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly." Again, when God saw how

Ahab had humbled himself, He responded favorably. "Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite: Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son" (1 Kings 21:28-29).

We also see how King David wept and chastened his soul with fasting when the shame of his sin came over him. 2 Samuel 12:16 says, "David therefore besought God...and fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth." Likewise, numerous others throughout the Bible did the same. They afflicted their souls and humbled themselves before the Lord, and He responded.

James 4:8-10 says, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. **Be afflicted**, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.**" When we humble ourselves, God lifts us up and lifts us out!

Fasting has a way of making us humble before the Lord. It is important that we understand that God is not moved by *fasting*. He is moved by humility! When we fast, our souls are afflicted and we are humbled. Fasting gets God's attention because it humbles us and He is drawn to that humility. Fasting allows the spirit-man to become dominate over the flesh-man. It shuts down the influences of our natural senses over our spiritual senses. When we become more spiritually sensitive, we can hear the voice of the Spirit more clearly.

Now many think that the words "fasting" and "starving" are synonymous, or that fasting is simply "premeditated starvation." Yet, most of us probably have enough excess reserve built in to last us through a hard winter! Some of you might even be thinking, "I don't have to starve to hear from God." If so, then your flesh is doing the talking--and will keep on talking! Why? Because

your flesh will do what it can to keep from being denied of its cravings.

Food is basic to all living creatures. Without it we cannot survive. In fact, hunger is the strongest motivational force in the body. All you have to do is mention chocolate, ice cream, twinkies, or apple pie and people begin salivating. In the Bible, we read that people killed for food, made covenants for it, and even sold their birthrights for it. Hunger is a powerful driving force!

Fasting is mentioned over 75 times in the Bible and there are 35 recorded fasts. Every great man and woman in the Bible fasted. Moses, David, Elijah, Daniel, Jehosaphat, and the prophets fasted. Paul, Peter, John and even Jesus fasted. Throughout Christian history, great men and women have been known to fast. John Wesley, Charles Finney, Smith Wigglesworth, Lester Sumrall, and Reinhart Bonnke have all spent time fasting. There is something powerful about this fasting thing!

Fasting is not a doctrine, but rather a practice. In the early church, the believers saw that their times of fasting were connected to a channel of power. When they mixed prayer with fasting, they saw tremendous things take place. Miracles seemed commonplace; signs and wonders often amazed the unbelievers. To the early church, fasting became the ingredient that overcame great obstacles that were hanging in the balance. Through fasting, the scales were tipped in their favor.

Did you know that the devil hates it when you fast? He hates the fact that you are forcing your flesh and soul to be attentive and obedient to the Holy Spirit. When you fast, **you become pointed; he becomes powerless!** When you move forward with purpose and vision, he loses. He can fight, kick and throw a running fit, but he loses. Fasting tips the balance in your favor!

No Christian can become truly victorious if he or she ignores the

principle of fasting. Fasting is not a command; it is a duty or an “act of righteousness” according to Matthew 6:1. In this chapter, Jesus’ teachings clearly indicate that He expects us to do three things: give, pray, and fast. He said, *“When you give...”* (verse 2); *“When you pray...”* (verse 5); *“When you fast...”* (verse 16). Jesus said that when you do these things, *“your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you”* (Matthew 6:18).

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I FAST?

When you fast, you are making a conscious decision to submit your flesh to the Spirit of the Lord. You have decided to put your spirit in charge of your body and your soul. Whenever you do this, two things will occur: something will happen in your body and something will happen in the spirit-world. First, let’s talk about what will happen in your body.

When you decide to fast, there will definitely be a “rebellion in your camp.” If you have never fasted, then your flesh has been controlling you for a long time. It has been choosing candy bars, malts, triple-decker hamburgers, double dipped cones, and Blizzards at the local Dairy Queen. The first time you tell your flesh “no,” rebellion is going to begin in your stomach!

As soon as you decide to fast, your stomach will begin sending signals to your mind. You will hear something inside you saying, “Hey, where’s the food? It’s time to eat. I’m starving!” Those signals are simply “reminders” that your stomach is still there. If you ignore those reminders, then your senses will begin to take over. Suddenly, every place you look becomes an advertisement for food. Every billboard seems to have something delicious on it. After a while, everything begins to smell like food. Even the exhaust fumes from the city bus begin smelling like bar-b-que. Even spinach and lima beans start to sound appetizing! If you are not careful, your stomach will trick your mind and you will start

thinking, "If only I could lick a Safeway banana ad..." It won't be long before you will be getting some pretty strong, violent, even desperate signals in your head, such as, "If you don't feed me I'm going to rip off this sun visor and shove it down your throat!"

Just remember, once you start fasting, there is going to be a battle with your flesh. This may go on for hours or even a few days until your body realizes that it is no longer in control. In fact, that battle will continue until your flesh is under control and in subjection to your spirit. Eventually--if you do not give in--it will fold up like a cheap pup tent and submit to your spirit and to the direction of the Lord.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF FASTING?

When we fast, we are fasting unto God, not unto men. Fasting does not get God's attention; it gets ours! Its purpose is to bring all our members into subjection to the direction of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Fasting is not a tool used to obtain something. It cannot be used to coerce God into doing anything. Fasting moves you, not God. He is always the same and is always there for us. Unfortunately, we are the ones who drift from time to time. Fasting draws us back to our dependency on the Father. It melts us into the purposes of God for our churches, our communities, our families, and our lives.

According to Jesus, when we humble ourselves by fasting, we receive from the Father. Remember, He said in Matthew 6:17-18, *"When you fast...your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*

I believe that there are four things we receive when we fast:

#1. FASTING GIVES US GUIDANCE. Guidance is something that we all desperately need. Many people have built their lives on

unscriptural choices and are in desperate need of God's direction. It is time for them to fast! Then there are others whose lives are built on the rock of the Word, yet they find themselves in need of specific direction. They pray and seek the Lord, but receive silence in response to their normal pleas. It is time for them to fast!

The apostles grasped the idea that fasting coupled with prayer was the key to receiving divine guidance. On one occasion, they were in need of the Lord's direction so they gathered at Antioch and began to fast and pray. *"While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."* So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 13:2-3). They received supernatural guidance! Fasting had created an environment in which the Holy Spirit could clearly communicate with them. Likewise, when we fast and pray, we give the Holy Spirit an avenue by which He can communicate His direction to us.

#2. FASTING ENCOURAGES OUR FAITH. When we fast, we receive direction from the Lord, which strengthens our faith. Fasting cannot build our faith, but it can encourage our faith. When we neglect or deny our fleshly desires, our faith is fed. In Matthew 16:24, Jesus told His disciples, *"If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."* Fasting is the octane for our faith. It gives us higher mileage in spiritual things.

The apostles had to rely on a continued spiritual discipline to maintain their walk in the supernatural. That discipline simply consisted of giving themselves to prayer, fasting and the Word of God. They realized that apart from that discipline, they weakened quickly. Likewise, if we examine ourselves, we will find that when we become slack in our prayer-life, Word-life, and fasting-life, we will soon falter.

John Wesley said, "Prayer and fasting are the appointed means by which unusual faith is attained." When we fast and pray, supernatural faith begins to rise up inside us. Why? Because fasting draws us to the Father; and where the Father is, there is grace, power, rest, peace, guidance and faith!

#3. FASTING GIVES US POWER OVER EVIL. The devil always wants to make believers feel impotent. He wants us to think that he is supreme. However, when we begin to fast, something supernatural starts to happen. Not only does it move us toward God, but it strengthens us against our enemy.

After Jesus had returned from the mount of transfiguration, He found some of His disciples trying to cast a demon out of a young boy--unsuccessfully. Later, they came to Jesus in private and asked Him why they were unable to cast the demon out. Jesus told them, *"Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by **prayer and fasting**"* (Matthew 17:20-21).

How could Jesus say that? Because He had already experienced victory over Satan through prayer and fasting. Luke chapter four tells us that when the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus, He went into the wilderness and fasted for forty days. During that time He battled Satan and won. What caused the victory? Was it because he was the Son of God? No! The Bible says that He was fashioned just like us; He was a man. The only difference was that He combined prayer and fasting to gain control over the devil. Luke 4:13-14 says, *"When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside."*

Jesus told his disciples that if they would earnestly pray and fast, they would experience the same power and victory over Satan. Fasting is not hocus pocus. It is not "miss a few meals and get victory." It is not "quit eating and get power." That is witchcraft! True fasting that pleases God is humbling ourselves and seeking His face. It is saying to the Lord, "I need You more than I need food to survive!"

If we genuinely seek God and His purposes, His grace and power will flow to us and through us. Yet, if our spiritual lives are undisciplined, that precious anointing will slowly leak away. Spiritual discipline through fasting will keep His grace fresh in our lives and give us a supernatural edge over Satan.

#4. FASTING GIVES US POWER OVER CARNALITY. The apostle Paul tells us that we are to walk after the things of the Spirit and not after the things of the flesh. *"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God"* (Romans 8:5-8).

Every believer struggles with worldliness or carnality. Carnality refers to those things that pertain to fleshly appetites, not to the things of the spirit. Many believers are bound by habits and dependencies from which they can never seem to break free. Fasting is the key to being loosed from those chains! The discipline of fasting gives us power over the desires of the flesh or the body. It forces obedience and subjection of our fleshly cravings to the desires of the Holy Spirit. Fasting gives us victory over such things as pride, egotism and haughtiness. It starves the flesh, allowing the mind to turn toward spiritual issues and direction.

The apostle Paul also gives us some insight into how to have power over our bodies. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 says, *“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”*

Paul is saying that every athlete goes into strict training, disciplining himself so that he might win a wreath that will wither and die. However, the Christian disciplines himself to win a crown that will last forever. To win that crown, we are not to run with uncertainty or without aim. Rather, we are to keep our bodies under subjection to the Holy Spirit. We are to force it into compliance, making it a slave to the things of God so that the Word of God will not be in vain in our lives.

Fasting is the most powerful aid we have for bringing our flesh into subjection to God’s Word. If you are having problems with habits or recurring sin, fasting and prayer will supernaturally deliver you from their grip.

FASTING IS A WEAPON OF WARFARE

For many Christians, fasting is a missing ingredient in their spiritual battles. Many people have written books about spiritual warfare, yet few have mentioned the fact that fasting is one of our most powerful weapons.

The prophet Isaiah wrote, *“Is not this the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?”* (Isaiah 58:6) Through this passage, the Lord reveals that fasting is not to bring

us into bondage, but to loose us from bondage. Fasting is powerful! It is a mighty weapon of our warfare!

Fasting as a tool of warfare does four things:

#1. IT LOOSES THE BONDS OF WICKEDNESS. Satan desires to bind us with ungodly things that will separate us from the Lord. The forces of evil camouflage themselves so that they might entangle us with wicked habits such as cursing, drinking, smoking or looking at pornography. Satan also tries to bind us with feelings of resentment, anger, jealousy, hate or bitterness. We feel oppressed and attempt to break these habits or fight these feelings, but we are unsuccessful. Eventually, we find that we are completely bound by these invisible shackles and have no place to turn. We pray and seek the Lord, but cannot break free.

When we find ourselves entangled by the bonds of wickedness, fasting combined with prayer is the only weapon that will loose us! Fasting is a “hidden weapon” chosen by God to help us break free from Satan’s yoke of bondage. It literally has the power to open wide the shackles that are holding us captive. If you are struggling with “bonds of wickedness” and have done all you know to do to get free, begin fasting and watch the chains fall!

#2. IT UNDOES THE HEAVY BURDENS. Many Christians go through their entire lives burdened down by the enemy. Year after year, Satan adds heavy weights to their lives. Eventually, the load seems impossible to bear. Yet, they do not need to stay under the devil’s weight because fasting has the power to undo every heavy burden!

The Hebrew language has a unique way of explaining what “undoing the burden” means. To *undo* literally means “to jump”; *heavy burden* means “a troop.” I find it very interesting that Psalm 18:29 says, *“For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.”* When we fast, we run through the camp

of our enemy and jump over all his obstacles because we are no longer tied down by his weights! When you fast, you are going to feel the weights of Satan falling from your life.

#3. IT LETS THE OPPRESSED GO FREE. The word oppressed means “to crack in pieces; to break, crush, discourage, or bruise.” Today there are many Christians who are oppressed--bruised, discouraged, broken and crushed. Prayer alone has not set them free. They have tried to “cast out” the oppression, but things remain unchanged. Only God’s chosen fast has the power to set them totally free.

If you are bruised or wounded, discouraged or crushed, God’s chosen fast will deliver you and set you free. Fasting will liberate you because it will bring you closer to the Lord Jesus, your deliverer. Luke 4:18 says that He came to *“release the captives... and to set at liberty them that are bruised.”*

#4. IT BREAKS EVERY YOKE. Satan wants to yoke every believer to his way and his plan. He wants us to live as prisoners of war for his purposes. He wants to hold us down, subdue us, and neutralize our effectiveness by putting his yoke upon us. Maybe you feel washed out, worn out, prayed out and weighted down; but Isaiah says that fasting has the power to stop the devil’s plans by breaking off those yokes.

In this passage (Isaiah 58:6), the word break literally means “to tear off.” In other words, there will be a violent ripping away of demonic yokes from our lives when we fast! No longer will we be forced to submit to the devil’s slavery. Our Lord has given us a powerful weapon: His chosen fast. Not only do we have the Word, the name of Jesus and the blood of the Lamb, but we also have access to the throne through prayer and fasting. Do you feel the yokes of the devil trying to pull you down or hinder you in your walk with the Lord? When you fast, those yokes will be ripped away!

HOW DO I BEGIN?

I believe that every Christian ought to live a fasted lifestyle. They should set aside one day every week to fast just to keep their bodies and fleshly desires submitted to the Lord. If you have never fasted, I recommend that you begin with a two meal fast (breakfast and lunch); then have dinner with your family. This will be a beginning for you. After you have conquered your flesh there, you can move on to a full day fast. Drinking water or juice will be very helpful. Liquids are necessary for any kind of fast.

If you are prepared to go on an extended multiple day fast, remember to drink plenty of liquids and pray! You may experience withdrawals from the toxins that are in your body such as caffeine, sugar and other residues. This is quite common, so do not be alarmed. Fasting burns out all of the toxins that are in your body.

If you have been fasting for three or more days and you are ready to end your fast, do not break it by gorging yourself on heavy food. This is dangerous and can cause serious harm to your body. After having abstained from food for several days, your system cannot tolerate the introduction and processing of food that quickly. Rather, it must slowly reactivate the digestion and assimilation processes. Begin by eating fruit, salads or clear soups for several meals; then gradually increase the amount of intake.

CONCLUSION

Finally, remember that prayer without fasting is still prayer; but fasting without prayer is simply going hungry! Fasting is not a “food strike.” It is not done to change God’s mind, but to change our ways. It brings us to a place where God can move us, speak to us, guide us, empower us and encourage us. Fasting humbles us

because it forces our bodies to submit to our spirits. It reconstructs God's divine order in our lives, and this is where the power comes from. The devil hates fasting because it forces our flesh to obey the Spirit. When this happens, he always loses.

Although fasting is a "dis-tasteful" task, it has earth shaking results! Though often overlooked, it is a mighty weapon of our spiritual warfare. Those who have learned how to seek the Lord through prayer and fasting have delivered a mighty blow to the enemy. Christians today have little excuse for remaining weak and powerless; God has given us his "chosen fast" so that we can overcome every obstacle and break every yoke.

If you are ready to bring your flesh into subjection and be led by the Spirit, then fasting is where you must begin. Once you have learned how to bring your flesh into submission, you will never have trouble hearing God's voice and obeying. May the Lord richly bless you as you venture into a deeper walk with Him. AND...watch out devil!



VICTORY CHURCH

11777 Sheridan Blvd.
Westminster CO 80020
303-426-8888
www.victorydenver.com