

Agape House of Worship
Wednesday Bible Study

Study Series: Fasting: The Key that Opens Doors
Part 3: Fasting that Gets Results

Wednesday, January 22, 2025
Teacher: Pastor Jide Lawore

Matthew 6:16-18 - "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

As we have learned over the course of this series, fasting is a spiritual discipline that has been practiced by believers both in the Bible days and throughout church history. Under the Old Covenant, the Lord commanded one regular fast for every Israelite (Yom Kippur Leviticus 16:29-3). While it is not a commandment in the New Testament, we can clearly say that Jesus expects every believer to fast (Matthew 6:16 "When you fast...") and categorically says the disciples will have a reason to fast after the bridegroom is gone (Mark 2:18-22).

Corporate and Personal Fast

Corporate Fast: Corporate fast describes fasting together with other people for a common goal. Corporate fast is usually called by a church, small group, family or sometimes by a nation. In general, the rules are set corporately. To be successful, corporate fast must be purposeful. Examples of corporate fast are as follows:

- *I Samuel 7:5-6 "And Samuel said, Gather all Israel ... and they gathered ... and fasted ... "*
- *Ezra 8:21-23 "Then I proclaimed a fast ... So we fasted and besought our God ..."*
- *Nehemiah 9:1-3 " ... the children of Israel were assembled with fasting ..."*
- *Joel 2:15-16 "... sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people ..."*
- *Jonah 3:5-10 "the people ... proclaimed a fast ... from the greatest of them even to the least"*
- *Acts 13:1-2 "... While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said..."*
- *Acts 13:3 "So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off."*

Personal Fast: Personal fast is a fast embarked by an individual person. The individual decides the fast and for what purpose. The individual also determines the type and the rules. It is important for the individual embarking on a personal fast to be sincere, disciplined and if possible to find a way to be accountable.

- *II Samuel 12:15-16, 22-23 "... and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth."*
- *I Kings 21:27-29 "When Ahab heard those words, he... fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly."*
- *Psalms 35:13 "But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting ..."*
- *Daniel 9:3 "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer ... with fasting ..."*
- *Luke 2:36-37 " There was also a prophet, Anna....and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying."*
- *Acts 9:9 "Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. 9 For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything."*

Types of Fasting:

1. Normal or Regular Fast: This is the most common type of fast generally accepted by believers and church leaders today. It is refraining from eating all food (you may drink water, tea, or juice). In normal fast, you eat once a day (usually not before 6pm). This is likely the kind of fast Jesus was referring to in the parable when he quoted the Pharisee as saying; "I fast twice a week..." (Luke 18:12)

2. Extended Normal or Regular Fast: This is when you go for a period of time (3 days, 7 days or more) without food but usually with water or liquids. It is generally believed that this is the kind of fasting Jesus did when he fasted for 40 days and nights. (Matthew 4:2, Luke 4:2)

3. Total or Absolute Fast: Total fast is a complete - no food and no drink fast. In Acts 9:9, Paul fasted 3 days with no food or drink. Esther also called for this type of fast in Esther 4:15-16. Moses and Elijah engaged in what must be considered a supernatural absolute fast of forty days (Deuteronomy 9:9; I Kings 19:8). The Bible does not have a record of anyone engaging in absolute fast more than 3 days naturally.

4. Partial Fast: Partial fast generally refers to omitting a specific meal from your diet or refraining from certain types of foods. It can also mean fasting for shorter period of time. This is generally recommended for people who are sick (maybe need to take medication), others personal constraints, or for young children. This is the kind of fast Daniel engaged in Daniel 10:3. Daniel fast involves eating vegetables and fruits only. No meats and animal or dairy products. No deep fried foods or solid fats.

General Guides to Effective Fasting:

1. Don't fast with a motive of showing-off:

Matthew 6:16 - "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

2. It is not wrong (and sometimes necessary) to inform others for the purpose of support and accountability:

The passage in Matthew 6:16 does not prohibit informing people when fasting; the issue is that of motive not the action. Sometimes it is a good idea to tell a few close people who can hold you accountable.

3. Don't fast without praying:

Fasting and prayer are often linked together (Luke 2:37; Luke 5:33). More importantly during fasting is to maintain an attitude of prayer.

4. Don't be legalistic about fasting: you cannot fast to earn God's favor or force Him to answer a prayer that is not in alignment with His will.

Luke 18:10-14 - "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' 13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' 14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

5. Fasting does not replace the essentials such living holy, working in love etc.: fasting while living in disobedience will not work.

Matthew 23:23 - "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

6. Fasting is effective when it is done with a clear purpose:

Sometimes, the purpose is already defined; e.g. when you have a major crisis or problem leading to fasting and praying. It is better to start your fast with a clear purpose of why you are fasting even if you fast on a regular basis.

7. Effective fasting requires physical, mental and spiritual preparation:

Physical, mental and spiritual preparation will make your fasting most effective. This involves planning of your time and schedule during fasting to give you time to pray, planning of your schedule to manage your stamina. Get a spiritual book or a Bible reading plan to enhance your spiritual life. Physically resist the urge to have that "last big feast" before the fast. Cutting down on your meals a few days before you begin the fast will signal your mind, stomach, and appetite that less food is acceptable.

In conclusion; whether your fasting is personal or corporate, it is not enough to just fast, we must desire to fast effectively with the goal of getting result. I pray that this study has enlightened you and will help you to do that going forward. Blessings!