

## **Part 2**

how to get ready

# Getting ready

## some things to consider

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**The purpose of this booklet is to equip you and your church to go deeper with God in fasting and prayer. Be aware that any activity can become a ritual and therefore void of spiritual significance. We are to resist mechanical and ritualistic worship.**

For Jesus, fasting and prayer was the way to prepare Himself for ministry. It was the Holy Spirit that led Him in the wilderness to be tested. He came out, after 40 days and nights of fasting and prayer, victorious and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul, the Apostle, is also a similar example. Just after encountering the resurrected Jesus, he spent three days in Damascus praying and fasting, waiting for Ananias to come and baptise him. His desire for God had become so strong that for the three days he could only pray and fast.

Begin by asking a simple question. What do I want God to do for me? This may sound like a silly question but take a moment to think about it. In life, we prioritise what we assume to be important. We seldom miss appointments we consider vital to our life. So begin this journey by searching your heart.

If you read Isaiah 58 you'll see that God is rebuking the people of Israel because of their lack of honesty in their worship. Prayer had become ritualistic and void of reality. Fasting was, for most of them, a pious act without any meaning. And they were wondering why God was not answering their prayers. Isaiah dedicates a whole chapter to correct the thinking of God's people regarding fasting and prayer. This is where we must begin.

### **What is fasting?**

I understand fasting as abstinence from food with the purpose of devoting that time to feed your soul with God's word. Some people try and fast by abstaining from social media, TV and other attractions. As much as social media is one of the greatest distractions from spiritual things, it is in the end a luxury not a basic need. I know there will be some who will disagree with me on this one, but I see no huge sacrifice on staying away from social media or TV.

Drawing closer to God in prayer and abstaining from food while you pray, will teach you self-control. This is a special time of supplication and intercession, when you can plead with God with a specific purpose in mind.

Fasting and prayer are spiritual disciplines. However, according to **healthline.com** there are some amazing physical benefits for both. Fasting is a practice that has been

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associated with a wide array of potential health benefits, including weight loss, as well as improved blood sugar control, heart health, brain function and cancer prevention. *“When fasting, be sure to stay hydrated, eat nutrient-dense foods and get plenty of rest. It’s best to consult with your doctor before fasting if you have any underlying health conditions or are planning to fast for more than 24 hours.”*<sup>2</sup>

It is vital to mention that if you suffer from a medical condition which demands that you eat at regular times, it is wise you consult your doctor before you embark on this journey of fasting.

Some people, with medical conditions who still want to take this journey, have found it useful to start fasting right after their evening meal and not eat until the next morning. For example, if you finish eating at 5.00 pm you can set time aside to pray, read the Bible and worship God before you go to bed. You will be fasting for 16 hours if your breakfast is at 9 am. You can have another time of prayer, reading and worshipping God as you start the new day. Be wise and take medical advice if you need it.

### **What is the purpose of fasting and prayer?**

The main purpose of fasting and prayer is the development of your spiritual life and closeness to God. Fasting and prayer are acts of worship. However, during times of fasting and prayer, you may determine in your heart to overcome a particular habitual sin. You may have other reasons too. For example you may fast and pray for the salvation of a loved one, the healing of person who is sick or a breakthrough in your daily walk with God.

Prayer and fasting, with the church, develops great unity and fosters love more than any other activity. God commands His blessing upon those who live in unity. He also answers the prayers of those who come to Him in agreement. If you want unity in the church, get people to pray and fast together.

In Mark 9, we find the story of a father who brings his son to the disciples to be healed. The story tells us how an evil spirit throws the boy into the water and fire, trying to kill him. The disciples are puzzled when they try to cast out the demon, but they fail.

Later on, Jesus explains why they couldn’t heal the boy. It wasn’t because they had no authority or power. It was simply because “this kind” doesn’t come out, except with fasting and prayer. This story teaches us that there are victories which are pretty easy to win. However, there are times when we are called to go much deeper in order to find victory. Fasting and prayer take you deeper and further with God.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/fasting-benefits#section11>

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From Mark 9, we draw the conclusion that fasting and prayer act as spiritual weapons. These powerful weapons must be an integral part of the spiritual arsenal in every believer, who seriously considers living a life of victory.

Paul mentions such "mighty weapons", in his second letter to the church in Corinth: *"We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ."* - 2 Cor. 10: 3 - 5

As believers, we do not fight against flesh-and-blood enemies. The warfare we are involved in is spiritual, therefore we must be equipped accordingly: *"A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armour so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places."* - Ephesians 6: 10 - 12

Unless properly equipped, we are prone to lose the fight every time the devil opposes us. Fasting and prayer prepares and trains you on how to use your spiritual armour. *"Therefore, put on every piece of God's armour so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armour of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."* - Ephesians 6: 13 - 17

The context of putting on the armour of God is the topic of prayer. That is why the Apostle Paul finishes this section with a call to prayer. *"Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere."* - Ephesians 6: 18

Fasting and prayer should have a spiritual reason. You can have **a personal reason** (overcoming a struggle, sin or dealing with family sickness, developing discipline, self-control as a fruit of the Holy Spirit). As a church you can have **a corporate reason** for your fasting and prayer. You may pray and fast for your community, church ministries or a new pastor. If you have a pastor, fast and pray for the one you have.

In Transformation Centre, we try to dedicate at least one week to fast and pray for the year ahead. We have experienced great blessing every time, as a church, we prioritised fasting and prayer above any other ministry or activity. It is a good practice to unify the church around a common purpose.

## What should I do during fasting?

**Pray.** Set aside time and plan your prayer time. Take notes as you plan. It is useful to develop a good and healthy habit of keeping a prayer diary. This is true for you as an individual but also as a church. You can look back and see the prayers that have been answered. Pray and listen to the Holy Spirit.

**Read.** Set aside time to read the Word of God. A major idea of fasting is that you recognise the value of God's Word. *"People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God"* - Matthew 4: 4b. Let the Word feed your soul just like physical food feeds your body. During this time, you may study a portion of Scripture in relation to your reason for fasting. If you fast and pray to overcome an addiction, read passages where God speaks about it. For example:

*"You say, "I am allowed to do anything"—but not everything is good for you. And even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything."*

1 Corinthians : 6: 12

*"So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most. - Hebrews 4: 14 - 16*

**Praise.** Choose to praise and worship God, while you fast and pray. Worship is an act of prayerful meditation. This can be easily done in song. The act of worship is often linked to the attitude of brokenness when one is being prostrated before God. Every church should develop a culture where this is possible. Praising is helping you develop contentment in your heart. Praise is the decision to honour God, no matter what the circumstances are. Hungry or full, thirsty or satisfied, in all circumstances learn to praise God.

**Fellowship.** Prayer and fasting can sometimes be hard, especially when the devil comes to oppose you. If, as a church, you make the decision to take time to fast and pray together, take the opportunity to be with other believers for prayer, fellowship and mutual encouragement. Whether you fast and pray on your own or with the church, do not neglect the fellowship with other believers. It will be a great source of encouragement.

## Chapter Summary

Let me conclude this part by saying categorically that fasting and prayer does not save a person. Fasting and prayer is for the person who has already experienced God's salvation. Fasting and prayer is your worship to God, an act of the will already submitted to the Lordship of Jesus.

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Some people may think that by fasting long periods and praying long prayers, will be a way to force God into doing something for you. No. Fasting and prayer simply show your determination to get close to God, with obedience and submission to His sovereign will. Penance or self-pity will not buy you grace. Salvation, the Bible says, is by faith alone. Jesus calls us to repent and turn away from sin. We are called to confess with our mouth the lordship of Jesus and believe in our hearts that He is alive. This wonderful work of grace in our lives is salvation.

Be blessed as you determine in your heart to draw close to God in fasting and prayer! My prayer is that as the church returns to the practice of fasting and prayer, God will hear us and revive us.

Revival is the work of the Holy Spirit in the church, turning the lukewarm Christian into a spiritually highly flammable follower of Jesus. The Holy Spirit can turn an indifferent Christian into a compassionate and loving person.

We understand that the Holy Spirit is here, with us today. We are forgiven and there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. Revival starts in my heart and in yours. It affects the spiritual atmosphere in the church and then it moves in the community and the society around us.

That is why we chose to fast and pray!

# Brokenness

## the end result is joy

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**Brokenness is often looked upon as something negative. Broken things are easily disposed of, rejected and deemed useless. However, God uses brokenness and weakness, in order to display His power and majesty.**

As you study the Bible, you will find that fasting and prayer are often associated with brokenness of heart or spirit. David tells us in Psalm 51: 16 - 17 that God desires a broken spirit and a contrite heart, much more than sacrifices: *"You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God."*

Brokenness must not be misunderstood as self-punishment or being hard on yourself, in an attempt to appease God. Biblical brokenness is an attitude of the heart, a decision we make as a response to God's work in our hearts. It is often reflected by humility or being "humble before God". In Daniel 10 we read about the prophet being broken over the future events the Lord had showed him in the previous chapter. He was fasting and praying, humbling himself before God, when God revealed Himself and reassured Daniel: *"... you are very precious to God, so listen carefully to what I have to say to you. Stand up, for I have been sent to you."* - Daniel 10: 11

I see at least three types of brokenness in the Bible:

**Brokenness over unconfessed sin.** When the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin we must be broken over it. We cannot allow our hearts to become calloused and accustomed to sin. The conviction of the Holy Spirit brings brokenness. Holy brokenness brings repentance. Repentance brings forgiveness and forgiveness brings joy. Can you see it? The end result of brokenness is joy! Once a sin is confessed and forgiven we can no longer be broken over it. We must rejoice in our forgiveness. For example, the church in Corinth had to experience this brokenness in order to experience repentance and then forgiveness.

*"I am not sorry that I sent that severe letter to you, though I was sorry at first, for I know it was painful to you for a little while. Now I am glad I sent it, not because it hurt you, but because the pain caused you to repent and change your ways. It was the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so you were not harmed by us in any way. For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death."* - 2 Corinthians 7: 8 - 10

**Brokenness in intercession.** This is a different kind of brokenness. Numerous intercessors in the Bible felt broken over the spiritual state of other people or their nation. Nehemiah was broken over the state of Jerusalem and its walls. Daniel was broken over the events predicted by God. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. You can be broken over your friend's sin or sickness. That state of brokenness and intercession will bring you to fasting and prayer. As you do, the Lord gives you peace and the result of the intercession is joy. The end result of intercession is joy!

**Brokenness in need.** The Lord Jesus told us in John 16: 33 to expect trials and sorrows in this world: *"Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."*

We know that our needy world is heading towards judgment. This truth should be enough to break our hearts. This brokenness is crucial for compassion. Compassion cannot exist without brokenness. The Bible tells us that Jesus had compassion for people, and therefore ministered to their needs.

*"Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick." - Matthew 14: 14*

*"Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things." - Mark 6: 34*

Jesus wept with people. He wept at the tomb of His friend Lazarus. He identified with the brokenness of those around Him and sympathised with their pain. In Gethsemane, just before His arrest, Jesus prayed for His disciples and wept while His sweat became blood. He knew that, after His departure, the disciples will face innumerable obstacles and trials, so He prayed with their need in mind.

## **Chapter Summary**

What do we do when we are faced with our own sin, the spiritual state or our nation or a personal and immediate need? We bring it all to God, with fasting and prayer. Whatever we face, may it be salvation, healing, provision or a new revelation from His Word, once we bring it to God we leave it with God. This will teach us how to depend on Him. When we leave the matter with God, the end result is joy.

The end result of brokenness is always joy. God's purpose for us is to have full and complete joy. Fasting and prayer is all about joy. We can rejoice in suffering, we can rejoice in tears, we can rejoice in intercession and in brokenness!

Let the Lord make you willing to be broken during the time of fasting and prayer. If He breaks your heart, He will heal it. His purpose for you is to find joy throughout this journey. **Are you ready?**