

Spiritual Maturity

Lesson Three Student

In growing in our relationship with God, our biggest battle tends to be with _____.

Our flesh will not always _____ to pray and read the Word. However our _____ consistently craves the presence and Word of God.

When you have difficulty with the desire to spend time with God:

- **First off ask God for the _____**
It is from Him that the desire comes (it is from Him to want to do his will and the ability to do His will).
- **Secondly, it may be due to the _____**
being stronger than the voice of the spirit. This is where fasting can help.

What is fasting?

Fasting, as a regular practice, is a _____ to keep your flesh in submission. When you fast, you are _____ the cravings and desires of your body, and instead _____ your spirit with the Word and prayer.

Probably the biggest point here is the _____ of physical food with spiritual food. Fasting isn't just skipping a meal at work. It's taking your lunch break to spend time alone with God. Fasting is telling God that you are



choosing Him over your lunch, and that you are now _____
on Him for strength that day, instead of gaining strength from food.

Learning (it is a process!) how to rely on God for _____ and
_____ strength is one of the great rewards of the habit of fasting.

Fasting is also a humbling experience

- It's an expression of your desire - for your _____ to rule your flesh.
- It's an expression of your desire - for _____ ways over your ways.
- It's an expression of your desire - that you want a _____
communication line with God more than you want to take care of yourself.

The purpose of fasting is to _____ yourself and _____ to
God.

Some mistakenly think that fasting is a hunger-strike to get God to do
something. Humbling yourself before God does move his heart, but under no
circumstances is it payment for something you have requested. The purpose of
fasting is to humble yourself and seek Him, not show God how much you really
want something.

"... I humbled myself with fasting ..." Psalms 35:13 (NKJV)

The result of fasting should be the _____ of yourself with Him.

Your time with God

You will find when fasting that your time with God increases in _____.
When you walk away from lunch and spend the time with Him, He will meet
you there and speak to you through His Word.



With this said, fasting is primarily a _____ thing between you and God.

"And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, who try to look pale and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I assure you, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will suspect you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in secret. And your Father, who knows all secrets, will reward you. Mat. 6:16-18 (NLT)

Consistently or on special occasions?

Just like how you set aside time each day for prayer and reading the Bible, a consistent time set aside for fasting is how you _____. Fasting is the _____ gym routine that keeps your spirit strong.

Special occasion fasts are when the Holy Ghost _____ you to enter a fast. This is perhaps the easiest way to fast because we have such strong feelings to do so.

Help me please!

You will also find at times during fasting that your _____ will throw a 2-yr old temper tantrum. Head it off at the pass! Don't rely on sheer willpower to conquer your flesh – you need strength from God, not from yourself. Get up and go talk to God. Open His word and memorize a promise.

Remember that flesh temper tantrums don't always come in the form of a pizza/donut temptation. For some, the subduing of the flesh during fasting has



more to do with; _____ a short temper, choosing _____ over emotional frazzled-ness, or choosing _____ over sharpness.

It is making God your _____ and choosing His _____ during a fast that reaps the fruit of closer intimacy with Him.

Uh-Oh

It takes _____ to build your spiritual fasting muscles. If you don't make it through your first fast, do not be discouraged! Try again! God will honor you for your faithfulness.

Types of Fasts

_____ Fast

- No food is eaten, but water is drunk (**Luke 4:2**)

_____ Fast

- Abstaining from food and water (**Acts 9:9**)

_____ Fast

- Restricted diet, not total abstinence from food
(**Daniel 1:15; 10:2-3**)

_____ Fast

- Media, entertainment, music - anything that God impresses on you
(Nazarite vows)

Special Occasion fasts



Many occasions for fasting are recorded in scripture. The common thread being _____ yourself and _____ yourself with God's _____.

- When Moses would go to the mountain, he would spend 40 **intimate days with God**, fasting.
- When the children of Israel were caught up in their own ways, and then ran into problems, they would proclaim a fast, humble themselves and seek God's face. **God would then direct their steps.**

- **Repentance & Deliverance - Jonah 3 (NIV)**

On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh:

"By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

- **Spiritual deliverance**

Isaiah 58:6 (KJV)

"Is not this the fast that I have chose? To loose the bands ... to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"



Mark 9:29 (Matthew 17:21) (NKJV)

"And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."



Handout 1:

While You Fast

Your time of fasting and prayer has come. You are abstaining from all solid foods and have begun to seek the Lord. Here are some helpful suggestions to consider:

- Avoid drugs, even natural herbal drugs and homeopathic remedies. Medication should be withdrawn only with your physician's supervision.
- Limit your activity.
- Exercise only moderately.
- Rest as much as your schedule will permit.
- Prepare yourself for temporary discomforts
- Expect some physical discomforts, especially on the second day. You may have fleeting hunger pains, dizziness, or the "blahs." Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches. Physical annoyances may also include weakness, tiredness, or sleeplessness.
- The first two or three days are usually the hardest. As you continue to fast, you will likely experience a sense of well-being both physically and spiritually. However, should you feel hunger pains, increase your liquid intake.

Breaking Your Fast

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

End Your Fast Gradually

- Begin eating gradually.
- Do not eat solid foods immediately after your fast.
- Suddenly reintroducing solid food to your stomach and digestive tract will likely have negative, even dangerous, consequences.
- Try several smaller meals or snacks each day.
- If you end your fast gradually, the beneficial physical and spiritual effects will result in continued good health.



Handout 2:



Precautions prior to entering a fast of ALL foods or absolute fasts (fasting food and water).

As you begin your fast, you may hear from concerned loved ones and friends who urge you to protect your health. And they are right. You should protect your health. **But I assure you, if done properly, fasting will not only prove to be a spiritual, but physical blessing as well.**

By all means, consult your doctor before you begin your fast of all foods for a period longer than one day. But, be aware that many doctors have not been trained in this area and so their understanding is limited. Even so, it would be wise to ask your doctor for a physical exam to make sure you are in good health. You may have a physical problem that would make fasting unwise or dangerous. Also, if you are under any type of medication, make sure you talk to your doctor before changing your regime. Prudence and caution are in order.

When you are assured that you are in good health, you are ready to begin your fast.

In spite of the safety and benefits of fasting, there are certain persons who should NEVER fast without professional supervision. For example:

- Persons who are physically too thin or emaciated
- Persons who are prone to anorexia, bulimia, or other behavioral disorders
- Persons who have tumors, bleeding ulcers, cancer, blood diseases, or who have heart disease
- Those who suffer chronic problems with kidneys, liver, lungs, heart, or other important organs
- Individuals who take insulin for diabetes, or suffer any other blood sugar problem such as hyperglycemia
- Women who are pregnant or nursing

