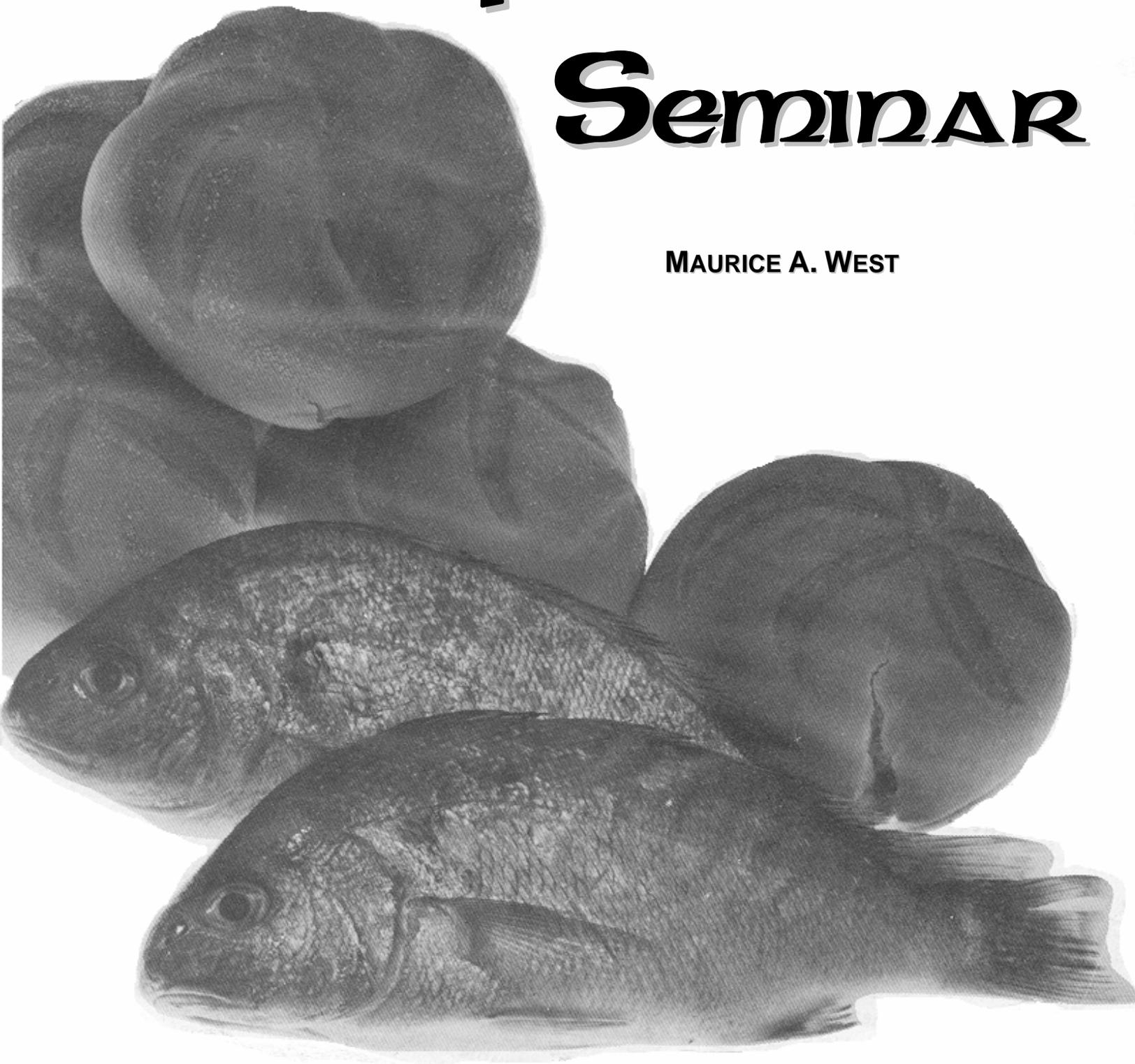


The **fASTING** **Seminar**

MAURICE A. WEST



The FASTING Seminar

© 1982 – By Maurice A. West

When citing this material, please refer to:

**Pastor Maurice A. West
West Side Church of God in Christ
228 South Hinkley Avenue
Rockford, Illinois 61102
www.westsidecogic.com**

The Fasting Seminar

INTRODUCTION

I originally wrote this booklet in 1982 for two reasons: (1) the Lord instructed me to do so and (2) to inspire and instruct you, the reader in result-oriented fasting and prayer. Fasting is a forgotten and often times avoided discipline in the church. Much of the disdain leveled at fasting can be attributed to our ignorance on the correct (Scriptural) way to go about it and incorrect teaching from the pulpit. This booklet has been written in a question and answer format using questions asked in a live seminar from the early 1980's. I have recently added additional questions from recent discussions with the people of God. If you have additional questions, please don't hesitate to write me at the address on the cover page.

If there are things within this booklet that you do not agree with, don't get angry – the purpose of this booklet is to present as much information on fasting as possible to get you busy with whatever method that you feel is best for you. Let's bring back the power of our testimony and return to the front lines of the warfare!

THE LORD IS SOON TO COME!

The Fasting Seminar

1. What is a fast?

Webster's Dictionary defines a fast as "abstinence from food; a withholding from the usual quantity of nourishment; voluntary abstinence from food." Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words further breaks down the word "fasting" into its original Greek word *nesteia* which refers to "(a) a voluntary abstinence from food...(b) involuntary abstinence...consequent upon trying circumstances." What these definitions are saying is that to fast is to abstain from food whether you planned to do it or not. Now if I left the definition there, some might be confused so let's broaden our look at this word "fasting" by looking at another question.

2. What is a fast as practiced by the Lord Jesus (Matthew 4:2; Luke 4:2), as taught by the Lord Jesus (Matthew 6:16-18) and as encouraged as a Christian discipline by the Lord Jesus (Matthew 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:33-35; Matthew 17:21)?

Now that we know what the specific question is, let's set out to find the answer. Generally, a Biblical fast is a voluntary (it is your own decision) abstinence from food. There are other considerations within a fast that we will go into later but keep this basic definition in mind: **fasting is a time that you have set aside to go without food for a reason.** The specifics are what we will soon get into.

3. Okay, I'm interested in fasting because the Lord Jesus taught this practice. How do I get started?

Let's look at these questions one at a time. We'll begin with, "How do I get started?" There are three basic steps in starting a fast. These steps are:

- A) EXAMINE YOURSELF (figure out your motivation for fasting)
- B) CHECK YOUR CALENDAR (plan ahead so that the fast can be kept holy)
- C) START THE BIBLE WAY (get ready to dig into the deep things of God)

We'll look at them section by section.

The Fasting Seminar

EXAMINE YOURSELF

I've listed below four questions that each person ought to ask themselves before going on a fast and the reasons for asking them.

A) Why do I want to fast? Is the reason good or is it bad? What's my motivation?

Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. Matthew 9:14-15

Your response may be that you want to fast because you have discovered that the Lord Jesus taught this practice. It is a good practice to look at fasting as something that should be done out of obedience to the Lord. There's no need to wait for some special "unction" from the Lord when He has given us clear-cut guidance from the Word of God - the Bible. Since God said it, let's do it!

In looking at this question, you also need to look at what you want to have accomplished in your spiritual life. Is carnality the dominating force in your life? Then you should look at fasting as a means to bring your body into subjection lest you become useless for God (I Corinthians 9:27 – ***But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.***). Are you facing some great challenge in your Christian experience? Fasting is a means to appropriate God's power to perform what He wants you to do (Luke 4:1-14 – ***And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. 14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.***). Are you wrestling with pride, conceit and a haughty attitude? Then humble your soul through fasting and prayer (Psalms 35:13 – ***But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine***

The Fasting Seminar

own bosom.). Are you seeking the victory over a habit that you're not pleased with? Fasting is a means to accomplish this.

One thought must be emphasized here before going further. Various ones in the church, and now in the world also, have looked at fasting as a cure-all for discouragement, lack of spiritual power, lack of zeal, an absent or inconsistent prayer life, etc. If there is one thing I believe and want to pass on to you regarding this subject it is this, "FASTING IS NOT A CURE-ALL." Most of the time we wrestle with these things because of our own negligence in other areas or our lack of true commitment to the cause of Jesus Christ. The lack of fasting is only part of the problem.

Whatever your reason is for desiring to fast, make sure that the motivation is not self-seeking ("I'm going to fast until the Pastor notices how spiritual I am") and is not un-Scriptural ("I'm going to fast for God to forgive my sins").

B) Am I calling myself to a fast or is the Lord calling me to fast?

The answer to this question will point out the seriousness of fasting and the guidelines of the fast that you have chosen to attempt.

If you have chosen to go on a fast and you understand why you desire to fast, you "call all the shots" on this fast. That's important to realize when you get into the midst of the fast and circumstances begin to work against the successful completion of the fast.

On the other hand, if the Lord has put an unction upon you to fast and seek Him, then before you go further in performing His will, get some specifics! You need to know how long you should fast, when you should start, why you are fasting and how you should fast. The Lord will give you all of these answers through His leading and then your only next step will be to do as the Lord has commanded you. In those cases, you will not need the rest of this section to help you because the Lord will give the answers to you. However, before you put this booklet down, I want you to understand that fasting is not something that we wait on the Lord to tell us to do. It should be practiced as one of our Christian disciplines. Fasting is a discipline that

The Fasting Seminar

must be practiced with consistency and with the knowledge of how to do it in order for it to be effective in our lives.

C) How long shall I fast?

When you are going to go through a personal fast (that is to say, one that you have not been called to specifically by the Lord) you are the one to determine the length of the fast. A principle to bring in at this point is this: **THE LENGTH OF THE FAST HAS NO BEARING ON THE DEGREE OF BLESSING YOU WILL RECEIVE FROM THE FAST.** Because I have fasted 10 days and you fasted 3 days does not mean that I have been more spiritually endowed or have more favor with God than you. The true key to any fast is not how long you fast but how you go through the fast. However, some do not look at fasting with wisdom and for that reason it is needful to look at how the length of a fast should be determined.

The first test to determine the length of the fast that you have chosen is the amount of experience you have had in fasting. If this is your first attempt at fasting, then I suggest that you don't go beyond three days. If you are used to fasting longer periods, then, by all means, spend more time with God. The principle is this: **YOUR LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE IN FASTING MUST DETERMINE THE LENGTH OF ANY FAST THAT YOU ATTEMPT.** Allow the Lord to lead you to the length of time that will be the most beneficial to you and then discipline yourself to go through that fast on a regular basis.

D) How shall I fast?

In answering this question, I am going into an area of controversy and many debates. What I am about to say may seem harsh but I truly believe it. There are some misguided preachers, teachers and church people in general that have the audacity to ridicule the means in which people fast. They are dead set on the idea that to fast means only one thing: total abstinence from both water and food. You will find that many of these people have an unwholesome attitude towards fasting and are not extremely experienced in this field. Because of this, some of the tremendous benefits of fasting are withheld from them and, more importantly, they discourage others. I hope that if you are similarly biased that the next few paragraphs will open up your understanding and help you to reach out into other

The Fasting Seminar

means of fasting or at least help you to be more open when you hear of other means of fasting.

I have presented here various means of fasting that I have run into and if they offend you please remember this: this booklet is written not to stir up controversy but to encourage us all to engage in this discipline more regularly.

FASTING WITHOUT FOOD OR WATER

“And he (Moses) was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water.” Exodus 34:28a **See also Esther 4:16.**

This is what I call the “classic” way of fasting. This is the method espoused by many in the church to the point that they feel that any other methods are not fasting. Please keep in mind, before you attempt in the flesh what Moses did in the spirit bear this principle in mind about abstinence in general: **The human body can go about seven to fourteen days without water and about fourteen to thirty days without food - beyond these points permanent damage can occur to your body and anything may happen.** This point bears mentioning since many people have been motivated by wrong, fleshly desires and have hurt themselves - others have even died.

FASTING WITH NO FOOD BUT DRINKING WATER

“... and in those days He (Jesus) did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.” Luke 4:2b

Here we go into the heart of the controversy. Bible scholars who have studied this passage and who know about fasting through experience have determined that Jesus must have fasted with water because when His appetites returned, it was not water that He desired but food. Had He fasted without food or water, the natural inclination would be for the body to desire water over food. Also, studies have concluded that the type of fasting that was done in Bible times normally involved taking in water. Personally, I have also drawn this conclusion from reading Exodus 34:28, Ezra 10:6, Esther 4:16 and Acts 9:9. In all of these passages, special

The Fasting Seminar

mention is made of the fact that a particular fast was carried on without the intake of water. If this was their normal method of fasting, why was this specifically brought out? If you think about it for a second, I think the answer will be clear.

NOTE: I am not trying to provide a crutch to anyone who firmly believes that other methods of fasting besides the “classic fast” are wrong and I am certainly not trying to diminish the Lord’s fast. The principle here is this – **there is absolutely no Bible direction on fasting methods** – this booklet is an attempt to bring some clarity and alternatives for those that may be confused.

FASTING BY DENYING CERTAIN FOODS

“I (Daniel) ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.” Daniel 10:3

This type of fast is called, appropriately, a “Daniel fast” or a “denial” or a “consecration” depending on who you’re talking with. Daniel states that he abstained from certain types of food but not necessarily all food. People under varying circumstances have practiced this form of fasting: fasting while eating only one meal per day; fasting by eating no substance but consuming juices and water (usually a fast of substantial length); or fasting as was formerly practiced in the Roman Catholic Church by abstaining from meats on Fridays. If you have a medical condition where the doctor has put you on prescription drugs that REQUIRE you to eat to take them, does that mean that you stop fasting? My answer is a strong, “NO!” Don’t forget the Scripture given earlier out of Matthew 9:14-15. The 15th verse ends by saying, “then shall they fast.” Are you excused because of your medical condition or will you find alternative methods to keep the body under subjection? In the church that I pastor, I encourage those that are under doctor’s care to obey the doctor but fast as much as they can in between taking their medication and maintain the “spirit of the fast”. In other words, be sincere on your fast no matter how long or the method used. (We’ll talk about what should be done on a fast later on – this is what “maintaining the spirit of the fast” means.) However, I also instruct them that if the Spirit of God calls them to a complete fast, obey God (but make sure that you’ve heard from God!).

The Fasting Seminar

Naturally, there will be many who will vigorously deny that any of the above is fasting. If you are one of them, before you get all worked up, do one thing. Read the rest of the 10th chapter of Daniel and see what a blessing he received from this so-called “non-fast.” Certainly you must agree, he did reap benefits and that’s what fasting is all about.

This type of fast is particularly effective in dealing with habit or lifestyle changes. That is, if you have a certain problem in your life that only the Lord can deal, an elongated period of fasting on juice and water of a length of 7 days or more can bring about the deliverance that you need.

Before leaving this section, let me issue a warning – many settle for this type of fast because the flesh is too much in control. They have no medical condition, they have no home problems (spouses or parents that are strongly opposed to the idea of fasting), and they don’t intend to use this type of fast as a “habit breaker” by staying on it for an extended period of time. For those of you, let me strongly give you this principle before going on: **Be careful when straying from the traditional ways of fasting (without food or water or on water only). Make sure the flesh is not still in control keeping you from “going through.”**

FASTING PART OF A DAY

“And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour...” Acts 10:30 **See also Daniel 6:18.**

The Roman soldier Cornelius fasted until only a certain hour in the day. No doubt he fasted abstaining from both water and food because of the shortness of the fast but it is not mentioned. Before you set out to go on your very first fast and think that anything less than forty days won’t due, think about this: Cornelius, a devout man, fasted a portion of his day and became the instrument for bringing Christianity to the Gentile world.

Many denominations encourage this type of fasting to help their members learn to discipline themselves in this area. My denomination, the Church of God in Christ, has set aside two days per week for fasting, Tuesday and Friday. On these days, the members are encouraged to fast until between 3 and 5 p.m. John Wesley, the

The Fasting Seminar

great Reformation preacher, was known to say that he would not ordain any ministers who would not fast at least the Wednesday and Friday partial-day fast days that he had set up. Why even the Pharisees were known to fast at least twice a week (Luke 18:12). This type of fasting is essential in establishing fasting as a discipline.

These are some of the ways to fast as shown through the Scriptures. How you fast, as I said before, is between you and God unless your own church leadership has mandated a particular way to fast. In those cases, you follow your leadership (Hebrews 13:17).

As I stated earlier, there are three basic steps in starting a fast. Let's go on to the second one **CHECK YOUR CALENDAR.**

The Fasting Seminar

CHECK YOUR CALENDAR

There has been a lot of confusion and foolishness in regards to fasting to the point that fasting is now looked upon as either fanatical or optional. It is neither. Let's look at more teachings from the Lord Jesus first before going further:

“Moreover when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.” Matthew 6:16-18

There is a sacredness in fasting that goes beyond any other Christian discipline. The fast is a secret, private affair between you and the Father. If you don't work to keep it sacred and secret, you will lose the benefits of the fast. Now why have I said this? Many times I have been at banquets, church dinners, and other functions that involved food when I, and others, have been faced with a person who is not eating and is making an obvious point of the fact that they are fasting. Before the engagement is over, everyone is uncomfortable (probably because of their own lack of fasting) but the main point is that someone who has not obeyed God has disturbed the sacredness of their fast. They have also weakened other Christians in their thinking towards fasting. Oh, but didn't they obey God by fasting? Of course they did, but then they went out and dishonored another portion of the same Scripture. Here's the principle: **since a fast is sacred and private, you need to prepare for it adequately.** Do I have a church dinner to go to? Then I should plan to not go or not fast during that time.

Planning for a fast is done in the same manner that other plans are made. Of course there will be times that you will be thrust into a situation where you will have to say “no” to food, but try as much as possible to keep the fast a private affair (except to your spouse – see

I Corinthians 7:5). By all means, while you are planning your times of fasting, keep the right attitude. Don't fool yourself constantly so that you never fast.

The Fasting Seminar

START THE BIBLE WAY

The third step in starting a fast has to do with the actual day that I begin my time of fasting and the days following the fast. That third step is **START THE BIBLE WAY** (Matthew 6:16-17). We have already used the Scripture referenced in the second step of starting a fast, so allow me to just paraphrase those verses to illustrate my point. To begin a fast the “Bible way” is to do the following:

A) “Be not as the hypocrites of a sad countenance”

Don't put on your worst face and attitude. People will end up thinking that something is deathly wrong with you, and of course, when they ask, you'll have to admit that you are fasting. Remember, your fast is sacred and private. Don't discourage others from fasting by your attitude. (Is it such a horrible task to obey our beloved Lord?)

B) “Anoint your head”

When beginning a fast, carry on your usual daily hygiene and then some. When you are fasting you must be careful to keep your personal hygiene at a peak because of the various odors and oils your body will be emitting during this period without food. Be especially aware of this fact as you go through each day and discipline yourself to use breath drops and freshen yourself at regular intervals since you may not be aware of your “personal presence.”

This passage has a secondary meaning also which goes beyond our personal hygiene. It is good to anoint yourself with anointing oil (usually olive oil that has been consecrated through prayer) to sanctify the fast in your heart. During the difficult times of the fast, you'll think back to the vow you have made, and the anointing oil, and be amazed how that this will help you through those rough times.

C) “Wash your face”

Not only is this a renewed exhortation to smell good and look good but this applies also to the oil you have just applied to your forehead. I remember a certain brother who would always give away the fact that he was fasting when others would see an obvious spot of oil on his forehead. Had he followed the Lord's specific instructions

The Fasting Seminar

by anointing his head and then washing his face, his fast would have remained a private affair between him and the Lord. Before I leave this point I will say this: the anointing of the fast is not in the physical oil but in the spirit behind what you have done. Washing it off will certainly not nullify what you have done.

In review, we see that there are three basic steps to starting a fast:

- A) **EXAMINE YOURSELF.**
- B) **CHECK YOUR CALENDAR.**
- C) **START THE BIBLE WAY.**

CAUTION: Do not stop here and prepare to go on a fast. You will soon find out what to do while fasting as well as how to come off a fast.

4. What shall I do while fasting?

Let's assume that you now have a mind to fast - but what will you do to gain spiritual blessings on the fast that will remain with you after the fast? I have seen many go on a period of abstinence from food and in their own minds they called it a fast. Unfortunately, according to the Scripture, the Lord did not. In this section, we'll establish another principle: **FASTING, IN THE TRUE SENSE OF THE WORD, INVOLVES MORE THAN JUST NOT EATING**. If we keep this in our minds, we can be blessed with the blessings associated with Biblical fasting instead of participating in a short crash diet.

What shall I do while fasting? Before looking at what to do, let's see what the Bible says about what not to do.

“Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?”

Isaiah 58:3a

In this passage in Isaiah, the people of God questioned the Lord about their own practice of fasting and their lack of results. The question was, in paraphrase, “Why are we fasting and you're not blessing us or answering our prayers? Why do you do us like this, Lord?” Let's look at the Lord's answer.

The Fasting Seminar

“Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labors. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.” Isaiah 58:3b-4

The Lord’s answer is clear and to the point – while they were fasting, business went on as usual. If they were used to certain recreational activities on a day by day basis, then while they were fasting they did the same thing. If they were used to cleaning their homes each day, then while they were fasting they did the same thing. If their next door neighbor made them irritable, they fasted for the Lord to “curse them.” The Lord’s answer to all of this was plainly: **THAT IS NOT THE WAY TO FAST IF YOU WANT TO BE HEARD IN HEAVEN!** And, friend, if you aren’t heard in heaven, you have wasted your time.

Fasting is serious business! By fasting, great ministries have been established, countries have been saved and the bound have been loosed. It is a powerful weapon in our spiritual warfare. Therefore, we must go at it in the way in which the Lord prescribes. So then, what shall I do while fasting?

I believe that there are three foundation blocks upon which spiritual growth is launched: the first is BIBLE STUDY, the second is PRAYER and the third is what we are dealing with now, FASTING. While I fast, I am involved in spiritual warfare and my armament must be at a peak. Therefore, while I fast I work at honing my “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). The Word of God is one of two offensive weapons mentioned in the list of our spiritual weapons in Ephesians 6:14-18. The other one is found in verse 18 and is not usually considered as a part of this list but those who are familiar with this weapon know that it belongs there:

“Pray at all times - on every occasion, in every season - in the Spirit, with all manner of prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and watch with strong purpose and perseverance, interceding in behalf of all the saints (God’s consecrated people).” Ephesians 6:18, Amplified Bible

So then while I am fasting, I should involve myself with Bible study and travailing prayer. The devil knows the significance of fasting and wishes to keep as many as possible from it. But if he can’t stop you from fasting, then he’ll try to have you fast incorrectly. These

The Fasting Seminar

are all tricks of the enemy. Stand your ground! Get deep into the Bible, the word of God, and travail in prayer.

So what shall I do while fasting? First, get into the midst of the battle through travailing, intercessory prayer. Second, dig into the Bible, the word of God and feast upon the truths there. Fasting is a time to empty the natural man to feed the spiritual man. The food of the natural man is natural but the food of the spiritual man is spiritual, the word of God (I Peter 2:2). Third, allow yourself to be used in “Christ-like” works. I use the term “Christ-like” rather than “Christian” to illustrate a point. Before looking at that point, let’s look at a Scripture to get our thought on what these Christ-like works are:

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen?... Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?” Isaiah 58:6a-7

These “Christ-like” works point back to the Lord’s discourse in Matthew 25:34-40 (“***...for I was hungry, and you gave me meat...***”). Had I said “Christian” works, you may have thought about your Sunday School class or cleaning the church building or even being involved with witnessing which are all good, sound Christian activities. But remember that the Lord Jesus always concerned Himself with meeting the needs of the whole man. We must also learn to be involved with the physical, mental and emotional needs of man in our fasting.

Before we leave this idea of Christ-like works, let me correct some things that may have come into your mind. Fasting is a time of pulling away from the multitude and going into the holy mountain of God. Once you have finished the prayer and you have studied the Scriptures most of the day, this is not the time to watch television, wash the car or to “exact all your labors” during this time of fasting. Allow yourself to be used by the Lord to meet the needs of people. Whatever the Lord leads you to do, do it cheerfully. Our goal through this consecration period is to become more like our Master, the Lord Jesus.

5. Once I have fasted for a few days, is there a certain way to end the fast?

The answer to this question is a resounding **YES!** Many Christians have ruined their fast at the most crucial time - the end. This is the time when the victory has been won, the

The Fasting Seminar

battle is over and it's time to rejoice. But too many of us find this to be a time of wrestling in the mind and sickness in the body. Whenever talking about ending a fast, it must be looked at naturally and spiritually, for a fast is a natural act (abstinence from food) to gain a spiritual result. Therefore, ending the fast cannot be looked at from only one of the two sides. In this section, we will look at this question, first from the spiritual aspect where the more important issues are, and then from the natural aspect where we too often err and grieve the Spirit of God through our ignorance and lack of discipline.

THE SPIRITUAL VIEW

This section may seem too short and oversimplified but the key is found in Isaiah 35:8. The way of the Lord has been intentionally made so plain that a fool (or a person that is slow of understanding) has no business making a mistake. Let's keep it that way in this writing also.

When ending your fast, there are basically two steps involved in the spiritual aspect: prayer and watchfulness. Jesus told His disciples to “**watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation**” (Matthew 26:41a) and that is exactly what you should be doing at the end of the fast.

Prayer at the conclusion of the fast seals this time of consecration with God by doing three things: (1) it gives reverence to the conclusion of the fast (though your body may be more than ready to return to its normal cycle, exercise self-control and end the fast in a reverential attitude towards God); (2) it provides a time to praise God for giving you strength to endure the fast; (3) it provides a time to entreat the Lord for continued protection now that you have ended the fast. Simply stated, prayer, no matter how short or long, is the proper way to spiritually conclude the fast.

It would be very easy to just leave the conclusion of the fast to prayer, however, this is only one part of it. Now that you have the victory and are yet basking in the blessings of being on the “mount” with God, the devil is going to come to steal what you have. Jesus said, “**The thief (Satan) cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill and to destroy...**” (John 10:10). The devil doesn't attack weakness only, he also attacks strength. The strong Christian bothers him. He attacked Job because he was strong; he went after Jesus in the midst of His fast because He was strong. He was so bold as to attack Joshua the High Priest while he was standing before the angel of the Lord (Zechariah 3:1). What this

The Fasting Seminar

is saying then is that if you are weak, complacent and cold in your spirit, the devil will bother you only enough to keep you in that condition. But if you're strong, then you are a threat to Satan and his kingdom and he must attack strength before it has a chance to attack him.

Therefore, now that you have prayed, you must also be watchful. Shall you keep your eyes open and watch everyone's move? Shall you pray with one eye open? No! To watch is to be cautious, to not get caught up in the cares of this life to the point that you can't see the devil move. After a good, spiritual fast where the Lord has really met you, it's easy to be deceived and allow spiritual pride to come in. ("The Pastor ought to let me teach this lesson, after all, he ought to be able to see the blessing of God on my life and that the Holy Spirit is ready to use me.") Friend, call it what you will but that attitude is pride and it stinks in the nostrils of the Lord. It is a prime danger that can sneak in after a fast if you are not watchful.

Another danger is allowing spiritual laziness to come in because you just went through a fast. Just because you fasted for an elongated period of time does not mean that you can now take a vacation. Too often I hear various types of Christian discipline compared to putting gasoline in a car. IT'S JUST NOT SO! You must make your Christian disciplines a matter of daily concern. Now that you have gone through the fast, it's time to run faster than ever because the fast has made you ready to do just that.

Remember this Scripture when breaking a fast or doing anything for the Lord that may cause a change in your attitude:

Be well balanced - temperate, sober-minded; be vigilant and cautious at all times, for that enemy of yours, the Devil, roams around like a lion roaring (in fierce anger), seeking someone to seize upon and devour.

I Peter 5:8, Amplified Bible

THE NATURAL VIEW

In looking at the physical or natural view of breaking a fast, I want to look at two things: (1) examples in the Bible that may confuse us and; (2) what is involved in the physical part of breaking a fast. This section may seem "distasteful" to some of the overly modest because we will be dealing with bodily functions created by the Lord and essential in a

The Fasting Seminar

discussion about breaking a fast. One other note before going forward: this section should be used only as a guide. As you gain experience in fasting and become more cognizant of how your individual body responds after a fast, you may want to add or subtract from what is written in this section. However, until you gain that experience, I encourage you to adhere to these instructions very closely.

In the Bible there are examples of what certain ones did in breaking their fasts. After I had been saved for almost a year, a brother (also a brand new Christian) brought me a “revelation” which he received from one of these examples about breaking a fast which he felt was entirely Biblical and would add new meaning to fasting. (Little did I know at the time that what was about to transpire would change my thinking, to the negative, regarding fasting for many years to come.)

And he (Saul) was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink...and when he had received meat, he was strengthened... Acts

9:9; 19a

The brother claimed that the only proper way to restore the body to its correct functions was to eat **MEAT** in faith. Well, needless to say, we tried it. We were blessed to go through a ten day fast using water only (we were determined to prove that this revelation was correct). After all, since fasting is spiritual why shouldn't the coming off the fast be a spiritual exercise showing our faith (pardon my sarcasm). We were not experienced in fasting, in fact, of the three of us that tried this, none of us had done any previous fasting beyond two or three days. None of us had ever tried a fast anywhere near this length and it really took its toll on our bodies. But all of this didn't matter, we went through the ten days and on the tenth day at 11:30 p.m. we went into prayer to thank the Lord for taking us through (at least we did one thing right). At the hour of midnight we prepared the meal that would revitalize our bodies to their normal functions and prove this great revelation. Our menu consisted of canned spaghetti in tomato sauce, cold apple pie (we lived in the dormitory at college and didn't have a means to heat the pie) and spicy, hot sausages on bread with mustard. Let me summarize the results by saying this: it took us two weeks to recover from breaking the fast and additional time to recover from the fast itself. We were afraid to fast after that because of the pain we experienced.

The Fasting Seminar

There is a way to break a fast that is godly, proper and will preserve the blessing of the fast. **THAT WAS NOT IT!** Let me say one last thing about that experience: only because of the goodness and mercy of the Lord to us at that time are we yet alive to tell this story. Breaking your fast is serious business - pay close attention to the following guidelines!

In breaking a fast correctly, there are certain things that you are trying to achieve: (1) a return to normal bodily functions; (2) a smooth transition from spiritual to natural; (3) maintenance of the blessing of the fast. None of this was accomplished in my fasting fiasco of some years ago.

There are some basic instructions to follow in ending a fast. They are listed here for you to use as your guideline in coming off a fast. Again, don't be misled by the word "guideline." If you are inexperienced in fasting, you should adhere to these instructions closely until you get more experience and until you are more familiar with how your body will react while ending a fast.

- 1) USE THE FOOD LIST IN THE APPENDIX AS YOUR GUIDELINE FOR HALF AS MANY DAYS AS YOU HAVE FASTED. If you have fasted four days, continue with these foods for at least two days after the fast and gradually return to your normal eating habits. Use the suggested menu in the appendix as a guide for the first 24 hours following the conclusion of the fast beginning with the salad. The lettuce and cabbage in this salad act as a broom to motivate your bowels to action once again. This is a key in returning yourself to bowel regularity.
- 2) BREAK THE FAST IN THE AFTERNOON (3:00 TO 6:00 p.m.) - DO NOT BREAK THE FAST AT MIDNIGHT OR LATE IN THE EVENING! Your body is now weak and not at 100% capability. Don't do as we foolishly did in trying to get our formerly inactive digestive systems to work while we slept. Many heart attacks occur because of this type of lack of control and just because you have fasted you are not exempt. If you're concerned that you aren't completing a full day of fasting then do one of two things: (1) start the fast earlier or (2) end the fast the next morning.
- 3) CONSUME PLENTY OF LIQUIDS, ESPECIALLY WATER, TO HELP IN THE DIGESTIVE PROCESS. This is especially true if you have fasted with nothing or have fasted consuming juices. Unfortunately, the natural tendency on what is

The Fasting Seminar

termed a “juice fast” is for the individual to consume much more juice than water. Your body needs the life giving elements found only in water to get going again.

- 4) AVOID OVEREATING! It is better for you to take small quantities more often than to damage yourself physically. Avoid the inclination towards gluttony following the fast. This is just as harmful to the blessing of the fast as not ending the fast correctly.
- 5) AVOID FOODS HEAVY IN SUGAR FOR AT LEAST 24 HOURS AFTER THE END OF THE FAST. No matter how easy you may feel they are to digest, avoid ice cream, pudding, candy bars and the like. Now that your system is trying to build itself back up to normal, you don't need to add extra burdens to it. Common sense also dictates that since the world is putting on a big push to remove sugar from our diets when we're eating normally, how much more so after you end a fast.

In the appendix at the end of this booklet, you'll find a list of foods to choose from during the transition period after the fast. Also included are items that should definitely be avoided and why.

6. What results should I expect to get from fasting?

This is a fantastic question because this is what fasting is all about. We are going through this for results and the results we receive may not always be spiritual. For a discussion on the rewards of fasting, let's look at Isaiah 58:8-9, 11.

THE REWARDS OF FASTING

- a) “***Then shall thy light break forth as the morning...***” The first reward of fasting is general prosperity or bountifulness. In other words, you will be as brand new and in the position where God can do anything that He wants with you. You'll be ready to go and able to get there.
- b) “***...thine health shall spring forth speedily...***” The second benefit of fasting is answer to prayer regarding your health. Many times I've heard testimonies (and have experienced this myself) of people who had an illness that they could not seem to get the Lord to move for them. After a period of fasting, they received the

The Fasting Seminar

deliverance that they needed. Even if there was no spiritual benefit from fasting, health experts agree that fasting flushes diseases and impurities from the body.

- c) “**...thy righteousness shall go before thee...**” The world needs to know who the real Christians are. These are the ones that can get a prayer answered. Fasting, and I say this carefully, allows our righteousness to become more visible because it helps us to gain the victory over our unrighteousness. It is a key in crucifying the life of the flesh.
- d) “**...the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward.**” The Lord will restore to you His presence, His glory and the evidence of His indwelling Spirit to you once you have fasted. You, through your fast, have torn down all the barriers that have kept you from the secret things of God and you now become a candidate for the excellent things of God. Once again you’ll feel the zeal of the Lord like you did when you first came to the Lord and received His salvation.
- e) “**Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am.**” Are you praying on a situation with no results? Fast and pray and then ask again. Notice the results that Daniel received in Daniel 10 when he fasted. **GOD WILL ANSWER YOU!**
- f) “**And the Lord shall guide thee continually...**” You say you can’t discover the will of God for your life in a particular situation? Fast and pray and allow the Lord to guide you. God wants to lead us at all times but many times we won’t submit to Him even in fasting. You can’t expect God to guide you into missionary work if you won’t allow Him to guide you on a fast.
- g) “**...And satisfy thy soul in drought...**” Have you ever been in a situation where the Lord has called upon you to get the job done and you felt like you just weren’t prepared? This is a time of drought - a time when you may not feel at a spiritual peak but the job still gets done. The Lord provides the increase (just as He does when we are at a peak) and the job will be done because of past fasting that you have done.

The Fasting Seminar

APPENDIX

The following is a suggested food guide to be used in breaking a fast and for at least half again as many days as the length of the fast. (If you fast for 3 days, eat this for 1½ days.)

1. The experts (those that fast for health reasons) say that the best start is a vegetable salad consisting of raw cabbage and lettuce. These leafy vegetables will re-stimulate your digestive tract to action. This salad should not contain cheese (it will work against the cabbage and lettuce) or red meat (it's too tough to digest on a good day). It can contain tomatoes with discretion but they are high in acid. Avoid using a heavy, spicy dressing or a dressing that is heavy with vinegar. The preferable dressing is lemon juice and oil but a creamy, off-the-shelf type of dressing may also be used with discretion. Watch the sodium level in the dressing!!!
2. Light vegetable soup, chicken soup or a cream soup. Avoid the "chunky" type soups unless the stock consists of vegetables without red meat. If you choose to make your own soup, stay away from the salt!
3. Melba toast or crackers. Watch the so-called "party" crackers like *Ritz* or *Cheez-its* unless they're low salt. These are high in sodium and also contain some heavy spices that you may or may not be used to. The key here is your past experience in breaking fasts.
4. Cooked vegetables with little seasoning. These should be taken after the first 24 hours beyond the conclusion of the fast.
5. Fresh fruits. Only on day 2 forward and then with discretion.
6. Liquids, especially water. Engulf yourself with plenty of water to help flush out your system and to get it going again. Avoid carbonated beverages or citrus juices until this transition period ends.
7. The following foods are definite "no-no's" during the time that you are transitioning back to a normal diet:
 - Sweets: cakes, pies, candy and the like (avoid for at least 24 hours past the conclusion of the fast.
 - Snacks: potato chips, cookies, pretzels, and all such snacks that may be heavily seasoned with salt, cheese products or other seasonings.
 - Carbonated beverages