

Fasting and Modern American Gluttony

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman discusses the significance of fasting as a spiritual discipline in overcoming modern American gluttony and fostering a deeper relationship with God.

Duration: 52:22

Scripture: Acts 13:2

Topics: "Spiritual Discipline", "Fasting And Prayer"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of fasting as a spiritual discipline to draw closer to God and experience real change for the future. It highlights the need to break physical and spiritual limitations through fasting, aligning our desires with God's will, and overcoming addictions and strongholds. The message encourages falling forward into God's grace, obedience, and holiness, while addressing the benefits of fasting in deepening our relationship with God and receiving clarity, direction, and spiritual empowerment.

Transcript

I'm talking tonight, as you can see in the bulletins there. Sometimes I like to just keep the notes and not show you, so you have no idea what I'm talking about. So everybody comes in prepared, they've already read everything, and I can pretty much sit down.

But I didn't wanna do that because there's a lot of important notes. And you can see we're gonna be talking about fast forward, experiencing real change for the future. And what I like to do once a year, usually is talk about a subject that nobody wants to talk about.

Yep, once a year, I'll try to throw it in there more often. And that subject is going to be very relevant, and I'm gonna tie it in just a minute. But I wanna recap last week, and I was talking about the more I seek Him, the more I find Him.

The more I seek God, the more I find Him. Same with you, the more you seek Him, the more you find Him. So if you weren't here last week, go on and look at that message.

We talked about prayer, and we would pray better if we lived better. And we would live better if we pray better. You see how that's tied together? When I'm living for Christ, when my life is being set apart for Him, I want to pray.

And when I'm praying, I want to live better. You get those two things out of order, and none of them goes right. We don't wanna pray, and we don't wanna live right.

Now, I also wanna be careful, because when we talk about holiness, and living right, and this topic I'm talking about tonight, let me throw out a quick word of encouragement. God wants us to fall forward. I don't wanna preach as if I'm perfect, and you're not, and you need to get your life in order.

We all need to fall forward. We all need to be encouraged. Life is like a race with ups and downs and all, and all you have to do to win is rise each time you fall.

And that's really the Christian message is one of surrender, and obedience, and holiness, but also a loving, forgiving God who's calling us back to Him. So I wanna be very careful not to forget that point, and just beat on this drum of obedience, and do this, and do this. I don't wanna forget about God's unfailing grace and forgiveness, because I need it every week.

I need it every day. Say things I shouldn't have, done things I shouldn't have, and we need to fall forward into His arms of grace and restoration. However, if that's all we talk about, and we never call people to obedience, and to turn from sin, then that's disaster.

So either you become really rigid and mean, or you become a modern-day, lukewarm church, talked about in the book of Revelation, where you have no power, no spirituality in your life. So just as a word of encouragement, don't feel beat up. Feel encouraged.

So here's what we're doing. Obviously, you know we're in the book of Matthew. We've been there some time, and I'm excited we've got our banner back up.

And we've been talking about giving, and praying, and fasting. Do you know that Jesus talks about that often? Giving, and praying, and fasting. So I just wanna put on the brakes.

It's a new year. Talk about the power of fasting. It's been talked about in Matthew, but I kind of just skipped over it.

And I referred you back to a sermon a year ago, but I've been convicted ever since. You know, talk about that. Talk about that.

Issue that we need to talk about. So what is the deal here? The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. That's the challenge.

We like the blessings of Christ, but we do not like the obedience to Christ. See, I love the blessings I read about in the Bible, but it's the obedience part that is the difficulty. So here we go with fasting, and I really believe this is the missing link.

You know, they talk about the missing link between evolution and thing, but they'll never find a missing link because there is none, and God created, and we know all that. But I wanna submit to you tonight, and I want you to be open, and just seek God in this area, pray about it. But I believe fasting can be that missing link that many people are looking for, whether it's a breakthrough financially, or restoration, or calling the prodigal home, or the marriage being restored, or healing.

And it's funny, I actually just typed in Google all scriptures dealing with fasting, and I couldn't even include them in the bulletin. I couldn't even include them on your handout. I had to go through and delete some.

There was that many Old Testament and New Testament dealing with this issue of fasting. So let's read what we kind of skipped over a few weeks back. Moreover, this is Jesus speaking, moreover, when you fast, not if you fast, is that interesting? Jesus said, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites with the sad countenances, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting.

I surely, I say to you, they have their reward, and the reward is these people saying, oh gosh, aren't they so spiritual? Wow, look at them. Jesus says, you got your reward, the applause of men. And then He goes on to say, but when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

There's always reward tied to fasting, always. Anytime you can neglect the flesh to feed the Spirit, there is reward. And let me just be honest with you tonight.

I'm gonna say some hard things, okay? I make no apologies. And sometimes in the Christian community, we have a lot of cheerleaders, but we don't have enough coaches. You know the difference.

Cheerleaders just go, team, you can do it, rah, rah, rah, and we need that. I need that sometimes on a weekly basis. But we also need people to say, listen, God's Word is clear on these areas.

Here's how it can help you. We need to stir and convict. You need to get back up in that ring and fight.

You need to get back up, son, and start running. You need to get up and do this, and coach them and push them. You think Mike Tyson had a cheerleader? Or do you have a coach? Best athletes that I've ever known didn't have always cheerleaders.

They had coaches to drive them further, and then the cheerleaders, obviously, to encourage. You have to have both. But we're seeing this big push towards just cheerleading, not offending, and not upsetting.

And if you go and get the Antelope Valley Press today, you'll see polar opposites in regard to the articles. The one I wrote and the one the Reverend Nancy something wrote. There's complete different views on who God is.

And we have to be careful because God is a cheerleader, but He's also a coach. He wants to encourage us, but He also wants us to be coached and say, get up and get back in there. You can win this fight.

You can do this. Here's what you need to do. Here's the blessing of obedience.

So I'm going to say some hard things tonight. And it's interesting, do you know that the most people who get upset at these types of messages that I'm giving are Christians? I get more criticism from Christians than the world. And it started dawning on me, what is going on here? Two things either happen.

I either hurt their pride in their arrogant judgmental Pharisees and calling them to humility and brokenness, or they don't like their lifestyle challenged. Let's be honest. Do we like our lifestyle challenged? Unless we're in a position to be humble and teachable, we don't like the lifestyle challenge.

So they say, don't challenge my lifestyle. Don't challenge my viewing habits. I mean, when I came out against Twilight and all the vampire and occult movies, I was hearing from Christians that were upset.

What? Why are we on the same page here? Darkness should not entertain the church. This is pretty crystal clear. Now, of course, we've all made choices we shouldn't have.

We all view things we shouldn't have. But Christians are upset at this call to a holier life. Why? Because it upsets everything.

It disturbs everything. You're questioning my eating habits. You're questioning my drinking habits.

You're questioning my viewing habits. You're questioning everything. I'm not questioning.

I'm just showing you what God's Word says. So it's very interesting that the main group that gets upset is Christians. They don't like the deeper life.

You're written off as a fanatical, extreme. Pray for an hour, please. Well, the Bible, New Testament Christianity would be considered extreme today.

You realize that, right? Fasting and travailing, 120, up in a room for 10 days, praying, seeking God, and then the Spirit fell, and then they're speaking this language. Everybody's confused. Then they're going out ministering.

They're dying for their faith. They're being martyred. They're selling things and giving everything, help these people in need.

That would be extreme today. That'd be radical. That'd be fanatical.

But that's biblical Christianity if the person is truly guided by the Spirit. I'm not okaying all fanaticism and weirdness that happens. I'm sure you understand that.

And that's a lot of times my message to pastors and preachers and teachers. If we are to lead the church in these dire times, we must confront destructive lifestyles, not cater to them. That's the whole point is to get people to change.

So spiritual disciplines always have spiritual benefits. You realize that? To be desperate for more of God, one must not only know what the Word says, but they must apply it. We must fully surrender to the one true and living God.

We must be empty vessels used at the Master's discretion. Alive, totally consumed by God. That's really what this whole issue with fasting is about.

So with that said, spiritual disciplines have physical benefits. Again, if you want this information, click on our website, the complete sermon notes, and it should all be there. But I'm gonna quote somebody, and I normally don't quote psychologists because, you know, I just don't.

But I heard this gentleman, I focused on the family this week, and I had to pull over again and write down some of these things, go online and listen to what he was saying because it was amazing. And a lot of times, and by the way, psychologists aren't bad if they're grounded in Scripture. Same way a doctor's not bad if they're grounded in Scripture.

A chiropractor's not bad if they're grounded in Scripture. Psychologists, study the mind, actually they're very powerful if they're grounded in Scripture. They understand that it's not self-esteem that we need, we

have a sin nature.

And so all these things, so we just need to be careful. Dr. Archibald Hart is a licensed psychologist, certified biofeedback practitioner, and board certified in psychopharmacology. Word I haven't heard before, it said this week.

A former dean of the School of Psychology, Hart is now senior professor of psychology at Fuller University, I believe. I've heard that they've drifted liberal, and I don't know, I'm just saying that's what he does now. And is best known for his research on the hazards of ministry.

Depression, anxiety, divorce, stress, and sexuality. And the reason I'm quoting him is so you don't say, oh Shane, that's fine, you just, you know, you kind of think that, and you know, there you go. Actually, these people are authorities on this area.

He talked about this week an interesting thing. Many of you know the word oxytocin, right? It's this powerful hormone. It's when we hug family members, when we kiss family members, the oxytocin levels are driven up, and there's increase of joy and peace.

It's also a neurotransmitter in the brain. The hormone plays a huge role in pair bonding, bringing couples together. This hormone is also greatly stimulated during sex, birth, breastfeeding, all these things.

So it's this thing, God-given chemical that God has given us, and when we do certain things, it is increased. But then he made the parallel with all the digital media today. That stimuli kills oxytocin.

So the kids that should be connecting with their parents, hugging, are playing video games and being disconnected and dealing with depression, suicide at alarming rates because the very thing they need is the very thing they're not getting. How does this tie into the sermon? Oh, I'm getting there, hold on. Let me, you gotta kind of put clothes on it before you reveal what it is.

So, too much digital media stimuli kills oxytocin. There's little joy, there's little peace, there's no connection to people. Now, to add insult to injury, what happens is cortisol is released and adrenaline is released in response to all of this.

And those are good things to some degree. You know, too much of a good thing, it can be a bad thing as we know. But here's what happens.

Many of you know, you know, the fight or flight thing, right, where like in the biblical times, or it's just, I don't wanna say right now, but back then, you see a lion. Whoa, stress levels raise up, right? Adrenaline is released, why? So now I have energy, now I can get the heck out of dodge. Cortisol is also released and that controls the non-essential elements.

I mean, it helps to control only the essential elements that are needed. So as a result, your immune system basically is in a bad state because all this energy, all this reserves now go to fight or flight. I need to fight that lion or I need to flight, I need to run.

And our body was not designed to be in that state of stress on a weekly or daily basis. So that's what it does. And the hypothalamus, you know, it releases this cortisol, this adrenaline, and the stress, and we're all stressed, and so we're able to deal with this lion.

My immune system shuts down, other non-essential functions shut down, so now I can better assess and better deal with this stress. The problem is we're putting our bodies now in a constant state of stress on a daily basis through the media, through all these things. So we're constantly in a state of stress.

And that's my whole issue with coffee, caffeine, stimulants, all these things. You're putting your body in a state of this ongoing. So not only does the oxytocin levels decrease, the adrenaline and the cortisol increase, and then we wonder why all hell is breaking loose.

Because we're going against biblical principles. We're not taking care of the one gift God has given us. That's how it plays a role.

Here's what happens as a result of all this. Immune deficiencies, anxiety, depression, tremors, panic attacks, weight gain, poor health, memory loss and concentration loss, learning problems, digestive problems, heart disease, sleep problems, all from too much stress and too much of these, because when cortisol and adrenaline is released on an ongoing basis, it becomes toxic. Toxic elements in our body and it's not good for us.

They've done many studies on angry people die much earlier because of all that anger and they're holding all these things in. So here's the ways to help and this is where I'm gonna tie into the sermon. If there's a situation like that, there's fight or flight, if you're not fighting and you're not leaving, all you're doing is sitting at your computer for six hours a day and all this stress, all those things need to be released.

So that's the whole point of exercising or moving or doing something so you can release those things. We're not created to sit behind something for six or eight hours and do nothing and just plop down and watch TV. All these things are adding to what's going on.

So there has to be a release for that stress that's taking place. The problem is many people are too busy and too stressed and there's no time for God. There's nothing, we're doing too much and the devil loves to keep us stressed out in that high state of stress.

Don't create stressful situations obviously and so I'm leading to this in a minute. Stimulants, we talked about the digital media, all these things bring down oxytocin and they increase the things that we do not need. Now here's the most important connection that I'm trying to make with oxytocin, cortisol, adrenaline.

They're all affected by a relationship with God. They're either heightened or decreased. Be still and know that I am God.

Wait on me, trust on me. So as we're doing, practicing spiritual disciplines, the end result is they actually have physical benefits and that was the tie-in he was making. So as we apply physical disciplines to our life, pray, taking care of the body, study, fasting, all these things, they actually help these levels, these hormone levels in the body.

They don't hurt them, they help them. Conversely, when we don't follow spiritual disciplines and we get caught up on the rat race, what happens? Everything we're seeing in our society today. I mean, I've got studies I was gonna bring from Consumer Report that talks about psychiatric drugs are on the rise with little kids.

Just get, you gotta get. Now, if somebody needs it, you know me. I'm, hey, you know, last resort.

God leads you in that direction. That's probably what they're there for. But to actually be dispensing these at an alarming rate and kid, instead of, why don't you start with the 24-ounce Diet Pepsi in the McDonald's? I mean, you know, we're, let's be honest.

And I just watch teenagers going to Starbucks. They can't be more than 15 ordering a triple mocha of this with an extra shot. They're on high-octane alert.

They wonder why they're stressed all the time. They wonder why there's so much depression and confusion. They have no time for God.

They're feeding their body all these things that pull away from Him. That's just biblical truth. And even in the secular field, it will show you that these things are not good for the body.

So fasting and spiritual disciplines foster a deeper relationship with God and thus increases joy and peace and comfort. Did you catch that? Fasting and spiritual disciplines, they actually foster a deeper relationship with God and they increase joy and peace and comfort. They are a byproduct of a right relationship with God.

Not all the time. I'm not suggesting if somebody suffers with depression, they might not be right with God. Paul suffered from depression.

One of my favorite preachers suffered with it. But what I'm saying is, that deeper relationship with God can help in all these areas. But here's the problem.

This is where I'm getting into fasting. I know it was a little long introduction. The flesh is in rebellion to God.

We don't like to hear that, but I'm here to tell you, your flesh, my flesh is in rebellion with God. You ever heard that saying that we're at war with the flesh, the devil, and the world? You ever heard that? That's really what you have to watch out for. Your own flesh, what's in me, is my worst enemy.

And then I've got the enemy, the devil, and then I've got the world. Well, how does it all work? Well, I thought about this this week and this is what I came up with. The flesh, it's in me.

I want it. The devil presents the bait often and the world affirms it. So the flesh is in me, the devil brings somebody or something into your life that ought not be, and the flesh wants it, the devil brings the opportunity and the world says, it's no big deal, come on, everybody's doing it.

And we fall right in. That's how it works. The enemy's been studying you many, many, many centuries and ongoing.

He knows exactly what will it take to take us down. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, those three areas. So he'll already use what's in you.

And then he'll present the bait. Sometimes he doesn't have to present it, we'll just run into it. And then the world affirms it by what we watch, what we listen to.

Look, everybody's doing it. Miley Cyrus gets praises. Duck Dynasty gets almost canceled.

Just that in and of itself should show you how sick and perverted our culture is. Little Disney girl, now doing God knows what, is applauded, oh wonderful, coming of age. Really? And then, I mean, we flipped.

Now you know what the prophet said, woe be to that nation who calls good evil and evil good. Because that is a nation and a people who's lost their moral compass. Unpride, and here's where I'm tying in fasting.

It's always good too, to get a first service out of the way. Then I know where I need to cut corners at the second or edit or add. That's why I have this.

Unbride, so you guys are the guinea pigs, the test stage. But that can be kind of good too. Because by the time I get to the second service, it's like, oh, can I do this again? But I'm actually kidding because I love to do this.

I'd do three services and two tomorrow if we could. Better be careful what I say because that could happen someday. Unbridle passions.

Hear this, hear me out. Unbride passions are perversions. They need to be crucified, not coddled.

Peter said, beloved, I urge you. Can you see Peter saying this? I urge you. Sometimes we think he's just a monotone Charlie Brown.

He's saying, I urge you as sojourners and exiles. It means you're not from this world. You're from your children of God.

Abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. So when we don't put these passions in check, we give fuel to the enemy. We feed that fire that we shouldn't be feeding.

So that's the whole point of fasting. Now hopefully I can get into the actual message. As you know, King's stomach is the dictator within, right? King's stomach is the dictator within.

If you didn't know that, I'm telling you right now, and I actually borrowed it from Jenison Franklin. He wrote a good book on fasting. If you want more information on this, that's a good book to pick up.

And it ties right in with, for many years, you've heard about the severe seven, right? That the church is always against. Wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy, and gluttony. And that is, I like a quote I picked up.

In the past, the church preached on gluttony. Today, we practice it. I told you this could be an ouch sermon.

Food, though, is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master. Please understand, it's a wonderful servant, a terrible master. As master, it decreases our spiritual appetite and weakens us spiritually.

That's why Paul said, I discipline my body, and I bring it into subjection. I discipline my body. We have it sometimes reversed.

My body's telling me what to do. It's gonna tell me where to drive right after I leave here. I gotta go there.

It's gonna tell me In-N-Out Burger. Then tomorrow, it's gonna tell me this. And then I gotta get a drink.

I gotta get a beer. I gotta get a smoke. I gotta get, it really leads us.

It's like, okay, come on, where do you wanna go? I need to go here in this spot, and I need to go, and our flesh just leads us. At some point, you gotta say, no, I'm in control of you. You're not in control of me.

I discipline my body. You don't tell me what to do, flesh. I tell you what to do, and we're submitting under the rule and reign of God.

Is that easy? Oh, no. As a person who's had a problem with food and continues to have a problem with food. I was 270 pounds.

Borderline hypoglycemia, denied life insurance. Doctors said, you're not gonna make it to see 40 unless you do something. I'm in my 20s, and you're telling me this.

So I know it's a struggle, but I also know when you overcome it, the benefits that are amazing, absolutely amazing. I had to read this quote. I kept going back and forth, but I read some of the early church fathers, and his name is Phloxinus.

There you go. Fifth century. Look at what he says.

You guys think I'm hardcore. Listen to this. Although all the evil passions of the lust are abominated and detested by the word of God, the filthy passion of the lust of the belly is more abominated and detested than they all.

It darkeneth the mind, for it stinks with filthy passions and is the door of all wickedness. Whenever it has power, like a great wide open door, it is open for the entrance of all abominable things. Wow, this guy really was going after gluttony in food, wasn't he? But then I came across a story that I read exactly a year ago on this day, January 4th, Saturday, and I said, I've got to put that in my note, so I added it this morning.

And some of you will remember, and even if you were here, it's a good reminder, of Thomas Constantine's history, the Three Edwards. And he describes the life of Renald III, a fourth century duke in what is now Belgium. Listen to this.

Grossly overweight, Renald was commonly called by his Latin name Crassus, which means fat. And at this point, let me interject that I have nothing but compassion for people who struggle in this area, being one of those, and I wrote a diet book on that for people to help them. So I'm not being facetious, I'm not being judging, because this was an area I struggled with in my earlier years.

And actually, I was in my yearbook at Bethel Baptist, I think I still have it, it says stuffed pig. I had an apple in my mouth, and they were pulling me on a... Yeah, I broke my leg, and I was in a little, what is those things you pull around, wet red wagon, it was a red wagon. So I had an apple in my mouth, and the caption in the yearbook is stuffed pig.

How you gonna live that one down when you're 12? So I have nothing, so that's probably why I got, okay, I'll show these guys, bench pressing 400 pounds, and getting into bodybuilding. So I went the opposite direction, you gotta find the balance. So anyway, with that said, I just wanna make that point when this goes out to radio or video, I have nothing but compassion for those who struggle in this area, because I'm a fellow struggler, and if it's not careful, I'll consume too much.

After a violent quarrel, Renald's younger brother, Edward, led a successful revolt against him. Edward was captured, remember, he's this overweight guy, Edward was captured, Edward captured Renald, but did not kill him. Instead, he built a room around Renald in the Newark castle and promised him he could regain his title and property as soon as he was able to leave the room.

So he put him in this room, built a room around it, or built a wall around this castle. This is all history books, you can check it out. This would not have been too difficult for most people since the room had several windows and a door that was near normal size, and none of it was locked or barred.

The problem was Renald's size. To regain his freedom, he needed to lose weight, but Edward knew his older brother, and each day he sent him a variety of delicious foods, lusts of the flesh, the king within, right? The king's stomach. Instead of dieting his way out of prison, he actually grew larger.

When Duke Edward was accused of cruelty, he had a ready answer. My brother is not a prisoner. He may leave whenever he so wills.

Renald stayed in that room for 10 years and wasn't released until after Edward died in battle. By then, his health was so ruined, he died within a year, a prisoner of his own appetite. And I started to think, that's true.

We can become prisoners of our own appetite. I remember my 20s, when I was living the party lifestyle, where I went to dinner, had to have the right beer. Where I went to a friend's house, had to have the right food.

Carl's Jr., Taco Bell, McDonald's, all those things just drove me, I'm hungry, they're calling, they're driving me. Who's driving this vehicle? They are. The king's stomach is the dictator within.

He pulls us in a direction, so it's good to say no. That's the whole point. One of the points of fasting is to tell the flesh no so you can be filled with the Spirit of God.

Is it not? Wow. Fasting dethrones the dictator within. If there isn't discipline in this area, chances are good that there's not disciplines in other areas.

If somebody's not disciplined in this area, there's a good chance that they're not disciplined in other areas, because the belly, the stomach, all that, everything flows from how well we can control the body. Again, a point of clarification. I don't believe it's all up to me, and willpower's the answer.

But as I submit to what God's Word says and fill with the Spirit, then He changes us. He transforms us. It's His work.

It's His job to change me. But my job is obedience to what the Word is saying. You see the marriage there, the union? Again, I want to encourage people to fall forward.

And if you're being discouraged right now, be very encouraged, because the whole point is to fall forward and to get back on track. That's why I give them, I don't give them messages knowing that everybody's living a perfect life. I give them messages saying, hey, we all need help.

God, can you bring some insight into our lives through the Word of God? We can't talk about a powerful prayer life and seeking God without discussing fasting. Did you catch that? We cannot talk about a powerful prayer life and seeking God without discussing fasting in at least some form. Here's what happens when we fast.

God's will becomes very clear, or clearer than before. Well, how does that happen? Well, let me tell you. Prayer changes from self-focus to God-focus.

Fasting opens the eyes of our understanding and that's why we receive. What I mean by that is a lot of times in the Bible I talk about ask and you'll receive. James, Peter, ask, you'll receive.

Jesus said, ask and you'll receive. Well, why is this not happening for a lot of people? Lord, I want that, please, that \$80,000 BMW that just came out. It's got, I don't know what it's got.

It's got everything. And that house up there, that house up there on Courtsill Mountain, it's not quite yet finished, Lord. I know it's 18,000 square feet, but I can make that work, Lord.

I use it for ministry half the time. Lord, can you just get to my 401k, Lord? I need it to explode so I can retire at an early age and not do anything for the kingdom. I can just retire and sit there and drink margaritas on the beach, Lord.

You see how He's not gonna answer any of those prayers? Oh, you haven't prayed those prayers before? I haven't prayed any of those three, so just rest assured. But as we're fasting and as we're giving ourselves to God and being filled with the Spirit of God, my whole life prayer changes. Lord, just bring a vehicle into my life that's gonna run for the next five years, Lord.

Open some kind of door so I can just get this truck that my neighbor's selling. And Lord, I just want a house for my kids and wife can be safe, so Lord, whatever you want, put me in the area you want me to be in. Lord, I don't want that drink on the beach and that margarita, Lord.

I wanna sit in the presence and power of God and operate in the anointing. Lord, what are you gonna have me do until my last breath? Oh, I see it, Lord. I pray for that door to open, Lord.

Bring finances for missionaries. Lord, bring finances so I can write a book and get that. See, you receive those because they're of God.

You're filling your mind with the things of God, so he plants his Spirit in you. The world might say, oh, that's weird, Shane. Well, the Bible says that our thoughts come from God as we submit to him.

You see how everything changes based on fasting? I thought I might need this. Last week, I lost my voice, second service. Just about, so I'm hoping that doesn't happen today.

Here's what else happens. Stagnation turns into flowing waters. Is anybody stagnant in their prayer life or their spirituality right now? You're wondering, where's God at? I'm just going through the motions.

I had to drag myself to church. I put on the radio. I just, okay, today's reading is here, but I'm just dead.

I'm just stagnant. I'm just dead as a doornail. I need help.

Fasting breaks that in a heartbeat, and rivers of living water flow out of that. It breaks that stagnation up. I can't explain it how, but I know it does it.

The mind becomes uncluttered and focused. Anytime we fast, the mind becomes uncluttered and focused. You understand that, right? When you remove food out of your daily life, your mind, the clutter in your mind, there's energy, there's a renewed sense of peace and following God.

There's ups and downs, of course, but it seems to bring a lot of clarity, and powerful spiritual life occurs. I believe there's a supernatural release when people fast. Things that normally wouldn't happen, praying

for, this is how you can tilt those things in your favor.

Don't take that the wrong way. I'm not talking about manipulating God. He's not a genie in a bottle.

Okay, here's my three wishes. Because all fasting does, you're saying, Lord, I'm denying myself, Romans 12. Present your bodies as living sacrifices unto God.

What is your reasonable service? Lord, I'm giving myself to you. I'm fasting from these things. Lord, every time I think of food, I'm thinking of you, and then you start to be filled with the Spirit of God, and you're making decisions that honor Him.

Okay, for those who are skeptical about fasting and opening up doors, Moses received the Word of God. Mount Sinai, after fasting. King Jehoshaphat experienced victory after fasting.

Esther received protection after fasting. Elijah was restored in the cave after fasting. Daniel experienced the supernatural after fasting.

Ezra received direction on rebuilding the wall, I'm sorry, the Temple of Jerusalem after fasting. Nehemiah was strengthened before he rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem, saying before the king, my place in my father's tomb lies in waste. I fasted and I wept for three days.

Joel offered the cure for judgment to the people of God after fasting, and fasting was the cure. Jesus was empowered after fasting. Paul was called after three days of fasting.

Peter received confirmation after fasting. Cornelius and his whole household was saved after he was fasting. And that's just off the top of my head.

That's why I included in your thing scriptural support. It's all over the place. What do you do with all that? You can't just say, well, they just talked about fasting just because, no, it opens a supernatural release of something extra happens, something, there's a difference there.

Why would Jesus Christ himself have to fast? Think about that, why would Jesus have to fast? Baptized in the Jordan River, John the Baptist says, I'm not gonna baptize you, and he says, oh, you're not gonna baptize me. Yes, you are, that suffered so that all righteousness might be fulfilled. He baptizes him, the Spirit of God descends as a dove, not a dove, as a dove upon him.

He goes into the wilderness, the Spirit leads him in the wilderness, and there he fasts for 40 days. He doesn't come out a weak man, he comes out, the Bible's crystal clear, and Jesus comes out in the Spirit of God, filled with the Spirit of God. The anointing of God is on his life.

Jesus goes from obscurity now to notoriety. Nobody knows who he is now. He's the talk of the town, he's the talk of the nation.

He's curing, he's releasing, he's preaching, because it all started with fasting and being filled with the Spirit of God. It makes a difference. At the risk of losing my reward, I hope I don't, but I've been doing it now since last January, usually most, 90% of the time, every Saturday, distilled water only.

And I can tell a big difference. People said the sermons, the church feels more alive because it's in that fasting, distilled water. It's all in heaven, all day long.

I'm not saying ha, ha, ha, it's very hard. It's very difficult. Around 10 it's hard, around two it's hard, and it's gonna be hard right after this first service.

But you just, you submit to God and allow the Spirit to fill you, and then there's clarity, there's unction, there's anointing, there's a difference because I'm obeying the Word of God, not in pride and arrogance saying ha, ha, but saying I have to do this, I have to pray, I have to fast, I have to get up early because I know what's in me, and in me no good thing dwells. And in case you haven't figured out, in you no good thing dwells. So how do we fight that no good thing that dwells? You starve it to death.

You starve the flesh. When you fast, addictions even bow at the foot of the cross. I've heard of men that have no sexual urges while they're fasting.

Their addiction to pornography's gone. All these, why? Because you're killing the flesh. You're killing the very thing that's sent to destroy you.

Remember what does the flesh say? Feed me so I can destroy you. Now let's go right back to that. Food is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master.

So let's not tilt this in the wrong direction. There's nothing wrong with God-given food. He created it.

And on that note, let me encourage you to consume God-given food, not food made in a factory by man, which a bunch of junk and a bunch of garbage, it does nothing for the one body that God has given you. It actually, I don't know why we're not experiencing more health issues and things, because we're not feeding our body what it needs to fight the things. Do you know that all of us in this room have cancer? We have cancer cells, I do.

They just don't show up in a test until they're over a billion or so, I believe. We're all fighting it. We're fighting it.

So God-given foods, when you hear the words like probiotics, antioxidants, flavonoids, all these things, it's just good God-given food that he said, here, take the life of the food so it can feed the body against disease. Take the life of the food. So you have the pomegranates, you have the fish, you have the steamed vegetables, you have all this stuff that feeds the body what it needs.

You go through a drive-thru, Carl's Jr., but I know I'm gonna maybe get an email from them, but a 1,200-calorie Western Double Cheeseburger is gonna cause a lot of harm, not a lot of good. I love those, but it's been many years since I've had one. It's not good to talk about it when you're talking about fasting.

But you all hear what I'm saying, right? We have this billion, I don't think you can put a price tag on a human body, this intricate machinery that scientists, any scientist worth their salt would tell you we know nothing about. How can a sperm, egg, come together, form? Now you have this little chromosome, all these little cells are dividing. Now it's a little tiny child.

Now that child is developing heart and lungs and liver and limbs, and then they wanna abort it. That's a whole nother thing. Don't get me started on that one.

But then the baby's growing and it's maturing, and then now the mental thinking, where does the mind come into play? When does it develop a brain? And now it has a moral code on itself, even as a little baby. They're hell-bent on being bad. No, no, no.

Who puts this moral code on? My kids know when they've done bad and they don't even know what bad is yet. Who put this moral code in their heart and on their minds? Where did all this come from? It's so well-designed, it's amazing. If you look at the human body in kinetic, you're studying biochemistry and all these things, I took some of the courses, just looking through National Academy of Sports Medicine books, and you look at the bone structure, the skeletal structure, the nerve structure, how it all, you're like, this is absolutely mind-boggling, amazing.

It screams creator. There is no way on the face of the earth that nothing became this. It's impossible, it's improbable.

It takes more faith to believe that. So God gives us exactly what we need to run this body more efficiently. We don't need to be taking two naps a day and being grumpy at six o'clock because we didn't have our latte.

We don't need to yell at people because we didn't get this and we didn't get that. Our body has been given by God to consume life-giving food, not dead food in a factory. And I've seen so many people turn around diabetes and depression and high cholesterol by just feeding the body what it needs, not what it wants.

You see the difference there? And yeah, it's a struggle. It's gonna be a big struggle for the rest of your life. I would even assume some, when people get off of diet drinks and sodas and all these stimulants, they are new people.

Because what is your stimulant doing? It's putting you in that fight and flight again, just like you've encountered a lion. So I encountered the lion, right? My body goes into this fight and flight. When we take the stimulants in, that's what your body does right when it gets there.

You're on high octane. You gotta keep moving. You can't sit down.

You gotta go, go, go, go, go. You gotta get things done. We're so busy that we're hurting ourselves because of it.

You pay, you're paying, what's it saying? Pay Peter to rob Paul or this? There's another saying. You pay now or you pay later. Either way, you're gonna pay.

You pay now by discipline and obedience to God's word or you pay later by saying, I wish I would've. Either way, there's a cost to pay. Moses, King Jehoshaphat, Esther, Elijah, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Joel, Jesus, Paul, Peter, Cornelius.

The battle is not yours but God's. Now when we're praying for things, we're fighting the spiritual realm. The battle's not yours and it's not mine so I don't wanna give you the impression.

The battle is God's, right? We're fighting from a position of victory. The battle is God's so use the arsenal. Use the arsenal he's given us.

A lot of times we go into battle unarmed, unprepared and untrained. Devil, take your best shot. I'm wide open.

I don't have any idea how to defend myself so just go for it and that's what happens. And people are getting sick and tired of being sick and tired. I've been praying for years and nothing seems to happen.

It's time to take action. I'm not saying that God won't bless prayers of those who aren't fasting because he's gracious and forgiving but sometimes we need to just sit back and fast and take authority and what I'm trying to say there is people are sick and tired of their prayers not getting answered. They're sick and tired of praying for things that aren't happening.

They're sick and tired of dying spiritually on the vine. They're sick and tired of not having a passion for the word of God. They're sick and tired of not wanting to go to church all the time.

They're sick and tired of not really worshiping God. They're loving the world more than things of God. They're sick and tired of that.

So to break that, to break that monotony, you've gotta fast and you've gotta pull the body back into submission to God. See, I don't know about you but I don't want a little communion cup full of God. Let the water flow.

Let me jump in the swimming pool. I'm good. I don't want this thing.

You ever been thirsty and tried to drink out of this? It's not fun. Sometimes we do communion. I'm actually thirsty.

I'm like, oh, I need about seven more of those things. But this is what we do. This is how much of God we want.

And how much of God you want is how much of God you're gonna get. I don't want the communion cup. Lord, would you fill, the Bible says, pour out on the dry land, let the floods come.

Lord, pour out on this dry and barren land. Pour out on my dry and barren soul. Lord, would you refresh me? Would you revive me? These streams of living water that Christ spoke about, I want that.

And a lot of the times that's only gonna come by, come out by prayer and fasting. Oh, didn't Jesus say something about that? Jesus, why can't we cure this demonic son? This demon keeps taking him over and throwing him around. Why couldn't we cast him out? Jesus said, this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting.

Now, theologians are divided. Some manuscripts it's in, some manuscripts it's not. But if you look at Mark, and I believe you look at the other time it occurs in the gospel, it's very clear that there are some things, some strongholds that are hard to get rid of.

Very hard to get rid of. They wanna hold on for dear life. I'm gonna give you a confession.

This might come back to bite me in the butt. Sometimes I might not tell the second service. So just be glad you came to the first service.

But do you know the hardest thing in my life to break since I was born? The hardest thing in my entire life to break, nobody could probably guess it. Coffee. Hardest thing.

I've tried for years and it keeps. Come on, come on. And I can tell a difference because it makes me angry, it makes me aggressive, it makes me moody, it makes me irritated, it makes me not fun to be around.

And the devil loves that. Okay, I might not get that boy to cheer on his wife, but I'll get him to yell at her, right? And it's just been, it's hard. So fasting, what it does, now the addiction is gone because it has to bow to the foot of the cross.

And then every couple months it wants to come back again. Usually when I'm having a slow day, I haven't had enough sleep, God, I just need that little adrenaline rush, we call it Christian crack, is really what it is. But it was the hardest thing to ever, it's like it had me bound.

Just try two days without it and you'll see this little demon doesn't want to leave easy. Starts to smell it everywhere. It's like I have to have it in the morning.

If you have to have something, it's called addiction. If you have to have something, it's called addiction. If you can't go without it, it's called addiction.

And how it would mess me up is I would get my addiction, sit down to study the Bible, and I couldn't sit and study the Bible because I was too irritated and agitated or I was too, I had to get stuff done. I can't sit, can't read, got to hurry up and do this. And I just couldn't sit still.

Why? Because I got 250 milligrams of caffeine pumping through my system at four in the morning. And it was very hard to break that. It wanted to just hold me.

Now, am I saying coffee's of the devil? Of course not. I'm just trying to show you how even these little foxes can spoil the vine, how some things that we might think are fine aren't. And there are those who can enjoy a cup now and then, and great, I'm glad, I wish I could.

Probably can in the future, but it pulls me in the wrong direction. Think about it. If something makes you angry and upset and irritated and moody and anxious, that's not a good thing.

That's not filled with the Spirit of God. That's the opposite of being filled with the Spirit of God. So what fasting does, and I think I upset a lot of people.

Well, you don't look too happy about that confession. Conviction must be setting in. Anyway, scriptural support, you have all the scriptural support for fasting you need.

And when they had ordained them, look at Acts 14, and when they had ordained them, elders in every church and prayed with fasting. Acts 13, and they fasted and the Holy Ghost said, separate me, Barnabas, and Saul for the work that I've called them. Esther, go and call a fast.

Nehemiah, fast. 1 Corinthians 7, 5, don't defraud one another except with consent for a time that you may give yourself to fasting and prayer. That's a hard scripture.

Paul's saying, don't have sex, and while you're not having sex, fast. Nobody's teaching on that one very often. Not only can you not have sex, you gotta go and fast now.

But he's saying, the whole context is, I don't know why I'm on this subject. Defraud ye not the other, meaning your body is not yours, and her body's not hers. You're given to mutually, except when it's time to fast.

Because why? Because you're fighting the flesh. You're fighting the desires of the flesh. Sexually, physically, all these things.

The body's, it's a call out from those things. Luke 2.37, Joel, Psalms 35, I mean, it just goes on and on and on. Now, let me throw out some physical, oh, goodness, second service is gonna start in 10 minutes.

Well, guess what? If you wanna hear the rest, go on a fast and stick around. Wow, I'm not gonna be able to finish this. Let's do the fast-forwarded version.

There's physical limitations, obviously. Get a disclaimer, check with your doctor. Want me to go through it like that, like a car sales commercial? Anyway, but honestly, check with a physician before you start a fast.

There's lots of different kinds. There's a Daniel fast. It sounds great right now, doesn't it? Yeah, fruit and vegetables, I'm on it, that sounds good.

Come tomorrow morning, oh, my Lord, it sounds terrible. What did I commit to do? And then guess what happens? I'll start tomorrow. And then tomorrow becomes next week, and tomorrow becomes, next week becomes next month.

I've got a hard, every time I start to fast, I'm like, how am I gonna fast with four little kids? There's little cheesy crackers all around, or this, or throwing, and there's no way I'm gonna fast with four little kids. Next week, when I go on a break or something, and we have all these excuses. Some are valid, don't get me wrong.

I probably don't wanna go on a fast if you've got a hard labor job or something, but talk with your physician. There's benefits I can't get to, how to fast I can't get to. Let me just say this in closing.

The beauty of fasting is that it draws us closer to God. Are you willing to do what it takes to truly know God? This is the price that many are not willing to pay. Shall I read that over again? The beauty of fasting is that it draws us closer to God.

I mean, just an example, as I was fasting, I already finished, I think, the Easter sermon. I don't know how that happened, but God just began pouring in my heart. Easter sermon's pretty much halfway done, because it's perfect, and it's just how it works, and prayer is being answered.

Some prayers I can't even discuss tonight that are being answered because of prayer and fasting, and that's why I don't understand. If somebody has a prodigal son, their 19-year-old daughter is living on the streets or out in Hollywood, and they don't know where they're at, and I say, have you ever fasted? Oh, no, I don't know, it's kind of difficult. It's kind of difficult? Your daughter's on drugs in the streets of Hollywood? It's kind of difficult? See this mentality we have? It's not about us.

J.C. Ryle noted, and I'll close with this, "Holiness will cost a man his sins. "He must be willing to give up every habit and practice "which is wrong in God's sight. "There must be no separate truths "with any special sin which he loves.

"Our sins are often as dear to us as our children. "We love them, we hug them, we cleave to them, "and delight in them. "To part with them is as hard as cutting off a hand "or plucking out a right eye, "but it must be done, the parting must come." And that's the whole point of fasting, is you're consecrating yourself.

Joel said, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly, gather the elders and the inhabitants of the land into the house of God and cry out to the Lord God for mercy. Say, well Shane, that's powerful. You don't even

know the half of it.

Joel is writing in a time where the consuming locust, what he didn't consume, the other locust consumed. The crawling locust, the consuming locust, the chewing locust devoured the entire land. So what's Joel's answer? Sound the alarm, call a fast, call the people together.

It's time to fast and seek God. It's a position of humility and brokenness. And I believe that's what he calls us to as well.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/eAg8VTcl4VQ.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/shane-idleman/fasting-and-modern-american-gluttony/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net