

Fasting for 20/20 Spiritual Vision

by Shane Idleman

Fasting is a means of humbling ourselves, starving the flesh to be filled with the Spirit, and aligning our attitude with the fast, resulting in spiritual growth, physical health, and restoration of youth.

Duration: 49:25

Scripture: Matthew 6:16

Topics: "Fasting", "Spiritual Clarity"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the significance of fasting for achieving 20/20 spiritual vision, urging the church to engage in a corporate fast to enhance their spiritual clarity and connection with God. He explains that fasting is not merely about abstaining from food but is a spiritual discipline that humbles the heart and aligns one's desires with God's will. Idleman highlights the physical and spiritual benefits of fasting, including improved health and a deeper relationship with God, while cautioning against the pitfalls of a wrong attitude during fasting. He encourages believers to approach fasting with purpose, persistence, and prayer, asserting that it can lead to powerful breakthroughs in their lives and communities. Ultimately, he calls for a return to fasting as a vital practice in the life of the church.

Transcript

What would I tell you this last, this last portion of this of 2019? Well, it's going to line up with what we are calling the church to do. For those who can do this, we are calling the church to a corporate fast. And you fast however God leads you.

And I'm gonna, what is the point of fasting? And what's the benefits? Well, I'm glad you asked because that's what I'm talking about. The title of the message is fasting for 2020 spiritual vision. Fasting for spiritual vision to see better spiritually.

Anybody need that this morning? Are you all doing good? You're okay? We can, we don't need this sermon today. Everybody's on target. Of course, I'm joking, right? I'm just gonna read, you know, this, this was a difficult sermon.

I worked on it all week, took out things, added things, even worked on it early this morning. I want to just read to you a few scriptures on fasting. They're not gonna be on the screen.

Just, just listen to these and you tell me if this resonates with you whatsoever. Matthew 6, Jesus said, and when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces and that their fasting may be seen of others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you fast, talking to his disciples, anoint your head, wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others, but your father who sees you in private will reward you openly. Now, I'm not a theologian, but that tells me that fasting might have some spiritual benefits, unless I'm reading that incorrectly. And it's very simple, it's very straightforward, that the father will bless the discipline of fasting openly, what you do in private.

And people sometimes say, but Shane, Jesus said, hey, we don't have to fast. They asked him, why aren't your disciples fasting? And if anybody tells you that, just remind them that they need to keep reading, right? Just, just keep reading a little bit more. It says, the bridegroom's here, Jesus said, I'm here.

But when I leave my disciples will fast, they will pray, they will give, they will fast, they will pray. Isaiah 58, they said, why have we fasted, God, and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you don't take any knowledge of it? So fasting is a position of humility. And God said, God told them this, behold, in the day of your fast, you speak, you seek your own pleasure, you oppress your workers, you quarrel, you fight.

Basically, you're fasting, but your attitude doesn't reflect a humble heart. You can, have you ever wasted a fast? I have. I've wasted a fast in the, and done it in the flesh, but, and not got any spiritual benefits, because it's not something you use to twist God's arm.

It's a, it's a way of humbling ourselves, starving the flesh to be filled with the Spirit, and, and, and our attitude must match the fasting. And here's where a lot of people miss it. When they're fasting, they're often grumbling and complaining.

Anybody grumble and complain when you're hungry? And so if, if, and I've caught myself many times, I'm like, this stinks. Why am I doing this? So, you know, and, and God says, you know what, just go eat. Go eat.

Fasting is not like a magic bullet. And, and I'll, I look back, I think I told you this before, I don't know how many months ago, it might have been a month and a half, two months, I left here, and I was just so thankful God had me. He moved at both services.

I felt the Spirit of God on me. I mean, and, and people, the atmosphere was thick, and it was a wonderful two services. But that evening, the, the Saturday night, I said, I'm just going to, I'm going to fast tomorrow.

I'm going to fast, and I'm going to watch you move, Lord. I know you'll honor this. And no sooner had I said that, I get in here, and somebody made homemade chocolate chip cookies and put them in the, put them in the, the, the office.

And I grabbed them and tried to put them in the usher's room. Guys, eat these quick. And the, my, my flesh got the best of me, and I ate three chocolate chip cookies before I preached.

But see, God says, I'm not going to, Shane, even in spite of you, I'm going to move. I'm going to show you there's not a magic bullet. There's not a little formula.

I'm going to move powerfully, whether you obey the fast or not. Now, that's not permission to break it, but it's not like you're, you're putting God's arm behind him, or twisting it, or, or making him change his mind, or like, you know, a magic wand, or some special little thing. It's positioning your heart to receive from God.

It's, it's, it's a fasting to please God, in the sense that you're starving the flesh. So God said, fasting, like you're doing this day, will not make your voice to be heard on high. Which tells me, if I align my attitude with the fast, it will, God will hear the cries of his people.

Now, he hears prayer, prayer, prayer, people who pray. We started this church without fasting. Being raised, being, being raised in, in part of the health and fitness industry, right? I told you that.

Many of you know, I oversaw gyms and personal training programs, and for years. And fasting was a no-no. What's, what was the rule? Every three, every three hours, got to keep the metabolism going, you got to have your macronutrient portions, you got to, you got to eat, you, you don't want to fast.

If you fast, even for a day, your muscle is going, you're gonna lose muscle, you're gonna deplete your, never fast. Now I have to rewrite one of my books, because what do we know 20 years later? It's wonderful. Actually, for those who are interested in fitness, your body goes into protein sparing mode, and you actually begin to save, you won't use a lot of muscle, you begin to save muscle, because your body knows God designed you where that, that's important.

And it'll begin to feed off of the fat storage, which is the purpose of fat. Did you know that? It's to keep us insulated, of course, but the whole point of fat is, hey, I took too much in, God says, I'll store it. Mainly here, right? For future use.

And that's how the, it's just wonderful to see how the body was designed. So fasting isn't starving. You're basically, you get hungry because your carbohydrate storage in your liver and your muscle is now depleted, about 1600 calories is used first, and then you get grumpy.

And then your body switches to start, that's why you hear the keto diet, ketogenic diet, your body begins to start now using ketone, ketone body's fat, as your primary fuel source. It's a very clean running fuel source, your brain uses it, and you start to feel so much better, clearer thinking, because your body's switching its energy source. So it's not starving.

God knew what he was doing when he designed the body. He actually designed us not to have an in and out on every, in every city, fast food on every corner. We weren't designed to stop and eat all the time.

Our body was just not made that way. And then Psalm 35 says, I wore sackcloth, I afflicted myself with fasting, I prayed with my head bowed to my chest. And we see a lot of scriptures on, on when, when there's a mourning, or a sorrow, or repentance, you see people fasting.

If my people are called by my name, will humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked way. Did you know all four of those have to do with fasting? Fasting accomplishes that. Did you know that our nation used to declare days of prayer and fasting? Abraham Lincoln, you go back I think even to George Washington, many of the, the founding would, would declare days of prayer and fasting.

They would read in Joel, Joel, the prophet Joel, call a sacred assembly, call the leaders together. God has, has, has taken away from the land. We are, we are being ravished by the, the locusts, or the, the

different, the elements that, or God would not bring rain, or heart, there wouldn't be a harvest coming in.

And he would say gather all the leaders, gather the people into the, the, the church, call a sacred assembly, and begin to fast, and pray. Because what happens is my appetite for food is dwindled compared to my appetite for God. You're switching appetites when you fast.

Ezra 8, so we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer. Acts 13 2, while they were worshiping the Lord, and indulging in meat and wine, the Lord said, well let me, oh I messed up. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Lord said, set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

If you want direction from God, I know of no better way than to pray and to fast. Fasting without prayer is just a weight loss program. And prayer without fasting, I believe, I believe, is just, just, just grabbing the hem of Jesus's garment.

It's just the tip of the iceberg. There's so much more when we, when we fast and pray. Especially if you believe that that scripture is in the original text, and I tend to lean that way, I've taught on this before, but some texts don't show that.

When Jesus said, this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting. When the boy was filled with the demon, the disciples couldn't cast it out, and Jesus said, this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting. So again, while they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

So here's the introduction, basically, on this. Fasting will improve your vision, spiritually and physically. Isn't that a double whammy? A double blessing? It doesn't just help you spiritually, it helps you physically.

Anytime Jesus says to do something, he's not gonna say, and when you fast, it's real good spiritually, but you're really gonna, you're really gonna hurt your body. They go together. The spiritual and physical realm often have parallels, don't they? When I'm doing good spiritually, often my body's doing good physically.

Not all the time, people get sick and different things, but overall, they run closely, they're closely related. And when you give into the indulgence of the flesh, and you hurt the body, does that not hurt you spiritually? Everybody should be shaking their head yes, it does. In case you don't know, I'll just tell you up front, you don't have to try this out, it does hurt your body spiritually as well.

So fasting will improve your vision, spiritually and physically. But let's talk about, and I'm hoping I can get through this whole sermon, I don't want to do part two, so just bear with me, I'm gonna go quickly. Physically, what does the body do? And I'm not gonna spend too much time here, you can read all about that in the book I mentioned, Feasting and Fasting, that you can take one if you need one as you're leaving.

When the body rests in that area of digestion, it is allowed to heal. What many call miraculous is really just the way the body was designed. And I'm sure most of you know, this isn't a secret, but most of our diseases, most of our sickness comes from what? What we're putting in, what that affects our health in a very big way.

And it's a word I've, here's a word I've used before, autophagy. You've heard that before, it's a word they've newly discovered. Actually somebody just won a Nobel Prize discovering autophagy.

And it comes from two Greek words, it'd be autophagy, it basically means consuming itself. You are so well designed that your body will begin to go after cancer cells, and disease cells, and tissue that's not healthy, and it'll consume those as fuel. Your body was designed to do that.

So fasting allows autophagy to take place, meaning I have no more energy, I have no stored carbohydrates, so instead of my body starting to consume my liver, my heart, it could, your body could consume organs and different things, it begins to consume the dead and decaying tissue and things that are not healthy in your body, it cleans house. Not only that, new stem cells are regenerated and created. Remember the research on stem cells? Embryonic stem cell research, and adult stem cells, and how important stem cells are.

And actually if you want to get really specific, cancer starts from stem cells. So sometimes if a person shrinks a tumor, say for the radiation or different things, if the stem cell isn't dealt with, it can keep fueling the cancer and the disease. So as we fast, the body says, oh I have no fuel stored, I'm going to begin to consume the dead and decaying cells and tissues.

Dr. Joel Fuhrman said this, the body's wondrous ability to self-digest and destroy needless tissue such as fat, tumors, blood vessel plaque. Did you catch that? You want to clean your blood vessels? Fast. Stop eating this stuff that is causing and creating the capillaries and different things to become more narrow and plaque and things like that.

We don't have time to go into the reason why that happens. Many of you know that why I don't think it's all blamed on cholesterol. I think cholesterol, HDL, LDL, whatever it is, cholesterol is good and God-given.

It's created by God. The problem is a lot of the things we're consuming, the toxins that begin to scar the blood vessels more than they should. They call it inflammation, chronic inflammation.

And the cholesterol rushes there to fix that problem. There shouldn't be that many problems happening throughout our body. But that's what happens when we don't take care of this wonderful gift that God has given us.

If you're convicted, say amen. Okay, good, I'm on track. And your body begins to consume disease tissues while conserving essential tissues.

This gives the fast the ability to restore youth to the system. We teach stewarding our finances here at this church and other churches, don't we? We teach stewarding our marriages. We teach stewarding our spiritual life.

Why should we not teach stewarding our physical body? Wonder what this body, what would your body cost? What's it cost? What's it worth? Would you take ten million dollars if you would give me your eyesight? I don't know anybody that would do that. Maybe you're out there. I don't know.

Ten million dollars for your legs. A hundred million dollars to remove your eyesight and your hearing. A hundred million, put in the bank.

Can you really put a price tag on that? This is the only body we have. This is not a trial run. This is not a test drive.

Of course, we're getting ready for heaven. We're prepared for the bodies that will never perish, never die, never wither, never get diseased, never get unhealthy. But until then, and the reason why I have a passion for this, let me just share some of this with you.

Those who often, and I'm trying to be sensitive here because I know there's people even right now listening to us in the hospital homes, listening to us that can't come here. And I'm not talking about that group of people. I'm assuming you would know that.

It's usually people who are convicted like to throw charges at me that aren't correct. But most people who don't take care of their body don't do much for God. I've noticed it.

I've noticed it. When I was overweight, when I was tired, when I was sluggish, when I was this, when after big meals and eating the wrong foods and I just don't feel good, I have to take this medication to offset this, we just don't do much for God. So I truly believe when the body is running efficiently, we want to do more for God.

That's just not only my opinion, that's what many people bear it out as well in testifying about, giving testimonies on this. But let me remind you, this journey is not only about physical health, it's really about spiritual health. That's what the main reason I go into a fast is for spiritual health.

And be careful who you tell, because not everybody's gonna agree with you. I'll just share something. It hurt my feelings, but I got over it.

I don't think they're here this morning. But on my last fast, I mean let's say I'm 215 pounds now, I got down to 189. Went 21 days, and it was so fulfilling, I wrote a book out of it.

There you go. And it helped so many people so far. But you wouldn't be amazed at the people who said negative things.

Why are you doing that? You don't look as good. Are you sick? That's not good. That's not healthy.

As they're stopping by Carl's Jr., and they're gonna lecture me on what's good and not healthy. But you see, now on my platform, I have to tell a lot of people. A lot of people know.

But didn't Jesus say don't go around telling people, well, we knew he took a 40-day fast. How do we know that? How do we know that Paul fasted? Because he says it. How do we know that Peter fasted? Because, see, it's okay if your heart's right to encourage people.

But if you're like the Pharisees, hey, look at me, day seven. I'm so special. I'm so spiritual.

Oh, you hypocrite. There's your reward. So you can tell people to encourage them.

But many people won't understand. You're family. I've had people come to me a couple times and say, are you okay? Are you sick? What's going on? So not everybody is going to agree with you on this.

And I don't know if you're aware, but both of our hospitals in our area are packed. Amen. Where's Jamie? There you go.

Right? Emergency. We have nurses working in the ERs in both hospitals. They are packed.

People are so sick. They want to build another facility. We cannot accommodate what is happening.

And this is only the tip of the iceberg if America doesn't get her bearings right on what is the real cause of our disease epidemic. Throwing more money at health care is not the answer. Universal health care.

I would love to bless people in all areas, but that is not the answer in and of itself. You have to take good stewardship of your body. Amen? Actually, we had to counsel our medical because of the expense.

And we got onto a share program. And you have to fill out a questionnaire and sign it. Do you drink? Do you smoke? Do you keep your healthy weight? Do you exercise? See, that's a way to do it.

To steward this body that God has given us. And again, my point this morning is not to condemn you. It's to convict you.

It's not to condemn at all. I've been there. If I just look at a chocolate muffin, I'm gaining weight.

So I know. I know how difficult it is. I know.

But I know how good you feel when you're fasting. I know the reward that follows. I know the spiritual insight and the dynamic power that results.

I know how good it feels when you go to your doctor. You go to your doctor and they say, hey, everything looks great. What are you doing? And we have to remember that I love physicians.

I love doctors. But they don't know a lot about health. They don't.

We just took our little baby in to get checked out and they put the temperature thing right under pajamas. You want to put that underneath? Don't get me started. And I try to minister to the doctors I know on health.

A lot of them are overweight. They're sick. Because we've been taught, they've been taught to prescribe a pill and not look at how God designed us.

So the main point I really want to talk about is the spiritual discipline of fasting to strengthen faith. That's what it does. Fasting strengthens faith.

And that's why it's difficult. Why is this discipline so difficult? It's a hunger strike against hell. Nothing hurts more than starving the flesh.

It's difficult but it's so rewarding. And I should tell you up front in case I forget. The first couple days, prepare for hell.

But you get to a point where, I mean, Rick Carr, he's not here I don't think. He was a great example. You know Rick, he's one of our ushers.

He fasted the last time with water only for 21 days. And what was most impressive to me is on Sunday afternoon after church, he would make huge spaghetti dinners with meatballs and spaghetti for the homeless outreach. I text him, you still doing okay? I mean, you're more man than I am.

I don't know if I could sit and make spaghetti all night for the home and while you're fasting. But there gets to a point where your body just doesn't crave those things anymore. It's beginning to clean house.

It's beginning to detox. And I use this word loosely but there's a spiritual high in a good way where it's just this overpresence, the overpowering presence of God. So it strengthens faith.

But I want to tell you about two extremes you have to avoid as we're getting into this, okay? Number one, avoid being a fasting ninja. Gonna fast every day, every week, every month. It's all about fasting.

And you can lose your mind because you become obsessed. Now there's not too many people I know in this congregation that are this way, praise God. But there are people out there who it's just, it's almost like fasting is the only way, the only truth, the only life.

Nobody knows the will of God except through fasting. And that's not true. We know that.

How many prayers has God answered in your life without fasting? I'd say the majority of my prayers God has answered in my ignorance and I did not have to fast. He answered those prayers. I'll tell you, just recently two of my kids were going through some things, sickness or different things, and I was reading a book on prayer at seven o'clock.

I said, why am I reading a book on prayer? I'm just gonna pray. And I made it almost to eight o'clock that night, an hour, just turn off the light and just praying and fell asleep eventually. You say eight o'clock's early, I know, praise God, it was nice.

But both the kids were great the next day. One had an ear infection and wax that kept coming out of her. You're just like, what is going on? The doctors, of course, want to prescribe.

Here's your amoxicillin for ten days. She's eight months old. Why don't we give her an antibiotic, which means against life.

But anyway, it's okay in some cases. I'm not against that. So anyway, she was fine the next day, and the other daughter just having issues with breathing and different things.

It was a night she just, all night, she just, from what I listened, she was fine. It was just amazing. I feel that God answered those prayers.

I truly do. There was assurance. There was a peace that came over me.

Now, will they maybe struggle with that again? Of course. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, I have a feeling he still died. So, you know, some people say, you know, just give up.

But the enemy still wants our family. He wants our health. So, fasting ninjas.

Don't be a fasting ninja. This is not a secret formula. This isn't a secret formula.

Remember, I even wrote down the three homemade cookies. Homemade chocolate chip cookies. But I already told you that story.

That I had those cookies and God moved. I've blown a fast and God moved. It's not a secret formula.

And I think God doesn't want us to get the credit. It's like, okay, I fasted. God, you do this.

God says, no, you fast, you align your heart with mine, and I'll do what I will do when I do it. So, don't get too extreme on this issue. But number two is probably what most of us struggle with.

We say fasting isn't for us today. And I'm gonna read a prominent teacher. I was gonna tell you his name, but I'm not going to.

But he said this. It was disheartening, actually, for me to read this. But I had a feeling he believed this.

Jesus's silence on the area of fasting shows you shouldn't preoccupy yourself with it. Teachers today should not elevate it when Jesus left it in the shadows. Such silence is inconceivable if God intended a regular, detailed approach to fasting to be an ongoing part of the life of every believer.

So, let me read this again. Jesus's silence on the area of fasting. Hmm.

Well, he fasted 40 days. He said, when you give, when you pray, and when you fast, he goes on to say, let your fasting be seen of God. When the bridegroom is gone, you will fast.

How many more times you want him to talk about it? But see, we like to find excuses in things. Anything we don't like what the Bible says, we call it legalism. Correct? Many people do.

Moses received direction when fasting. Ezra secured the people on their journey when he fasted. Esther survived the wicked plans against her and the Jews by fasting.

Daniel received insight when he fasted. Now, this is interesting. I don't really call Daniel fast a fast.

It's a clean eating healthy program. It's a clean eating program. Fasting is eliminating food.

You have mainly water. What about juice fasting? It's not juice. It's not fasting.

It's juice feasting. You're still having juice. Fasting is when there's nothing entering your body except water.

Now, you can try going on without water, but I don't recommend it. Unless God has you do that. But why was Daniel's fast so effective? Well, have you ever tried to eat junk food and juice and Coke and meat? You'll turn into a mean person just trying to limit those things.

It's funny. Daniel eliminated all the things that the flesh lusts for. When was the last time you lusted for broccoli? They called it pulse.

It was pulse. It was a mixture of nuts and vegetables. I'm not lusting for cashews.

You put salt on them, maybe you got me. But see, he starved the body from the things it was lusting for. That's why it was so effective.

And Jesus strengthened himself by fasting. Paul said it's a spiritual discipline. He said, I was in much agony and I was shipwrecked.

And he said, in many fastings. But let's look at this just for a minute. What did the early church believe? Something called the didache or diachte, however you pronounce it.

I want to pronounce both different ways. It was written around 70 AD to 140 AD, they estimate. And it said this, before the baptism, the one who baptizes and the one being baptized must fast.

And any others who can, you must tell the one being baptized to fast for one or two days beforehand. The shepherd of Hermes, he said, this fasting is very good provided the commandments of the Lord be observed. St. Basil the Great, fasting gives birth to prophets and strengthens the powerful.

Fasting makes lawgivers wise. Fasting is a good safeguard for the soul, a steadfast companion for the body. Have you heard of Polycarp? Ever mentioned that name? Polycarp was actually a disciple of John, who is a disciple of Jesus.

Wonder if he had anything to say about fasting. Well, Shane, you probably checked it out. Of course, I would check it out before saying that.

He said this, he wrote a letter to the Philippians. He warns against the temptation of false teachers and heresy and believers, and heresy turning away believers. He said, let us turn back to the word which was delivered to us in the beginning, watching unto prayer and persevering in fasting.

These are all early churches. So where did this jewel go? Where did this gem of fasting go? What's declined mainly in the last 100 years? Mainly a lot of things through teaching, like I just read to you earlier. It's in the shadows.

Jesus didn't talk about it. If fasting was important, they would have outlined how to do it and when to do it, and that just doesn't hold any weight. It's often because these people don't want to fast.

And I'm gonna make a statement here. I was hoping I would forget about it because I even took it out of my notes yesterday, but maybe somebody needs to hear this. Often those who have not been mightily filled with God's Spirit often do not want to fast.

It's just what I've noted over the years, what I've seen over the years, those who need a mighty filling of God's Spirit, they've quenched and grieved the Spirit of God, they do not want to fast. They need to, but they don't want to. They also don't like to come to prayer meetings.

They also don't want to get too worshipful. Hey, that's enough. That's enough.

We did 15 minutes. Come on. Cut it off now, guys.

That's a little too... See, it's the whole package. When someone is Spirit-filled, they want more of God. They want more worship.

They want more prayer. They want more fasting. They want to be on their knees before God and cry out to Him.

And these leaders who don't like fasting, I've read in their books where they will put down people who spend all night praying. They'll put down people who might wear grooves in their hardwood floors because of praying after 20 years, because they've never experienced that, and that's why they mock it. The lust of the flesh is one of three bullets that Satan uses, correct? Do you know the bullets that Satan puts in his gun? They are very simple.

It's gonna be the same three every time. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, what the eye wants, covetousness, the flesh, what the flesh craves, and the pride of life. Oh, pride is deadly, is it not? Pride is deadly.

Pride is so deadly that right now it's working in some of you why you should not fast, why you should not humble yourself and fast. Well, how can you say that? Because it happens to me too. I'm starting a fast, and my flesh is already negotiating.

Shane, just try the Daniel fast. You don't need to get that. My flesh is already negotiating with me, telling me how I'm going to fast, and I'm not listening to the voice of the flesh.

We're gonna listen to the Spirit of God and seek God and see what... You would not believe what has happened when I told my wife I'm gonna fast. I'm planning for it. The week which is coming up, I get called for jury duty.

You ever jury duty on fasting? No, no, I don't think so. So I had to get online, contact them, postpone that, and then this coming week, on Thursday, this coming week, I get a text that the mayor wants me and a few other pastors to meet at his house for dinner and talk about our community. So I told the guy, well, I'm fasting.

I don't think that's gonna look real good. No, you're right. You don't need to come.

Right? Because, you know, and then the place I'm going, I usually go for just a couple days. I just found out it's closed because the power went out. So stuck at home with five kids trying to fast the first couple days is very difficult.

So all these things. So now my flesh is negotiating. Hey, let's just change this plan around.

Let's just go to easy fast. And the flesh hates being starved because you are taking away its power. I talked to the men yesterday.

You want to decrease, you want to get rid of lust in your life for a season? Fast. Fast. It will take away that drive many times, completely, because you're starving.

You often, do you see often the gluttony and sexual sin is tied together? It often is. Because once you give up, once you give into one area of life in the flesh, it begins to affect all other areas. You know it's all connected.

Come on. This isn't, I'm not speaking to a bunch of people who just became Christians last week. You know it's all connected.

Leonard Ravenhill said this, how can you pull down strongholds of Satan if you don't even have the strength to turn off the TV? But I changed it for you. How can we pull down the strongholds of Satan if we don't even have the strength to say no to food? The weapon we use, the weapons we use to fight Satan are spiritual, correct? They should match the warfare. Not by might, not by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord.

So if you want 20-20 vision, what is 20-20 vision? You see, I mean I don't have to explain it, but at 20 feet, some of you know better than I, but 20 feet you can see what a normal person would say. Let's see, 20-100 vision is at 100 feet. In other words, your eyesight is terrible with 20-100 vision.

20-20 is normal, good vision. It talks about clarity, sharpness, coordination, depth perception, and focusing are all normal. And I thought what a good analogy, what a good parallel with us, because when you fast there is a clarity, there's a sharpness, your coordination is better, your mind is clear, your depth perception

is right on, you're focused, you're attuned, the spiritual and the physical are going together.

20-20 vision. You can have 20-20 vision spiritually speaking. I think many times we miss it because we're not in a season of prayer and fasting.

Can you imagine this? How many of you are wanting God to answer prayers or you're needing direction in an area of your life? You don't have to raise your hand, you can if you want. Let's do that because I'll start. I am, I've got a list going.

What about if you said, Lord, I'm going to, I'm gonna not eat today. I'm gonna take my Bible, I'm gonna take a drive or go somewhere. If you're a woman, you have kids, have a hubby watch them, rotate, you know, it's okay to do that.

And then, Lord, I want to hear from you today. I'm gonna go all day, I'm just gonna seek you, I'm gonna put you on my calendar, you're my priority. I want to hear from you in this area.

Do you think at the end of the day you're not gonna have any extra insight, any assurance, any other direction? Now, you might not hear from heaven, but I guarantee you'll be better for it. I better, I know you'll have, when I do that, I have peace now that, okay, I'm in a season of waiting. I don't need to know because there's a peace, a peace of God that surpasses all understanding, comes upon you when you, when you begin to, to, to, to seek Him in this area.

And what I do is when that hunger comes, that's when I pray. Here comes, for me, it's a reminder to pray for my kids, my family, for you at this church. Many people, many people that you don't know, we pray for you.

We see it on the prayer list, we see things on Facebook, we pray for your marriage, we pray for your health issues, we pray for a loss that you had, we pray for so many different things, and that hunger signals the time to pray. It's a battle, it's a hunger strike against hell. So let's get into some application before we close out.

What do you think? Application, fasting with a purpose intensifies your prayers. So you have to, what is your purpose? You can't just say, well, that was a good sermon, I'm going to try this later today, and just try it. And at about four hours into it, your flesh will win.

What was I thinking? I'm not made to fast. You know how many years I avoided fasting because I'm hypoglycemic, and I have low blood sugars, and I don't feel very well when I don't have food every three hours? Come to find out I was addicted to sugar, and caffeine, so that kind of narrowed that down. But we have all these excuses.

And when you begin to say, okay, I'm fasting with a purpose, Lord, I can't just jump into this, I'm on high blood pressure medication, I've got to take my medication. And that's true, but when you're fasting, your blood pressure lowers, so make sure you see a doctor and regulate that correctly. There's so many benefits to fasting.

For example, many people don't know this, I'm still shocked, type 2 diabetes. Have you heard of that? You might have it. Do you know people who have it? That is diet-related.

That disease, we have a disease that they call an epidemic. We have a disease in our nation that is bankrupting the healthcare system in many cases. We have a disease that is preventable by our diet.

But instead of doctors saying, do this, they say, here, take this. Now, I'm not saying not to take things, please don't misunderstand, but I am saying how many of those who take things can get off of those things if they wanted to, if they restructured their lifestyle? And if you don't like what I'm saying, could it be that you need to hear what I'm saying? Could it be? And if you're upset, take it to God. Take it to God.

Ask Him. I'm fully on board with repenting or saying, I apologize if I have misspoken according to God's word, if I've taken things too far, if I've done things the wrong way. But I don't come up here with a pointing a finger, I come up here with a broken heart.

Because I've seen people being in the fitness industry, that's one thing I have seen. I have seen thousands, yes, thousands of people change their life, get off medication, hold their grandkids again by changing their diet. I've seen it.

I've seen it firsthand. I know it's difficult. So here's the application.

You have to have a purpose. And that purpose intensifies with prayer. So here's what I would do.

Number one, here's what I'm doing. Ask God. Even if you can only go a day, you can keep starving the flesh, just ask Daniel.

The people say, well, Shane, I can't really fast that long. Well, you can get off everything you're addicted to and do it. Be careful, right? I know people who went cold turkey on coffee and they turn into a monster.

You got to maybe exchange it for green tea and prepare for headaches, prepare for hell, but pray for heaven, but plan on hell. And it shows how addicted we are. I mean, I've done it where I've went days without sugar, I turn into Jekyll and Hyde.

This stuff is powerful. So you can fast from the things that are addictive if you can only go a day or half day without water. Ask God.

Seek Him. Let Him answer that. List the prayer needs.

List your prayer needs. This is so important. I have three by five cards, and I list the prayer needs.

And what do I do? I attack, and I attack again, and I attack again, and I hit it again, and I hit it again, and I hit... Sometimes the prodigal son doesn't always come home. Sometimes the wayward daughter doesn't always call that same day. But you go and you attack again, and you keep on, and you keep on.

That's why he says, break down strongholds, bring the sledgehammer out one brick at a time, one brick at a time, one prayer at a time. What I've noticed, it's usually through persevering prayer that our prayers are answered. Praying clear through even when you don't feel like it.

Going days, and weeks, and months, saying, God, I know you hear me. I'm going to keep pressing. And why? Because it's a battle.

What soldier shows up on the battlefield, shoots one shell, and the war is over? What? Who does that? Doesn't. It's a fight. It's a battle.

That's why I told the men yesterday, get back up and fight again. But Shane, I'm discouraged. I'm beat down.

You bet you are. But you put on your big boy pants and get back up and fight again. God didn't call you to live in a state of being defeated.

God called you to live in a place of victory. If you don't believe that, look to the scriptures. They will see you through.

So list the prayer needs and then attack, and attack again. My hunger for prayer to be answered outweighs my hunger for food. Have the right attitude.

Don't grumble and complain. Amen? I grumble and complain on my fast. I'm just telling you up front, pray for me.

Expect God to answer, number four, expect God to answer impossible prayers that align with His will. Expect God to answer impossible prayers. That's why I love that song.

The same God who raises the dead and heals and restores, that God we still worship. I love the verse from 1 Corinthians, eye has not seen nor ear heard nor has it entered in the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. Now, that can be talking about heaven.

But I looked at the context of who Paul was quoting. He was quoting Isaiah 64. And Isaiah said, from ancient times, no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God but you who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him.

If you believe the scriptures are in error as I do, I believe that scripture. It says, God waits on behalf of those... or God acts on behalf of those who wait for Him. Fasting is part of waiting on God.

I'm hungry right now, Lord, but I'm saying no and I'm pressing in, I'm pressing in. You don't know what breakthroughs are just on the horizon, are just there and that need to be broken through at this hour and in this season. I believe our nation needs to call back days of fasting and prayer.

Pray for America as you're fasting. And really at the core of this fasting is persistence. What is persistence? It's a continuation in a course of action in spite of difficulty and opposition.

We need to start preparing Christians for the real warfare. We persevere regardless, regardless of the opposition. So here's what happens.

I'm going to share just... I'm going to end with what I told them in yesterday. Prayer and fasting sets the guard in place. It puts a guard on the... How much safer would you feel having Navy SEALs at your front and backyard? Or SWAT team, whatever, just they're there.

That's what prayer and fasting does. It sets the guard over your home. Mark 14, 38, watch and pray.

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. So there's a guarding, there's a keeping watch, there's staying spiritually alert.

All of this happens through prayer and fasting. Psalm 119, I rise up before dawn and I cry out for help. You know it's okay to do that? I gave the man permission yesterday.

I said, you can cry out for help. You can. That doesn't sound very manly, no, but it sounds very godly.

We have to stop worrying about being manly and start worrying about what it means to be godly. These same men who don't want to worship God will go out and do incredible things in the name of sin. So they rise up before dawn, they cry out for help.

I wait for your word. Do you do that? If you need God to answer, begin to pray and fast and rise up early and cry out for help. God, I need you today.

God, I need you today. You know a prayer I've been praying all month? I'm going to give you a little nugget into my prayer life. I pray, God, and I mean this.

If I don't mean this, God, please show me my heart. But I pray, God, I don't want to be well-known. I don't want to be popular.

I want the power and presence of you in my life until the day I die and I don't care about anything else. I want the power and presence in the lives of my children and in my family and in the church. God, we don't need a name for ourselves.

We need the power and presence of God. That's what we need today. I also told a story yesterday of a man, I don't remember who it was, I heard it a while back.

He was going through a lot and he pulled up two chairs. One chair here, one chair here. And he sat down and he said, Devil, you're going to sit and watch me worship.

Oh, I love that. Devil, you're going to sit and watch me fast. You're going to watch me worship God.

I'm going to persevere. I'm going to continue in a course of action despite difficulties and opposition. That's why when you read all these scriptures that people take out of context, when he says you are the head and not the tail, you are above and not beneath, you are a child of God, you are a heir of the kingdom of God, you have been given all these graces and all these blessings in Christ Jesus.

This comes from a persistent fighting attitude. A fight that a person that gets back up and fights again. Though the enemy has got your children, though the enemy has got your grandchildren, though the enemy has got you bound, you fight.

You get up and fight. We don't become passive and upset and disgruntled. That's when the enemy moves.

A true believer gets up and fights. And they keep fighting regardless of what it looks like, the outcome. I don't see any outcome.

What's the point? Well, without faith it's impossible to please God. Could it be? Could it be? Could it be that God is testing faith? We have this perception, many Christians have this perception, that they have to see what God is doing. I have to see the results or I'm going to give up.

I think we miss it. I think it's more important to say, God, I don't see the results, but your word says, and I'm trusting you, I'm holding you at your word. Even now I can get frustrated and people email me and say, ha, ha, ha, ha, look at America's falling apart.

Why do you keep saying if my people are called by my name, if they humble himself? Because I'm going to do that until the day I die. Your word says, if we humble ourselves, your word says the God of heaven hears the cries of revival. Oh God, waken your people.

Your word says it and I trust you. I have faith that can move a mountain. I don't see it.

I don't feel it, but God, I trust in you. And you get back on track and that faith begins to turn into a mighty power within you because regardless of results, I trust in you. That's the position that a person must have during this battle with Satan.

So I just want to encourage you, if you've never fasted, if you're not sure about it, just pray, pray and Google all scriptures about fasting. If you're not convicted after reading that, I don't know what to tell you because it's throughout the entire Bible to pray and to fast, to pray and to fast.

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