

HOLY CLUBS LEARNING SERIES
BEN ATKINSON

HOW TO
FAST
SAFELY &
SUCCESSFULLY

PRACTICAL PROVEN PRINCIPLES TO
HELP YOU OVERCOME IN FASTING

MUST READ!!!

Three real life stories that will inspire you to dream God size dreams, and then fast & pray until they come to life.

HOW TO FAST SAFELY AND SUCCESSFULLY

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Text taken from: *"The Rewards of Fasting"* by Mike Bickle and Dana Candler
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*“But the days will come when the
Bridegroom will be taken away from them,
and then they will fast”*

- Jesus Christ

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRO: HOW TO FAST SAFELY & SUCCESSFULLY	1
YOU CAN DO THIS.....	1
WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THIS BOOK?	1
HOW TO READ THIS BOOK?	1
STEP-BY-STEP TO STARTING YOUR FAST	1
PART 1: MY JOURNEY WITH FASTING	1
STORY OF MY JOURNEY WITH FASTING.....	4
WHY DOES GOD WANT OR DESIRE US TO FAST?	6
DUTY. DISCIPLINE. DELIGHT.....	8
EIGHT DIFFERENT KINDS OF FASTING IN THE BIBLE.....	9
PART 2: PRACTICAL TIPS TO HELP YOU FAST	11
WE ARE ALL CALLED TO FAST	11
FASTING IS ALWAYS VOLUNTARY.....	11
WE FAST FROM SOMETHING TO GIVE OURSELVES TO SOMETHING.	11
FASTING WEEKLY.....	11
WHAT DO YOU FAST FROM?	11
DON'T ASK AND DON'T TELL.....	12
CHOOSING YOUR FAST	12
BEFORE YOU FAST, IT IS IMPORTANT TO CHOOSE THE TYPE OF FAST	12
GUM ON A FAST	12
THE THREE DAY MARK	13
WATER IS YOUR FRIEND	13
WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FASTS?	13
DIFFERENT LENGTHS OF FAST YOU CAN DO.....	15
HOW TO FAST AND PRAY WITH CHILDREN	21
HOW TO BREAK A FAST	23
WHY ARE THE REWARDS OF FASTING SO IMPORTANT?.....	25
UNDERSTANDING THE BRIDEGROOM FAST	26
THE BOOK OF DANIEL - A LIFESTYLE OF FASTING.....	28
DANIEL'S FASTED LIFESTYLE	28
START YOUR FAST.....	30

THEIR OUTCOMES	30
INTRODUCTION	30
STORY 1: FASTING FOR WOMEN IN IRAN.....	32
8 LESSONS I LEARNED FROM MY DREAMS	33
GOD WAS WORKING FROM THE FIRST DAY WE STARTED TO PRAY	38
WHY I BELIEVE HEARTS OF MOTHERS WILL TURN NATIONS BACK TO GOD....	40
SCRIPTURES THAT SHOW THE VALUE AND PURPOSE OF WOMEN.....	40
DREAM ONE: PRAYING WOMEN.....	42
DREAM TWO: THE WOMAN OF AZUSA	43
DREAM THREE: UNITED WOMEN.....	44
REMEMBER DREAMS ARE AN INVITATION TO FOLLOW GOD	44
STORY 2: YOU CAN FAST LIKE ESTHER.....	44
JESUS' DREAM: AFRICAN AMERICAN PRIESTHOOD	45
6 MONTHS AFTER WE MOVED FROM RICHMOND TO KANSAS CITY	46
ONE MONTH LATER	48
11.11.11. THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CALL	50
GOD BRINGS DIVINE REVELATION DURING THE ESTHER FAST	51
BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF GREECE AND PERSIA	53
DIVINE REVELATION ON A FAST USUALLY FOLLOWS THIS FORMULA:	54
DAVID WAS THE LIVING ANSWER TO OUR PRAYERS	55
STORY 3: FASTING & PRAYING WITH MY WIFE UNTIL GOD ANSWERS... 	55
A MOTHER AND FATHER, FAST AND PRAY	56
AWAKENING IN EUROPE #VISITATIONOFJESUS	58
GOD'S GLORY IS COMING TO THE NEXT GENERATION	60
YOUNG PEOPLE YOU ARE CALLED!!!	61

INTRO: HOW TO FAST SAFELY & SUCCESSFULLY

YOU CAN DO THIS!!!

Welcome! Whether you are a person seasoned in fasting or this is your first time, we are so glad you are here. We get to do this, and the best is yet to come. Now, to begin your journey, I want to give you these three important areas:

1. Children should never fast from food. Instead, they can fast from the media and/or sugar.
2. If you have a medical condition DO NOT FAST WITHOUT SEEKING YOUR PHYSICIAN FIRST.
3. If you struggle with any eating disorder please fast with friends (and please refrain from fasting food; you can fast from media).

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THIS BOOK?

The goal of this book is to help you fast, safely and successfully. I, Ben Atkinson, served on staff with Mike Bickle at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City for over a decade. It was during that time that I learned how to fast in a safe and enjoyable way. I know that sounds like an oxymoron. However, I truly enjoy fasting. My hope and prayer is that you will be able to enter into a fast and grow your heart closer to the Lord while participating in His plans and purpose for your life. You really do matter to God, and you have a part to play in His Kingdom coming to earth. God could bring Heaven to earth with the snap of His divine fingers—but He's waiting to partner with you.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK?

This book is broken up into 3 parts:

- PART 1 - My Journey With Fasting
- PART 2 - Practical Tips to Help You Fast.
- PART 3 - Three Inspiring Stories of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes.

Many people asked me why I added the 3 profound stories. Why not leave them out for the next book? The answer is that I hope these stories help equip, encourage, and inspire you. Ultimately, this is the goal of this book. The stories are in three parts. First, God gives me a dream or revelation. Second, I gain His heart through searching the Bible and praying. Third, I walked out the story with friends over the years. Honestly, I could have left the stories out and just given you a short book, but instead I gave you both: a short book on the practical's, followed by the stories to inspire you. Read both and I know you will accomplish much with our Lord.

STEP-BY-STEP TO STARTING YOUR FAST

1. Read through this book completely.
2. Choose which type of fast you are going to do.
3. Invite a friend to fast and pray with you
4. Set a schedule together of when you are going to start and end your fast.
5. Organize what you are going to eat, drink, and sleep.
6. Set a schedule of what you would like to study in the Bible or pray.
7. Pray for the grace of God to fast.

PART 1

MY JOURNEY WITH FASTING

Part 1: My Personal Journey With Fasting

STORY OF MY JOURNEY WITH FASTING

I have a love-hate relationship with fasting. I love the results of fasting, but I do not like going through a fast step by step. I remember my first fast like it was yesterday. My mom's twin sister was sick and had to go to the hospital. She was getting some type of surgery. I don't remember what. I assumed that God really wanted me to fast so that the surgery would go well. I was a young, naive 14-year-old at the time. So, one morning I decided today was the day I would fast and pray for my aunt. Just a side note: I was training for an upcoming triathlon, which meant each morning I would have to do an hour of biking, running, and swimming. I did this all before I ate breakfast. Typically, I was not able to actually eat my breakfast till 10 AM. So, on the day of the fast, I got up extra early and rode my bike to a spot 5 miles away. (Normally I would bike for 10 to 20 miles, so the five miles was not very arduous).

Later I arrived at the spot: Now, this was no ordinary spot. This was the spot I had picked out to pray, the place where I knew a miracle could happen and my aunt would be made well. (I was very excited about this potential miraculous God moment I was about to have). As a youngster, I thought stories of biblical proportions would be written about this fast, this place that I chose to pray, and this miraculous moment. (Don't laugh. I was young, and a legend in my own mind).

I arrived at the location on my bike, pulled my bike off the side of the road, and then I walked into the woods. There I found the miraculous location, gently folded my hands together, slowly closed my eyes, and faithfully started to pray. Nothing major happened at that moment, which was kind of disappointing, because I was expecting God to meet me with some kind of glorious Angel or trumpet sound. (After all, I was taking time to fast and pray, and I assumed these were two powerful things and that He would at least have to send an angel to meet me). Because nothing was happening, I began to ask what I should do to change things. Then I remembered a picture on my wall back home. It was an older man and his wife kneeling down in a potato field. They were thanking God at noon, while the bell over the church was chiming. Not to be outdone, and wanting a marvelously, gloriously, stupendously preordained moment with God, I got down on my knees and began to pray.

Honestly, I don't even know what I prayed. But somehow, I got hungry. Remember, normally I wouldn't have eaten until 10:00 AM. If I recall correctly it was closer to 7:30 AM at the time I was praying. So, my body wasn't even ready to have food. But there I was in the woods facing the first big hurdle in my first major fast. Should I break the fast or should I continue to pray? Interestingly enough, I don't really remember my aunt's life being in danger. However, it was important. But it was at that moment that I failed my first test in fasting. I gave up on my fast. I had never pedaled so hard as that day, as I raced home at breakneck speed. I dropped my 10 speed in the front yard, burst through the door, and commenced to run to the kitchen, devouring whatever I could put my hands on. Oh, the woes of a 14-year-old in their first fast.

I learned an important lesson that day. Fasting is something God wants us to do, but we can't do it safely or successfully in our own strength. Jesus says when you fast, not if you fast (Matthew 6:16). On that day I learned that I had a role to play in my aunts' recovery. God wanted me to partner with Him, and I was not able to. Honestly, I struggled that day with the thought, "Does God like me or not?" After all, I had just broken a fast, and now my aunt's life was hanging in the balance.

Part 1: My Personal Journey With Fasting

Throughout the day, I waited to hear how the surgery went. I remember begging God to give me a second chance. I'm sure that I did not skip lunch that day. Towards the evening, my mother told me my aunt was fine, and my evening dinner never tasted so fine. But the biggest lesson I learned that day was that God delights in me whether I keep fasting or I break a fast.

When I was learning to fast as a young leader in the body of Christ at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, my friend and mentor Mike Bickle used to say, *"If you fail during a fast, just push delete and start over again."* That really is amazingly simple and yet such a profound statement. Mike would also remind us that God delights in us no matter our failures and shortcomings. Fasting is not getting God to like you more, nor is it manipulating God or controlling God. Fasting positions our heart in weakness and allows God to be strong.

It is important for us to learn how to fast according to God's grace. I call this *"grace-driven fasting."* This is when we partner with God's grace to help us during the fast. Instead of trying to do it by ourselves, or in our own strength, we cooperate with His power and strength—GRACE. This does not mean we will not have any negative physical side effects, and our fast will just be so glorious. (Yes, you will have hunger pains). Instead, when we will cooperate with God's grace, He helps in our weakness. God is gracious; therefore, He extends His grace to us. God's grace is His unmerited gift or favor. Simply put, this means God blesses us when we don't deserve it. God has power to help us overcome and be successful. However, we must follow in God's ways in order to cooperate with His grace.

John the Baptist is a perfect example of cooperating with the grace of God in his life. John allowed God to increase fully in his life and help him in every way. The strength of God increased in John's life as the physical flesh of John decreased. So, it was not John doing his life and ministry, but Christ in him—the hope of glory working by the grace of God. (And it is important to know that John lived a fasted lifestyle. He lived simplistically with what he ate, what he wore, where he lived, and how he spent his time and money.)

John said this, *"He must increase I must decrease"* (John 3:30). This discussion was started after John's disciples were arguing with others about a certain way to be purified. John's disciples, not wanting to be outdone by the other person they were arguing with, came to John to get validation for what they had said. John, being the consummate disciple maker, declared to them that no one can have anything (the power and anointing of God) unless they get it from heaven. And then he said the phrase, *"He must increase and I must decrease."* It's important to look clearly at what John said. Look closely at the word order of this text. He first said, *"Jesus must increase,"* then he said, *"I must decrease."* This is so important in grace driven fasting.

Grace—driven fasting implies that God is helping us. He becomes stronger and we become weaker, because His grace takes over. In order for God to help us, we first must understand that He is all powerful, He loves us, He has our best interest at hand, and He wants to help us. He wants you to fast safely and successfully.

In essence, we must know who God is, what He thinks and feels about us, and what He wants to do for us. John the Baptist understood that his ministry was not about himself. Instead, he was preparing the way of the Lord. John's ministry was to highlight the coming of Jesus the Messiah. John was

Part 1: My Personal Journey With Fasting

anointed from heaven, or given power from heaven to do this. John did not magnify his own ministry. Instead he magnified Jesus. Therefore, the first thing that was first place in John's life and ministry was to magnify Jesus—GOD MUST INCREASE.

John also understood who God was and what God had planned in his generation. John the Baptist looked at Jesus (studying Isaiah 40), kept his own heart pure (by living a fasted lifestyle), talked about Jesus (by proclaiming the message of repentance and the Kingdom of God was coming), prepared the people (by preaching and baptizing them), and he was faithful to the end (as he was martyred). Jesus said, "John was the greatest man ever born of a woman" (Matthew 11:11).

Why was John the greatest man ever born of a woman? Simply put, he gave his life fully to the Lord and became a vessel for God's grace to flow through. John was faithful to allow Jesus to increase in his life and ministry. Everything he did made a way for Jesus to increase. As John did this, his life and ministry decreased, John became weaker physically with his time and energy, but the grace of God, the power of God, the anointing of God increased in John's life. John cooperated with the grace of God to finish his ministry.

If we live like John the Baptist, then we will allow the grace of God to work in our life. We do this by grace—driven fasting. We allow God to increase in our lives, we become weaker physically, and then in the grace of God we can walk forth in victory.

WHY DOES GOD WANT OR DESIRE US TO FAST?

It is important to know that God does not need us to fast, but He wants us to fast. God is not in need. He is all sufficient and all powerful. Jesus lived a fasted lifestyle and so should we. God commands us and invites us to fast (Matt. 6:16-17). We are specially called to fast in order to grow closer in love with Jesus, and to partner with Him in the work of the kingdom until He returns (Matthew 9:13-15). To understand further, let's look at Psalm chapter 2. David, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was listening to a conversation between the Father in heaven and the Son of God (Jesus).

Psalm 2

*"Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying,
"Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us."
He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The Lord shall hold them in derision.
Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:
"Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion."*

Part 1: My Personal Journey With Fasting

*"I will declare the decree:
The Lord has said to Me,
'You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me, and I will give You
The nations for Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth for Your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' "*
*Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
Serve the Lord with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish in the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."*

The Psalm starts off with David bringing clarity and understanding to the position of our Father in heaven regarding His relationship with humanity, in particular the kings of the earth. Verses 1-3, David tells the story of the nations raging and plotting against God the Father in heaven and against Jesus, whom David affectionately calls the "Anointed." Then in verses 4, 5 and 6, David shares the authority and power of God the Father. He does this by explaining the Father is the only one who can set a leader on the throne in Jerusalem. And then in verse 7-9 Jesus is introduced as sharing conversations that the Father has had with Him before time existed physically on earth. Jesus explained that His Father wanted Him to ask for the nations, or intercede for the Salvation of the people in the nations.

In order to understand the word, "Ask" we have to look at Psalm 110.

Psalm 110

*The LORD (Yahweh; the Father) said to my Lord (Jesus),
"Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool."*

*The LORD (the Father) shall send the rod of Your (Jesus')
strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!*

*Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power; in the beauties of holiness, from the
womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth.*

*The LORD (the Father) has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever according to the
order of Melchizedek."*

The Lord (Jesus) is at Your right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath.

*He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill the places with dead bodies, He shall execute
the heads of many countries.*

In Psalm 110:1, the Father asked Jesus to sit at His right hand. The Father is asking Jesus to sit at His right hand after the complete or finished work of the cross. Then the Father declares His power will go out of Zion, or heaven, and defeat the enemies. How is this going to happen? Through a

Part 1: My Personal Journey With Fasting

powerful volunteer army that God raises up. This is not an ordinary army. David gives us insight that this is an army of holy righteous women and men—a volunteer army. They are more consumed with the beauty of God in the spirit of holiness than they are the pleasures of this world.

Picture this: God the Father majestically sitting on His throne in heaven and Jesus, the faithful Son whose hands and side are scarred, reminding all who see of the glory of the cross and resurrection. Also, picture the Holy Spirit, 7 lamps of fire (Rev. 4:5) burning powerfully, while searching out the deep things of the Father's heart (1 Cor. 2:10). Surrounding them are four amazing living creatures each with six wings and eyes all around, and they never stop staring at God and singing, "*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God almighty, who was, and is, and who is to come*" (Rev. 4:8). Around this glorious throne are 24 elders, taking the crowns that they have been given, and casting them before God as they are overwhelmed and kneel before His glory and power. As they cast their crowns before Him while singing, "*You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created*" (Rev. 4:11). God's glory and power are bursting forth with lightning, thundering and voices in every direction as multitudes of angel's worship and give praise to God. But it's important to note where Jesus is.

Jesus is at the right hand of the Father forever living to make intercession for us (Rom. 8:34). Jesus is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:7-8). This means that Jesus chose to save you and me from our sins before earth existed physically. But Jesus didn't just save us from something—He saved us for something. He saved us so that we could worship God and grow in love with Him day by day. And like John the Baptist, He saved us so we could fulfill His plan and purpose for our life.

Today, the Father could just think a thought and everything would be brought into perfect order. Instead, after Jesus went to the cross and rose again, He asked Jesus to sit at His right hand and intercede (or pray for you and me). Remember, Psalm chapter 2 that Jesus would, "*Ask for the nations.*" (This means to ask for people to be saved in the grace of God.) Jesus is right now asking for the Gospel to be preached in all the world as a witness according to Matthew chapter 24 verse 14. Psalm 110:3 says, "*That God will do this through a volunteer army.*" And they will have, "*The dew of Your youth*" (Ps. 110:3; God's strength not our strength). This means God is raising up a glorious voluntary army of men and women who stare at God in the beauty of holiness, allow their lives be transformed by His beautiful holiness (holy), and they are empowered to share the gospel on earth by the glory and grace of God (the dew of His youth; Ps. 110:3). This is an awesome reality—you made the team!

It is through this volunteer army that God the Father's heart is made known. He wants to have a family (sons and daughters living with Him forever). And this is where you and I come in. This is where we're called to fast according to the grace of God. God has a plan to place His Son Jesus on the throne in Jerusalem. And He is asking you and I to participate in this glorious reality. Again, God could snap His fingers and everything would come together exactly how He wants. Instead, He sent His Son as the sacrifice that would take away our sins, and empowers us to partner with Him in the glorious gospel being preached. Therefore, the Father is sitting in heaven waiting for you and I to participate.

Fasting is an opportunity for God to increase, God's strength to increase, and our strength to decrease. We are that volunteer army that was spoken about in Psalm 110:3. So, God does not need us

Part 1: My Personal Journey With Fasting

to fast and pray, but he wants us to partner and participate with Him. Moreover, the grace of fasting is a gift to the Church. God gives grace to fast. You will receive it as you ask for it (2 Pet. 1:2; 3:18). You are called to experience the joy and benefits of a fasted lifestyle. In Isaiah 58, God ordained fasting to (1) loosen the bonds of wickedness; (2) undo heavy burdens; (3) help the oppressed go free; (5) give bread to the hungry; (6) receive the light of revelation in God's Word; (7) for emotional and physical health; and (8) that righteousness would break forth. TODAY, pray for the grace of God to fast. We get to go on this journey—WE GET TO FAST.

DUTY. DISCIPLINE. DELIGHT.

Fasting by nature is not easy, but it gets better the more that we do it. Fasting starts off as a "duty." It is something that we know we must do according to the teaching of Jesus (Matt. 6:16). After you continue in a rhythm or season of fasting, your heart, mind, will, and emotions begin to change. (It takes 21 days to build a habit, and it takes a few times to see the tangible results.) After you have fasted for some time, and your body gets used to it, then fasting becomes a "discipline." It is something that you expect to do. This is an amazing time, and it may take longer for some than others.

When fasting is a discipline, your whole being grows more and more alive. (This is similar to a person that stays consistent in working out and begins to see tangible results). Lastly, after you make fasting a discipline, fasting then becomes a delight. I absolutely love to fast. I don't like the pain of fasting, but the results are amazing. (Recently I participated in a 3-day Esther fast with no food or water, and it was amazing). So, just like a soldier entrusts their body to self-discipline, let us joyfully consider the words of Paul, "Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus, I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." (1 Cor. 9:26-27)

I did not know that I had issues inside of me until I started to fast. Fasting, which is voluntary, draws us closer to Jesus, because it exposes the issues that lay hidden in our hearts. If you are not fasting and you feel a fleshly/sinful discomfort, you often will give into it without knowing; we feed the monster within. Instead of confronting the issue, we cause it to grow by feeding it, or giving in to our fleshly desires, no matter how subtle this may be. For example, when I fasted for the first time, I became angry with others. It was not just a tired anger, nor a hangry feeling. Instead, this was anger towards people, and it was manifest when I fasted. Why? When I was not fasting, I was giving into my flesh/sinful desires. The food I was eating not only sustained me, but it was medicating me (covering up) the issues inside. But the anger was actually an outward revelation of something deeper going on inside me. I was in pain.

I remember one particular night when I was fasting. I was around my church family. We had just finished praying. I was on a 7-day fast to pray for a miracle in someone's life. Normally when I am around these people, I don't feel anything out of the ordinary. But this time, while fasting, I was agitated. I was angry at little things. Not wanting to sin, I left the group early. In my immaturity, I told them that I needed some "alone time with God." But really, I was just mad. Driving away I found myself, talking out loud, "I can't believe so and so said that!" And also, "He is just prideful, that is why he speaks like he does." I then caught myself mid-sentence mad at my very own cousin, who is an amazing person. I was no longer speaking life over my church family, instead I was coming into agreement with the enemy's plan for them. It was then that God spoke to me.

Part 1: My Personal Journey With Fasting

"Son, you have unsettled pain in your heart. That is why you are so angry." I drove the rest of the way in silence contemplating the words that God had said. Then I knew, I was hurt, and my fasting was exposing the pain in my heart. I was undone. I had an issue, and because of my fasting, I could not cover up the pain like I had usually done. So, the fasting exposed the "monster within," so that God could work healing in my anger.

It is important to note that when you are fasting, you may experience unusual discomfort. Don't break the fast right away. Maybe, just maybe, God is exposing what is in your heart because He wants to help bring you freedom. So, dialogue with God, share with someone in confidence, and have them pray for you. God's Mercy will wash you clean, and His Grace will give you strength to overcome.

EIGHT DIFFERENT KINDS OF FASTING IN THE BIBLE

This is certainly not comprehensive. Instead, it is important for you to read through this section on your own before you fast. This is designed to be a reference for you to grow and learn more.

Fasting to grow in the understanding and love of God: When confronted by John's disciples, because Jesus's disciples were not fasting, Jesus introduced a new understanding about fasting (please read the "Bridegroom Fast" section). Jesus replied, "*Can the friends of the Bridegroom mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the Bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.*" (Mt. 9:14-15)

Fasting to increase in the power of God in personal ministry:

This can be either in your preaching, or other creative expressions, and also in your outward gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12; 14:12). The power of John the Baptist's preaching was connected to his fasted lifestyle (Mt. 11:18). When the disciples could not set a demonized boy free, Jesus told them that kind of demon does not go out except by prayer and fasting (Mt. 17:21). The early church fasted twice a week (Wednesdays and Fridays) to experience more power. Fasting was a regular part of Paul's life (2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27; Acts 9:9).

Fasting for prophetic revelation of the end times:

Daniel sought God with fasting and prayer and received revelation of Israel's end-time destiny (Dan. 9:1-3, 20-23; 10:1-3, 12-14). After fasting for 21 days, an angel told him that his prayers were heard because he set his heart to understand (Dan. 10:12). As he sought the Lord, the angel Gabriel gave him "*skill to understand*" (Dan. 9:20-23).

Fasting for divine revelation of Word and Spirit:

Please don't skip this part. There will be a powerful release of prophetic revelation before Jesus returns (Acts 2:17-21). Daniel prophesied that in the end times God would raise up "*people with prophetic understanding*" who would teach multitudes (Dan. 11:33-35; 12:4, 10), and I believe that is you. God wants to cause you to mature and grow in understanding of what He is doing in those days (Jer. 23:18-20).

Part 1: My Personal Journey With Fasting

Fast for God's promises over families, cities, and nations:

The Lord has prophetic plans and promises for families, cities and nations. You should actively seek the Lord for their fulfillment. Daniel prayed and fasted for the fulfillment of God's promise to release Israel from captivity to return to their land (Dan. 9:1-3; 10:1-4). God answered Nehemiah after he fasted and prayed for God's promises to his generation (Neh. 1:3-11; 9:32-38). After Cornelius fasted and prayed, his whole house was saved and a door of grace was opened for the Gentiles to be saved (Acts 10:1-4, 30-31). Paul fasted for the release of God's purposes (2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27; Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17-18). Personally, this is the type of fast that I spend most of my time engaged in. When a group of people seek the face of God, and then fast and pray those promises, God will answer from heaven.

Fasting to stop a crisis (individual or national):

Fasting to seek God for mercy during a personal crisis is seen throughout Scripture, and we should stand with the Lord in this daily. This means we watch and pray as Jesus instructed (Matt. 24:42; 26:41). And He said, *"blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted"* (Matt. 5:4). We must watch what He is doing, mourning with Him (feeling His emotions) and then fast and pray until there is a breakthrough. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, being distressed by her barrenness, prayed with fasting, and God answered her by giving her a son who grew up to become a prophet (1 Sam. 1:7).

Fasting asking God for divine Protection: (Ezra and Esther) It is important for us to learn to fast and pray for all of God's people everywhere. The writer of Hebrews said, *"Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also"* (Heb. 13:3). Ezra: Before Ezra led a group of Jews from Babylon back to Israel to help rebuild their nation, he fasted and prayed to God for protection on the journey because it was so dangerous (Ezra 8:21-23). Travel was dangerous in the ancient world because bands of thieves often attacked groups to take money and supplies. Esther: Esther was a young woman, weak by earthly standards, but her God is more powerful than the evil male leaders of her day. She was an orphan girl, taken in by her uncle Mordecai, who was a Jewish leader, during the time of the Babylonian exile. His job was to stand and serve the Babylonian king at his gate. In an interesting turn of events, the king was in need of a new wife. So he staged a beauty pageant and Esther won. She held the king's attention until she did not. In the course of time, Esther called the Jews in Persia to fast for three days after Haman set into motion a plan to kill all the Jews (Esth. 3:13; 4:7). Esther first needed protection because she was going to approach King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) without a royal summons (the penalty was death). Many cried out in prayer and fasting (Esth. 4:3, 16; 5:1-6). The Lord spared Esther's life and then reversed the situation among the Jews concerning Haman's evil plans (Esth 9:1).

Fast for direction:

There is always a need to rely on God for your earthly direction. Jesus said, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt. 5:3). We must live poor in spirit; empty of our own strength and completely relying on Christ Jesus. Today, we are called to fast and pray for God to reveal His direction or clarity in our lives. Throughout the New Testament, the church fasted for supernatural wisdom and direction. Paul and others fasted and prayed for direction for their ministry (Acts 13:1-2) and before selecting and commissioning elders of the new churches in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.

Part 1: My Personal Journey With Fasting

On many occasions, God reversed Israel's desperate situation after they turned to Him in corporate prayer and fasting. Joel prophesied that God would judge Israel using locusts, and then later by an invasion by the Babylonian army (Joel 1:2-18; 2:1-9). On both occasions, Joel called Israel to turn to God in prayer and fasting (Joel 1:13-14; 2:12-15). Jonah warned the wicked city of Nineveh that God was going to destroy them. When Nineveh repented with fasting, the Lord showed mercy and spared the city (Jon. 3:3-9).

PART 2

PRACTICAL TIPS TO HELP YOU FAST

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

WE ARE ALL CALLED TO FAST

The Bible says, *“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,”* (Matthew 6:16-17). Everyone can fast, but not everyone can fast the same way. Therefore, it is important for you to choose the different way that you are going to fast (see types of fasts below).

FASTING IS ALWAYS VOLUNTARY

Though leaders may invite others to join in corporate fasting with a specific goal in mind and for a specific time, fasting can never be forced or mandated. In light of this, fasting is not a mandatory requirement for joining the Holy Clubs staff or community, etc.

WE FAST FROM SOMETHING TO GIVE OURSELVES TO SOMETHING.

Fasting is not a way to lose weight. It is not a way to cleanse your body and feel better before eating a lot. Fasting is not a *“trend.”* It is not something you do intermittently to feel better about your future *“positivity.”* Fasting is setting our heart to draw closer to God.

FASTING WEEKLY

I believe the Holy Spirit is preparing the church for the greatest revival and the most intense pressure in human history. Therefore, radical changes are needed, and this will surely come, but not in our own strength. Instead, the Great Shepherd of the church, Jesus Christ, is preparing and will prepare the church to overcome in the GRACE of God. Biblically, we know the church will be prepared before Jesus returns (Rev. 19:7). What the church accepts as normal will change drastically. Recommended Books on fasting: *“The Rewards of Fasting”* by Mike Bickle and Dana Candler; *“Shaping History through Prayer and Fasting”* by Derek Prince.

WHAT DO YOU FAST FROM?

You abstain from something and give yourself to spiritual growth and revival. This means you practically increase your time in the Word and seek to obey in the Holy Spirit while fasting: food, finances, and the use of our time (especially your time on a phone/social-media/media), words, and energy.

Many fear fasting, but the fear of fasting is actually far worse than the fast itself. Fasting is, by definition, abstaining from food. Fasting is part of the normal Christian life. It is often thought of as an optional discipline. Jesus said, *“when you fast,”* implying that fasting occurred in the regular course of a disciple’s life.

DON’T ASK AND DON’T TELL

I encourage you to keep the type of fast you are doing a secret. Of course, you can tell your friends that you are fasting with. However, this is more for humility purposes than anything else. Jesus told the story of the Pharisee who prayed loudly and publicly for all to see and condemned others with his actions and prayers. Luke 18:11-12 articulates God’s desire for humility in fasting as it states, *“The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’”*

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

Also, Jesus declares, *“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full”* (Matt. 6:16). If I am fasting liquids and someone else is doing water, we want to encourage each other instead of condemn each other. We want to fast only according to the grace that God has given us in this season. Keeping this in mind, let us fast in humility without drawing attention to ourselves for the benefit of the body of Christ.

CHOOSING YOUR FAST

How? You must ask God, what is the best way for me to fast in this season according to Your GRACE.

Why is it important to choose the type of fast you are doing ahead of time? It is important for you to prepare what foods or drinks that you will need when. For instance, if you are water fasting, then what type of water do you prefer; you should purchase the water ahead of time. If you are doing a liquid fast, then what type of liquids do you want, and when should you take in these liquids? The more you prepare, the greater your chances of fasting safely and successfully.

Lastly, the Daniel fast, which takes the most amount of preparation. It is important for you to study, plan, and purchase the necessary meals that you will have. Remember this is no meat, no sweets, and limited portions. Sometimes people find this a hard fast to complete, but with careful planning and God’s Grace you can finish it.

GUM ON A FAST

Depending on what kind of fast you are doing you may want to have a piece of gum. But be careful to do this sparingly. I may allow myself some gum in the morning, and then in the afternoon. It just breaks up the flow of things, and helps your mind to chew on something when it is feeling hungry.

THE THREE DAY MARK

Fasting can be hard but getting to the third day is the most difficult. Why? Typically, we do not eat healthy. As a result, there are many toxins which are trying to escape our body during a natural time of fasting. This may bring on trouble sleeping, headaches, or nausea. All of these are to be expected. After three days, I typically feel a lot better. So, getting past the 3-day mark in an extended fast, particularly if it’s a water fast (see below), is very important. Take your time and have grace with yourself.

WATER IS YOUR FRIEND

According to the Mayo Clinic, *“Every day you lose water through your breath, perspiration, urine and bowel movements. For your body to function properly, you must replenish its water supply by consuming beverages and foods that contain water.”*

“So how much fluid does the average, healthy adult living in a temperate climate need? The U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine determined that an adequate daily fluid intake is:

- About 15.5 cups (3.7 liters) of fluids a day for men
- About 11.5 cups (2.7 liters) of fluids a day for women

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

These recommendations cover fluids from water, other beverages and food. About 20% of daily fluid intake usually comes from food and the rest from drinks.”

Therefore, we can conclude it is important for us to drink water on a daily basis when fasting. This helps curb dehydration. It also helps with headaches and nausea. And lastly, most importantly, it helps you with your sleep patterns. One thing I do in the evenings that seems to help is boil some water and sip it slowly. I may have herbal tea if I am allowed to have it during my fast. This just helps take the edge away and slows my body down for sleep. It’s important for us not to restart our body in the evening by taking a dairy or a juice.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FASTS?

There are several different types of fasts. Below I will list the types of fasts that can be found in the Bible (not conclusive), how you can fast safely and successfully, and some of my personal experiences fasting. All should be done in a safe manner. Please consult a doctor if you have a pre-existing medical condition, or you are struggling with an eating disorder. (When fasting safely this is the number one priority. I will not always mention it, but it is important.)

Daniel Fast – No meats, no sweets, and limited portions. This is the best type of fasting for someone who is a full time student, employee, parent, or an athlete. Also, this is the most attempted fast, which I could spend a lot of time writing about. But for the sake of time, I want to bring clarity to a few things. To safely fast this way, make sure that you eat enough to do everything you need to do to take care of your daily life. For example, if you have children you need to parent during the fast, make sure you have enough food and drink so that you can patiently care for them during this time. To successfully attempt this type of fast, take time to schedule out your foods, and know when you are going to eat, drink, and sleep. The schedule will get your body into a rhythm. And the rhythm will help your body know when to rest, when to work hard, and when you will reward yourself with a little food. Furthermore, choose food ahead of time that your body will enjoy and help you stay strong. (For more examples just go to the internet and type in “Daniel fast recipes” and you will have many options to choose from. Here is an example.)

Liquid Fast – This is what I call the juice or smoothie fast. Simply, this is when you take liquids over a set time of the fast. To safely get through this fast, make sure that you are taking the right liquids at the right time. (This fast is not typically dangerous, however, if you have pre-existing medical conditions, then make sure your doctor signs off on what you should be drinking). So, to successfully make it through this fast, you have to know what are the right drinks and the right time to drink. The right drinks are not full of sugar or caffeine. Many times, people just start drinking and load their bodies with sugar substances. This will cause your body to crash, and then you’ll have a headache from excess sugar.

So, stay clear of stimulant drinks, sodas, and even some juices that are mostly sugar. Next, be careful with caffeinated drinks. I am not saying you have to cut them out. However, less is better, and it is important that you give your body time to react to the caffeine you are putting in. Sometimes, when you are not eating, your body will react differently to caffeine.

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

Therefore, I suggest actually cutting out caffeine three days before your fast starts so that your body has time to adjust and you are not fighting the headaches of fatigue that comes with caffeine withdrawals. Healthy smoothies can be very helpful at this time, but costly. What I do is prepare ahead of time with a proven supplement that my wife has had me use for the past five years. It has really gotten me through some very tough fasts. To learn more about this you can reach out to her at holy-clubs@gmail.com. The last bit of info on this type of fast is when you take your liquids. I encourage you to have a set time during the day to take in liquids. Water can be drunk all day long on this fast. As for your juices, smoothies, and supplements, take them at the same time you would take a meal. This way your body gets in a rhythm of when nutrients will be consumed.

For example,

AM: In the morning, have a cup of coffee and then a fruit smoothie in place of breakfast. Next, drink water during the day. Instead of reaching for a second cup of coffee before lunch, take a juice and sip it slowly. (This is a very helpful technique to help you fast successfully).

NOON: At lunch, have your strongest supplement. Throughout the day, until dinner time, continue to have water and/or juice (again, sipped slowly).

DINNER: Consume a supplement or smoothie at dinner. Now before you go to bed, be careful. Why? You want to set yourself up for success. If you have too much sugar, (yes, there is sugar in juices and smoothies) your body will react accordingly, and it may throw off your fast, which will cause you to break the fast and want to end early. (Certainly, do not have caffeine before bed when fasting.)

EVENING: Also, it is important to stay away from dairy before bed, as the dairy will restart your digestive system and cause you to stay awake. Again, that will restart your digestive system and will potentially keep you awake. One thing I do in the evenings that seems to help is boil some water and sip it slowly. I may have herbal tea if I am allowed to have it during my fast. This just helps take the edge away and slows my body down for sleep. It's important for us not to restart our body in the evening by taking a dairy or a juice.

Water Fast - During this fast, you will only drink water. Biblically, we see this fast lasting anywhere from 1 to 40 days. Jesus modeled this fast when, *"Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry"* (Luke 4:1-2). It is important to know that this fasting over the long term will affect you physically by making your cognitive awareness, or decision making, take longer. This will also affect your speech by slowing it down, and will leave you needing to take frequent naps. Furthermore, your body temperature may be colder as you lose fat at a quicker rate. You can safely do this fast by fasting with friends, so they can look in on how you are doing. Be careful of doing anything that may put extra strain on your body. For instance, be careful when you are driving if you are feeling fatigued. Do not do any extra strenuous activity.

Understand that you will have to slow down your lifestyle in order to give yourself over to the day-to-day weakness of water fasting. I have personally done multiple water fasts over 30 days. Though it is hard, after three days things become easier. (see above; Three Day Mark).

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

Complete fast – No food or water. Esther and her handmaidens did this type of fast (Esther 4:14). Moses also modeled this fast for 40 days (Deut. 9:9). However, I recommend not doing this fast for more than three days. I have personally done this fast-multiple times with no physical side effects whatsoever. (Except for slight headaches, slower speech, and I moved a lot slower.) You can safely do this fast by fasting with friends, so they can look in on how you are doing. You will successfully do this fast by getting away to a secret place (ex. cabin, hotel room, retreat center). I set a schedule of what I am going to do when and check this off when I am finished.

DIFFERENT LENGTHS OF FAST YOU CAN DO

It is important to know that there are many different lengths of fasting. I will mention the fasts I have done, their benefits as well as their failures, and what I would do over.

Random Fasting – This is when you go on a 1-2 day fast whenever there is a very important situation that arises. For instance, someone that needs healing and/or salvation. Also, there may be an important election and/or law that people are voting on. These fasts are very important and though they are not as hard, they have a huge impact when you do this with other people. For instance, in the Bible, the prophet Joel called for the people to fast when they were in a crisis.

One-day Weekly Fasting – This is when you pick a day once a week and set aside time to fast and pray. I have been doing this type of fasting for over 15 years of my life and I can say this has changed me the most. You do not grow weaker. (In fact, I believe I am healthier because of this lifestyle of fasting.) Again, I take time from something to give myself to something. Therefore, I set aside time to fast and pray.

In the summer of my college years, I was working a construction job. On my fast day, I would skip lunch time to read my Bible and pray. It was only one day a week, but that was the extra time I would have been eating that I set aside to fast and pray. I did the same with dinner on that day. I really looked forward to those days. It seemed my heart was more tender when I read my Bible, and it just seemed like Jesus was sitting next to me discipling me just like one of the disciples.

What would I do differently? Now that I have 6 children, I can honestly say, I would have given my college years and my single years to more ardent fasting, prayer, and alone time. Many of our staff give themselves to one full day (8 hours straight) to fasting, prayer, and reading the Bible. I did this for 5 years straight and I grew to love my fasting day. I would spend 8-10 hours alone in the prayer room, reading my Bible, going deep in God's Word, getting revelation, reading long sections of Scripture, and then weeping. At what? I was weeping at the emotions of God. (I shall one day write a book on the emotions of God as they run so deep. But in all your doing, become a student of God's emotions.)

Three-day Fast – Now in this section, things get a little bit more intense. But this is where God did a serious work in my heart. I would fast Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday until evening. And I did this for a year. My eldest son of six, Gabriel, was our only child at the time. He was a year old at the time, and is currently 16 years old. My wife and I were full-time missionaries at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City Missouri. We had nothing. Literally nothing. As full-time missionaries, we had to raise our own support, which we did not do a good job at. This was before smartphones and super-fast internet.

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

With huge aspirations and a few dollars in our pockets, we gave our lives to serving Jesus. But I knew something was lacking. God was calling my wife and I to something more, but I did not know how to get there. So, not knowing when, or how, or where I was going (to answer His call on our lives), I started to fast. Remember John the Baptist. *"He must increase and I must decrease."* As He increased the call He had for our lives, I began to decrease by fasting and praying more. I still had to keep up with my full-time volunteer job at the house of prayer. But then I gave an extra hour in the morning and an extra hour at night to fasting and praying. And I became weaker week by week, but God became stronger in my life.

It was about this time that God began to speak to me from the Bible about His end time plans and purposes. Next, my giftings, given to me by Him, began to grow extraordinarily. Also, and most significantly, I began to grow in the first commandment calling to love God with my whole heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matthew 22:37-38). Lastly, many small, supernatural miracles began to happen. Those miracles had to do with what God was specifically saying to me and the people I met along the way.

First, He spoke clearly about His plan from the Word of God; it is important that your life call and ministry not be as much about you as it is God's dream, plan, and purposes. I always say, read the Bible until you find God's dream and find your part in His plan. Then, give your time and energy for His Kingdom to come. You will never go wrong fighting for His Kingdom to come.

Second, God began to show me my little part in His bigger plan; He was raising up the African American men as one of the 7 Thunders spoken about in Revelation 10. My job was to pray, serve, and serve some more, until 1 million African American men sat as watchmen on the wall for Jerusalem (Isa. 62:6-7).

Third, God began to bring men and women into my life (lifelong friends) that I needed. They gave me genuine relationships and helped me by encouraging me with their words and finances. I can truly say fasting 3 days a week for a year was the most significant turning point in my life.

21-day Corporate Fast – It's one of the most powerful tools that has ever been given by God to man. I have been on so many 21-day fasts that I have lost count; probably at least two a year over the last 21 years (that would be forty-two 21-day fasts). Some of them I completed on just water, while most of them have been on liquid only, and a handful have been completed via Daniel fast.

But before we begin to tell this story, where did the 21 day fast come from? Daniel chapter 10:12-14: *"Then he said to me, 'Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come.'"*

Remember Daniel was a young boy in Jerusalem who had survived a siege to his city. At the end of that siege, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem, most likely killed Daniel's parents, and

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

then made him march through the desert 1,678 miles to Babylon. He survived only to be forced to learn the Babylon language and attend their idolatrous occult school for three and a half years. At the end of that period, he was tested and found the wisest and anointed by God to understand all dreams and riddles (Daniel 1:17). How? He lived a Biblical lifestyle of prayer and fasting. In fact, as a young boy, he wanted to fast even over the threat of death (Daniel 1:11-12). Also, he gave himself to prayer three times daily for the kingdom of God to come (Dan. 6:10). He truly was an intercessor.

What is the backstory of the Daniel 21-day Fast? Historically, Daniel had been living in Babylon as a human trafficking victim turned slave for the past 70 years. He was now in his 80's. The 70-year season of judgment against Israel that was prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer. 25) is now over. King Cyrus had issued a decree (just like the Bible said; Isaiah 45:1) allowing Israel to go back to Jerusalem in 538 BC. Daniel 10 takes place two years after Israel has returned. While they were back in the land, they had reinstated the sacrifices by 537 B.C. (Ezra 3:6), and by 536 B.C. they had begun to rebuild the temple (Ezra 3:8). But then something happened that caused Daniel to seek the face of God and fast for 21 days. But what?

Daniel was mourning because there was a conflict in establishing the Kingdom of God in Jerusalem. Daniel 9:25 tells the story of the angel Gabriel informing, "Daniel when they do restore Jerusalem, remember it will be in troublesome times." As an aging Biblical intercessor who had fought in prayer three times daily for the restoration of God's Kingdom, Daniel had somehow received news of the conflict and opposition Israel was facing. Not losing hope, he turned to the most powerful weapon he had, prayer and fasting. At every advance of the building process, there would be resistance. Daniel, as an intercessor, was mourning because the work of God's Dream (His Throne in Jerusalem) was not progressing.

Remember, he had given his whole life to see God's will done with the Jewish people in Israel. How do we know? Do the math. He was approximately 16 when he left Jerusalem, but he had prayed 3 times a day for the next 70 years for one thing—God's chosen people to return to Jerusalem. (When was the last time that you prayed for 70 years, or 25,550 days, or 76,650 times about the same things? Exactly, you—and I—never have.) Daniel had given himself to God's plan and God's will. Daniel was consumed day and night, passionately driven, with seeing God's dream, His deep desire, come to pass. That dream was the Jewish people worshiping God in Jerusalem with a restored Tabernacle. So, when he heard of the opposition halting the work, he did what he had to do—let God increase, while he decreased. He fasted and prayed until there was a breakthrough.

That is right. Daniel did not do a 21-day fast to get the answer. Instead, he fasted and prayed until there was a breakthrough, and that breakthrough was God sending an angel to strengthen and encourage Daniel on the 21st day. How did God strengthen the greatest human intercessor of all times? He showed him the greatest threat to the future for Israel—the anti-christ (that is any story for another time).

So back to the story about the fast we were doing in Richmond, VA, for 21 days. But before I tell you about the 21-day fast, I have to give you the back story about why I moved my family from the comforts of community, finances, and leadership, to venture on our own.

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

I was a young leader in the house of prayer at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City. I had to fight through learning to live by faith. (Starting with 50 dollars a month in support, and then a little more, and then a smidgen more. Never getting to a place of having some luxurious salary). Instead my wife and I had to learn to pray until God gave us toilet paper and then be faithful to turn around and give it away if He asked. Our lives were not our own. We gave ourselves to 6 days a week, 10 hours a day of voluntary, unpaid work, to see God's dream for a house of prayer to be built in America. There were hundreds of days that we spent our mornings crying because of a bill that was overdue, praying for our daily bread, only to finish the night having been randomly given the exact amount due in a secret envelope or through a check in the mail.

We learned a lot of lessons in those days. First, God is a good Father, we are His children, whom He loves, and He is always watching us. Second, if He didn't answer us in the time or way that we wanted, then He had a good reason why, and we should not become anxious or complain. Instead, we learned to trust that He is our Father, and His leadership and timing is perfect for His will. And His will is not subject to, or controlled by, my, or my wife's emotions. Third, our life and possessions are not our own. If God wills it, then we need to give what we have to the body of Christ. There were many times that our obedience in giving, no matter how small, led to us participating in a miracle in someone else's life. I can truly say, God is good, and all the time, God is good. Fourth, God increased my faith by introducing me to men and women that are extraordinary people of faith, and their gifts and support kept me going through the years. The farmer and his wife gave extravagantly to the work, even when the bumper crop did not come in. The living saint that gave His inheritance to see revival come in. The poor widow that gave her last funds to make sure that my wife and I could pay our bills. The husband and wife who sold their baby book so we could stay and minister to the broken of the earth. The faithful saints that still send toilet paper to this day, and the man who gives extravagantly weekly so that we can put singers and musicians before God, like David of old, in the house of prayer. The list literally could go on and on. I have met the meek of the earth—my life is full.

Now where were we in this story?

God shared Revelation 10 with my wife and I; that He was beginning to build the 7 Thunders on the earth. The 7 Thunders, which John heard and saw, but John was instructed, "Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them." Why wasn't John allowed to share the message? For two reasons. First, it was for the time of the end, or the end times. Second, John had to eat the scroll. This meant that he did not just hear the message—he had to consume the message. He had to let the very nature and emotions of God go into his innermost parts and transform his very DNA. He had to eat the message to become the message. And it is the same with those called to be the 7 Thunders at the end of the age. They will have to consume the message—the message of the Knowledge of God and His gloriously powerfully end time plan. They will have to consume the message to become the message.

God is searching for women and men who know that there is more. They are called to be like John and lean their head upon the chest of Jesus saying, "Tell me the deepest secrets of Your heart," (John 13:23-25), while throwing off his past sins, confidently, yet meekly, walking in the title of the one whom Jesus loved (John 21:20). God is calling for a generation that will be unoffended (never offended again), because they are not living for this age. Just like Daniel, who was a human trafficking victim

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

and thrown into the lion's den. Why? Because the devil knew he could not succeed in stopping the Jews from returning to their homeland while Daniel was praying. He had to stop Daniel to keep Israel bound in sin and out of Jerusalem, the promised land. Daniel, instead of living in bitter resentment, humbly awoke and arose to live for God's dream, while embracing a lifestyle of fasting and prayer. It was here that he unleashed prayers that ripped open the veil between heaven and earth. Will you answer the call to prayer and fasting—living close to the heart of God?

Maybe you are offended upon reading this. Maybe you don't understand how a loving God would allow His chosen people to be taken away to exile in Babylon. After all, if He is a loving God why would He let that happen? The answer is simple. God always wants to let us choose to love Him, and Satan hates God and is trying to destroy humanity. God placed two trees in the garden, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He told us to eat from the Tree of Life and live, but the other tree would lead to death. God gives us two choices, because He loves us. If we choose life, then we will be with Him forever. If we choose death, then we will die in the lake of fire made for Satan and his followers. But, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

In Daniel's day, Israel had disobeyed God by turning from His commandments and forsaking the covenant they made with Him (Daniel 9:5; 11). This is similar to what happened in the garden; Adam and Eve fell into temptation and forsook the Lord. And this is similar to what happened at the time of Balaam. Balaam, who was a soothsayer, was asked to curse the people of Israel (Num. 22-24). However, God forbade him to. So, what is the next thing that the devil could do to stop the plan of the Lord? Balaam told the king to entice the young people to engage in sexual immorality. Why? Balaam knew God is Just. If Israel sinned, then the justice of God would come against them in the form of judgment and it did. God's justice was released upon the Israelites. He was forced to bring judgment against Israel for their sin. And that is exactly what happened, resulting in 24,000 people dying during a plague.

God's anger was so fierce that He said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the Lord, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel" (Num. 25:4). When have you ever heard of this being the solution for ending immorality and getting free from the justice of God? Well, this is the New Testament you might say. If this is so, then why are thousands going to die in the book of Revelation? Why did Paul, when talking about those taking communion while engaged in willful sin declare, "For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:30); this means they ended up dying. So why is God's Justice so fierce?

God cares about people, and He is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). What does this mean? God does not pour out His wrath upon a believer (1 Thess. 5:9), but He will discipline those He loves (Hebrews 12:1-11). In the case of Israel, they were sinning, and that sin led to death—separation from God forever. Remember the two trees in the garden. The two choices? God told Israel, "For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off" (Deut. 30:11). "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil... (Deut. 30:15). Then He gives Israel (and you and me) the answer to the question of LIFE, by shouting, "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live..." (Deut. 30:19).

So, in summary, God releases His wrath, because He is just. He is just upon the sinner and the saint. But, when His wrath is poured out upon the nonbeliever, they realize God is God, and they have a chance to repent; they tangibly see the fear of the Lord. (Remember the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10); you can only truly begin to see the knowledge of God when you encounter the fear of the Lord.) And when you consider eternity in hell separated from the God who created you. A loving Father will do the least severe punishment to get the greatest amount of turn around. A loving Father will also discipline His chosen people to keep them from sin and eternity in hell. A loving Father would do whatever He could to wake them up so that they would choose life.

So, Daniel engaged in the battle for Jerusalem, for God's Kingdom to come, in the place of prayer and fasting through a 21-day fast (as depicted in Daniel 10). It is with this in mind that multiple churches in Richmond, Virginia, united together, in 21 days of prayer and fasting to see the murder rate drop in our city. In 1997 Richmond had gotten the unfortunate distinction of the murder capital of the US (on a per capita basis; <https://richmondmagazine.com/look-back-murder-capital-no-more/>). In 2008 we gathered and fasted together seeking heaven for revival in our streets.

PRAY-METRO RICHMOND 21 DAY FAST

Each church hosted prayer times that anyone was invited to. Then we met together one evening a week and fervently prayed together. We fasted and prayed with hope, urgency, and expectancy, until God answered from Heaven. On the last night of the fast, we all gathered together (there was a snow storm). I remember one pastor who had fasted on water and had lost 40 pounds, was freezing, and had no energy. He just shuffled his feet up to the microphone to pray. We all fasted in our own way. I remember sitting back watching all the parts, all the moving parts of the city—the body of Christ—come together, in this grand offering. I learned something about God that night as two Scriptures went through my mind.

First, Jesus said, "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless" (Matt. 12:7). Also, when Paul taught, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

I understood that God is Merciful and wants to show His people Mercy. I also learned that He does not condemn us for our past sins; He invites weak and broken people to partner with Him in prayer and fasting. As we fasted and prayed, God heard our prayers, not because of how amazing we were, but because He is Merciful and wanted to show Mercy on a city. He wanted to drop the murder rate; this meant the murderers either turned to Jesus, or left town. A drop in a city's murder rate is revival.

Do you know what? Romans 8:1 declares there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Do you know what this means for you and me fasting and praying? It means the devil can't stop me from partnering with Jesus to bring revival to my city. The Bible says, "How could one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had surrendered them?" (Deut. 32:10)

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

And do you know what? He did answer. The murder rate dropped down to 32 people murdered. (One is too many, and this does not include the number of children murder via abortions). Thankfully the murder rate has not risen as high since. But I was ruined forever. I now knew that God actually answered when weak and broken people gathered together and prayed. I know now there is no condemnation and my prayers really matter; I can partner with God to see God's Kingdom come and His will being done.

HOW TO FAST AND PRAY WITH CHILDREN

Children can fast and should be encouraged to fast. However, children should never fast from food. Instead, they can fast from sugar, media, and other creative things. But remember, they are fasting from something to give themselves towards something. Joel called families to fast and pray together in the midst of crisis so that the children could understand the severity of sin. Consider Joel 2:16, "Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber." Why? So that everyone realizes the importance of these important lessons.

First, we must follow God's commands; if the children learn the importance of this firsthand, then they are less likely to sin in the future. Second, the children will learn what to do to get out of a crisis in the future. Third, they will encounter the beautiful and powerful nature of God during the fast. Last, they will get out of a pattern, and be free from some of the little things that they choose to fast from.

During a fast, I would encourage parents to include their children in the fast. Here are 5 simple ways to do this:

Parents share – Take time to share about the fast. Let the children know what fasting is according to God's perspective. (Take time to share about how Jesus fasted for 40 days before He started His earthly ministry.) Also, explain to them that Jesus said we are all called to fast (Matthew 6:16-17). We are specially called to fast in order to grow closer in love with Jesus, and to partner with Him in the work of the kingdom until He returns (Matthew 9:13-15).

Invite the children to fast – Again, children will not be fasting from food, but encourage them to join in on the fast. Ask them to choose what they would like to give up. My children have fasted from media, sugar, and other things to have many successful moments of prayer, or seasons of prayer answered. One such season of the children fasting and praying together, about 12 children total, weekly for the ending of abortion in Ohio. We fasted several different ways, and then met together once a week to pray for an hour. This was such an incredible journey for parents and children alike. At the end of the fast, Ohio signed the "Heartbeat Bill" into existence. The children were so happy because they had taken part in God's plan to save the children. So, what did we do to celebrate? At the next prayer meeting we had doughnuts!

Pick a start date and end date – It is important for the children to be set up to succeed. What does this mean? It means that they are able to have step-by-step instructions for success. Let them know when the fast will start and when it will end. Encourage them to mark it on their calendar when the fast will end. Sometimes you can mark it off day by day.

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

Share the why behind the what – Always let them know why you are fasting. Encourage them to persevere. Tell stories if you can of persevering during a fast; have the kids share how they overcame during the fast

Gather together daily (Bible, worship, and prayer) – Remember, we are fasting from something and giving ourselves to something. Make sure you are spending time in the Bible, worship, and prayer. Take time daily to meet with them so that they can get in the rhythm of spending more time with the Lord. This can be as much as 5 minutes, and as long as 1 hour. Joel, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, called the families to come out to the prayer meetings (Joel 2:16).

BONUS How I spend about 45 minutes with my kids in Bible, Worship and Prayer – This is how I break it down:

- a. Worship (20 minutes) – We usually have our Bibles open along with our notebooks out, and we take time writing down either a Scripture (the family picks a Scripture out ahead of time), or we write down words or phrases that God shares with us (the little children can draw a picture of what God shows them).
- b. Bible (15 minutes) – We take time to read a section of the Bible. The best way we have found is that everyone takes turns reading, one verse after the other. Then take a moment to discuss the sections that stand out to you.
- c. Prayer (10 minutes) – Next, we take time to pray, one after the other. Pray for either what you just learned in the Bible, or for a specific issue that is at hand. Either way, at some point it is important to learn to pray through the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:8-14.
- d. BONUS READ A BOOK (15 minutes) - Read about influential Christians; my family likes to read stories about the heroics of past missionaries.

HOW TO BREAK A FAST

It is important for you to break a fast in a safe and successful way. You will safely break a fast when you take your time to reimplement what your body has not been eating. For example, if you are doing a water fast, then you want to slowly introduce juice into your diet. I actually start with watered down juice. And then I give my body 20 minutes. Why? It seems the body takes 20 minutes to digest food. You want to slowly reintroduce food into your system, or in this case water and juice. And then I allow myself 20 minutes to see how my body is affected. If I feel nauseous then I will slow things down and wait 40 minutes to an hour until I try to drink again. In the same way, if I have been doing a liquid fast, I slowly introduce vegetables, and or fruit. Your body should be able to process this as your liquid fast usually has both of these ingredients in the meal. But you should take your time to be safe. Again, it is better to be safe than sorry; certainly take your time.

I have broken water fasts the wrong way a few times. Only once actually! I went on an extended water fast and then tried to break the fast by eating a cheeseburger and fries. This resulted with me at the bottom of the vehicle crying out, because my stomach felt like it was going to do somersaults. That was a painful lesson. Take your time.

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

Below is a more detailed progression for you with simple examples of breaking a fast:

Complete fast: Just simply drink water first. You can start with 8 ounces of water and then wait 20 minutes. Typically, you do not have to wait 20 minutes, but if you are not feeling well, you will know within the 20 minutes. Next, have some more water. After this, you are now ready for juice. But not a full container of juice. You should follow the 2:6 rule. Two ounces of juice mixed with 6 ounces of water. Why? You are just helping to start your body's digestive system. If there are no problems after 20 minutes, then you are ready for a full glass of juice. But make sure that you sip the juice over the course of 20 minutes. Next, your body is able to have broth. Pick out your favorite broth and water it down. I like to have a ½ cup of broth to a ½ cup of water. Bring it to a boil and then sip it slowly. Then wait 20 minutes to see how your body is affected. Next, as your body is able, start to eat your favorite fruits in small portions over the course of 20 minutes. Then wait 20 minutes to see how you feel. If you feel alright, then continue on this soup. (At this point it is ok to institute meat, if it is in a soft, smaller portion, and it may take a few days before your body allows this). Then for your next meal you can add a progression of small portions of meat, preferably chicken, baked without added grease, butter, or any type of oil. Then wait an hour before eating again, just to give your body time. If all is well your body should be ready to keep eating. Remember just take it easy. This means smaller portions, and less grease and sugar. If at any point you are in an intense period of pain that seems beyond normal, then please see your physician, or go to the emergency room.

Water fast: Some of the details are similar to the fast above so I am actually going to cut and paste the progression with some slight changes; read this completely to fast safely and successfully.

Finally, you are ready to taste something other than water; you are now ready for juice. But not a full container of juice. You should follow the 2:6 rule. Two ounces of juice mixed with 6 ounces of water. Why? You are just helping restart your body's digestive system. If there are no problems after 20 minutes, then you are ready for a full glass of juice. But make sure that you sip the juice over the course of 20 minutes. If you are in an extended water fast, slowly try to reintroduce juice, and then slowly try to reintroduce greens; you may have to blend the greens and drink them in a diluted water substance. Or just take a green smoothie, pour a few ounces of it in your cup, and fill the rest up with water to create a diluted green drink. Again, wait for 20 minutes and see how your body does. If anything does go wrong please consult your physician immediately.

Next, your body is able to have broth. Pick out your favorite broth and water it down. I like to have a ½ cup of broth to a ½ cup of water. Bring it to a boil and then sip it slowly. Then wait 20 minutes to see how your body is affected. Next, start to eat your favorite fruits in small portions over the course of 20 minutes. Then wait 20 minutes to see how you feel. If you feel alright, then continue on this soup. (At this point, it is ok to institute meat, if it is in soft, smaller portions, and it may take a few days before your body allows this). Then for your next meal you can add a progression of small portions of meat, preferably chicken, baked without added grease, butter, or any type of oil. Then wait an hour before eating again, just to give your body time. If all is well, your body should be ready to keep eating. Remember, just take it easy. This means smaller portions, and less grease and sugar. If at any point you are in an intense period of pain that seems beyond normal, then please see your physician, or go to the emergency room.

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

Liquid Fast – This is not that hard to transition. Typically, your liquid fast will have already included fruit, veggies, and protein. Therefore, when you are breaking this fast the first meal can be either some soup, fruit, and or veggies, but start small, and wait 20 minutes in between meals just to make sure your body is feeling ok. Also, stay away from having a greasy, fast food type meal, right away. Slowly work your body into a meal. It may be a few days before your body can handle that type of food. Also, if you have not been drinking coffee, take it slow. Start with one cup of coffee, and then sip it over a little while. Again, see how your body is able to process this. Soup is a very good transition meal for this type of fast.

Daniel Fast – This is the least hard to transition. In fact, very few special precautions are necessary. The only suggestion may be that you do not eat greasy food right away, and you sip coffee slowly, if you have not had any during your fast. Other than that, enjoy.

WHY ARE THE REWARDS OF FASTING SO IMPORTANT?

Rewards of Fasting: Jesus called us to fast because He knows that its rewards will far outweigh its difficulties. With boldness, Jesus emphasized that the Father will reward fasting (Mt. 6:17) when He said, “When you fast...your father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” This proclamation alone makes fasting very important. God rewards fasting, yet these rewards are not earned by you. Instead the rewards are given to you as you successfully partner with the Lord in weakness. This is a glorious reality because God wants to bless you. And this is according to His Grace; God blesses us when we don’t deserve it.

How will you see the rewards? Usually, they are either external or internal. God externally may bless your finances, ministry, family, or school (etc.) One time, God told me He would reward me by giving me a gift to serve the body of Christ if I finished this 30 day water fast. It was very hard, and I wanted to give up many times, but I stuck it out, and now I walk in this gift, and I have been faithfully using it to serve the body of Christ for the past 17 years. God also rewards us internally by strengthening, changing, and building our heart, soul, and mind. There have been many fasts that I entered feeling a certain way, struggling with a certain aspect, or pleading for a breakthrough in my heart. Upon the completion of the fast, I woke up and was changed, sometimes never dealing with that issue again. But the greatest internal change is when my heart grows to love God more and more. I have learned to affectionately call this the Bridegroom Fast. For that lets turn to Matthew 9.

WRONG IDEAS ABOUT FASTING

Throughout history, many have fasted with a wrong spirit as they sought to earn God’s favor or even man’s approval. Some embrace extreme self-debasement to try to prove their dedication to God or to earn His favor. This is certainly not what God is after. He delights in your weak, yet sincere desire and pursuit to love, believe, and obey His Word and Spirit. You cannot fast to prove anything to God or to show how much you deserve His favor; fasting is not an arm-wrestling match between you and God. Instead, you fast to position yourself to receive freely from His grace and be preoccupied with Jesus and His will.

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

FASTING: EMBRACING VOLUNTARY WEAKNESS

Fasting embraces voluntary weakness in order to experience more of God's power and presence. It is a paradox that you become weak in the natural in order to receive more strength from the Spirit. Jesus revealed to Paul that the release of God's power in his life was connected to his willingness to embrace weakness. This revelation is foundational to understanding the purpose of fasting. *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."* (2 Cor. 12:9)

This kind of weakness is not moral weakness, but voluntary weakness as a Godly choice. This weakness includes prayer, fasting, giving, blessing our enemies, and enduring persecution. The phrase *"the fasted lifestyle"* means to voluntarily subject yourself to the vulnerabilities and difficulties of fasting. The most challenging issue in fasting is the physical weakness it produces. You become physically weak and can't function in the way you usually do (Ps. 109:24).

The *"strength made perfect"* refers to Paul experiencing more of God's power. Many desire to walk in *"perfected power,"* but do not want to embrace the necessary weakness.

Fasting restrains your physical pleasure, but it enhances your spiritual pleasure. Your greatest pleasure comes by feasting on the person of Jesus. Fasting is an exchange where you abstain from certain things to *"feast"* on God's word and prayer, whereby you experience more of His grace.

I have experienced that the fear of fasting is worse than fasting itself. Fasting is not too hard. It is a lie that the demands of your modern pace of life make fasting impractical for today's Christian. Never talk yourself out of what God created and ordained for you to do.

MONSTER WITHIN

I did not know that I had issues inside of me until I started to fast. Fasting, which is voluntary, draws us closer to Jesus, because it exposes the issues that lay hidden in our hearts. If you are not fasting and you feel a fleshly/sinful discomfort, you often will give into it without knowing; we feed the monster within. Instead of confronting the issue, we cause it to grow by feeding it, or giving in to our fleshly desires, no matter how subtle this may be. For example, when I fasted for the first time, I became angry with others. It was not just a tired anger, nor a hangry feeling. Instead, this was anger towards people, and it was manifest when I fasted. Why? When I was not fasting, I was giving into my flesh/sinful desires. The food I was eating not only sustained me, but it was medicating me (covering up) the issues inside. But the anger was actually an outward revelation of something deeper going on inside me. I was in pain.

I remember one night when I was fasting. I was around my church family. We had just finished praying. I was on a 7-day fast, to pray for a miracle in someone's life. Normally when I am around these people, I don't feel anything out of the ordinary. But this time, while fasting, I was agitated. I was angry at little things. Not wanting to sin, I left the group early. In my immaturity, I told them that I needed some "alone time with God." But really, I was just mad. Driving away I found myself, talking out loud, "I can't believe so and so said that!" And also, "He is just prideful, that is why he speaks like he does." I then caught myself mid-sentence mad at my very own cousin, who is an amazing person. I

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

was no longer speaking life over my church family, instead I was coming into agreement with the enemy's plan for them. It was then that God spoke to me.

"Son, you have unsettled pain in your heart. That is why you are so angry." I drove the rest of the way in silence contemplating the words that God had said. Then I knew, I was hurt, and my fasting was exposing the pain in my heart. I was undone. I had an issue, and because of my fasting, I could not cover up the pain like I had usually done. So, the fasting exposed the "monster within."

It is important to note that when you are fasting, you may experience unusual discomfort. Don't break the fast right away. Maybe, just maybe, God is exposing what is in your heart because He wants to help bring you freedom. So, dialogue with God, share with someone in confidence, and have them pray for you. God's Mercy will wash you clean, and His Grace will give you strength to overcome.

UNDERSTANDING THE BRIDEGROOM FAST

Jesus deliberately lays down His life for the Father's will to be done (Lu. 22:42). And the Father's will is to have a family—that includes you. Also, Jesus longs to share His heavenly glory with you (Jn 17:22-24). This is not like sharing a meal together, nor is it as trivial as sharing a few million dollars. Instead, this is God the Father enjoying God the Son, enjoying you, equally enjoying each other forever. Revival is Family—a glorious Family. (Interesting side note: Did you know that Jesus loves you with the same intensity that He loves His Father? John 15:9).

What does a loving Heavenly Family look like? Deep in the heart of the Father, He desires children (you as a child of God forever). But did you know that deep in the heart of Jesus, He passionately desires a Bride? In fact, the beloved Bride of Christ (put your name in here) is the great prize of all the ages, for which Jesus patiently awaits (Rev. 19:7). The affections of the human heart are one of the most precious possessions to God (Eph. 1:18).

Why? Because of God's tremendous love for you and your extravagant worth to Him. Jesus died to redeem you, and thus eagerly desires your affections—you move the heart of God. You were made for love; you were made to love God and be loved by Him (Matt. 22:37). The reason you were created and redeemed is to be loved and to love Jesus with all your heart. Satan attacks your heart so that you will NOT fully love God. He viciously desires for you to live as a slave instead of Jesus' inheritance. Wisdom cries out, *"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life"* (Prov. 4:23).

Today, rise up and believe in your heart that you immensely matter to Jesus. You are a son or daughter—a child of God—and you are the Bride of Christ. God's ultimate eternal purpose for creation is to provide a family for Himself that includes faithful children for Himself (the Father) and an equally yoked Bride, the eternal companion for His Son (Jesus). The Holy Spirit's job is to joyfully share God's heart of Love with you while releasing measures of grace for you to walk fully obedient unto the Lord. Your job is to not just be the Bride, but also to be a Friend of the Bridegroom, just like John the Baptist (Jn. 3:29).

So, when Jesus invited people to fast, He was inviting them into a lifestyle and a destiny. He said, *"Can the Friends of the Bridegroom mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with them?"* He was sharing His heart, "I am the Bridegroom, and I love you.. Do you know you are my Bride? Do you know how

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

much I love you?" Jesus, their Bridegroom was right there in front of them, but HE would be gone. And Jesus was saying someday you will see that: (1) I am your Bridegroom; I love you so much I am going to lay down your life so that we can be together again. (2) You are the Bride; if you understand my love for you, then you will live differently, in sanctification and obedience, because I love you. (3) When I am gone, the pain of not having me around will be so intense, that you will have to fast. What will this fast accomplish?

The Fast will ultimately bring Jesus back to earth. It will grow your heart deeper in love, and it will help others around you to see Jesus.

First, the fast will bring Jesus back because Jesus said in the end times you will understand you're a Bride, and the heart of the Father will long for Me to come back and rescue His Children and My Bride. The Bible says the prayers we will be praying before He returns is, *"The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!'"* (Rev. 22:17). Wait!

You will not only know you're a Bride, but Jesus gives you understanding with heartfelt feelings; you will have a deep longing for Jesus's return. This is the only heartache that you actually want/need to go through. You were made to feel the deep desire of the Father, as expressed through the Holy Spirit; the Father longs for Jesus to Return so He can receive His reward and you can claim your inheritance. So, in the end you and the Father/Holy Spirit will be crying out, *"Come Lord Jesus Come..."*

Second, this passage gives understanding that you will grow deeper in love with God. And how could you not when studying out His love? All the love stories, romance movies, every love story ever told, lead to this very moment. When the Bridegroom gets the Bride. (Men are the Bride of Christ just as women are sons of God. This does not diminish their masculinity, nor impede a woman's femininity). Jesus was inviting John's disciples to feel His heart, and He is inviting you to fast so that you can grow deeper in His love, which will transform your heart.

Third, when you fast, those around you will be affected. Through this statement Jesus was inviting others into His love and their identity as the Bride, and this is exactly what John did. The Bible says John was sent by the Father in Heaven (Luke 7:27). He was the greatest man born of a woman (Matt.11:11), and He was a friend of the Bridegroom (John 3:29). He knew that Jesus was the Bridegroom and He was the Bride. He was a Friend of the Bridegroom in that He was preparing the way for the Lord (Isa. 40). This is what Jesus was inviting John's disciples into; that they would understand He was the Bridegroom and they could be His fasting friends, Friends of the Bridegroom. And this is what He invites you into. That you would set your heart to fast and pray out of LOVE. He is inviting you to fast because you want to, not because you have to. HE is asking you to become a Friend of the Bridegroom, a friend who prepares the way for His second coming. (I could also show you that, if you embrace this fast, then you will walk forth with the spirit and power of Elijah).

Lastly, when Jesus is asking you to fast because He is coming back, He wants you to partner with Him. Jesus explicitly said, "For I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Matt. 23:3) You can not separate what Jesus said here with His invitation into Bridegroom fasting, "Can the friends of the Bridegroom mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the Bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast." (Mt. 9:14-15) First, Jesus shares He will not come back unless there is vibrant intercession.

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

Second, that intercession will come from weak humans connected to the deep emotions of His heart. Jesus is inviting you into His heart and then inviting you into partnering prayer and fasting and the best is yet to come. Will you embrace a season of prayer and fasting for the sake of LOVE?

***Practically, the Bridegroom fast is the first Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of each month, and the full first week in December. This adds up to 40 days, so invite your friends and start a fast. Go to holyclubs.com for more info.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL - A LIFESTYLE OF FASTING

Daniel and his young adult friends chose to live a holy lifestyle; therefore, they arose in the midst of crisis and lived differently in their high school and university years. As a result, God poured out His Spirit, gave them gifts, callings, promotions and influence, both in Heaven and on earth. The first section is historical (Dan. 1-6) highlighting six episodes in Daniel's life.

Daniel 1: Fasted and Prayer Lifestyle Dedication of youth, refuses to compromise, embraces a fasted lifestyle in Babylon (we also know that He prayed 3x daily; Dan. 6:10).

Daniel 2: Prevailing Prayer and Revelation: Nebuchadnezzar's first dream, Daniel receives the word of the Lord in crisis; surround yourself with a praying community.

Daniel 3: Standing as a Faithful Witness: (Rev. 13) Deliverance from the fiery furnace.

Daniel 4: Cultural Revival: Daniel and his friends lived differently and their witness attracted heaven giving them authority on earth; Nebuchadnezzar's second dream – calling leaders to righteousness.

Daniel 5: Biblical watchmen (womā'en): The Holy Spirit already revealed God's plans; Daniel agreed with heaven in prayer and lifestyle; Belshazzar's feast - the sudden downfall of governments (fall of Babylon).

Daniel 6: Divine Protection: Daniel in the lion's den - supernatural deliverance of believers in persecution.

DANIEL'S FASTED LIFESTYLE

In Daniel's early days in Babylon, while still in their teen years, he and his friends refused to compromise. Together, they "purposed" in their heart to choose to not defile themselves (Dan. 1:8). The Scripture states, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank..." (Dan. 1:8)

As youths, who were human trafficking victims, they purposed in their hearts to live "wholehearted," which is ardently obeying God's Word and Spirit, growing in love and dedication to God day-by-day while embracing a fasted lifestyle in the face of certain pleasures that were available in Babylon. Daily, they refused to compromise by yielding to their flesh and the ungodly culture that they lived in. Growing in God and overcoming peer pressure to conform is a significant challenge in every generation.

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

Daniel and his companions restrained from legitimate pleasure; they kept themselves from something to give themselves to something. In the fasted lifestyle, you embrace a spirit of heightened consecration in order to position yourself to receive more from the Lord. The fasted lifestyle includes restraining from legitimate and permissible pleasures for the purpose of a more focused dedication to the Lord. It includes fasting from food, media, social media, entertainment, possibly exercise, and other legitimate pleasures.

Today, God is inviting your generation and others into a Daniel lifestyle. Daniel set his heart to live a fasted lifestyle, even refusing permissible things in his dedication to God. He and his three friends ate vegetables and drank water. The word that is translated as vegetables in the NKJV is translated as pulse in the KJV. It comes from the Hebrew *zeroa*, which means "that which grows from seed." Thus, *zeroa* includes vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes (peas or beans), nuts, seeds, tofu, and herbs. Daniel would not order a large pizza and say, "Hold the pepperoni, because I am on a Daniel fast." Daniel said, "Test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink." (Dan. 1:12)

WHAT IF? What if you chose to live like Daniel? How would your life turn out? What would the landscape of your generation look like? Daniel's lifestyle is a picture of the unusual dedication that God will call people to in this hour. In Daniel's day, he faced Babylon, then Medio-Persia, and eventually Greece and Rome. Today, you are facing a combination of all these empires amassed on a global scale, with a riveting, Psalm 2, furious hatred for: God, Israel, and believers across the earth. You are facing the spirit of this age lulling you to sleep upon your beds while your generation is dying without actually knowing who Jesus is. Please, rise up in the mercy and grace of God, and stop being entertained by things Christ died to set you free from. Jesus has so much more for you.

"How or why" you may ask, "is satan causing my generation to fall asleep?" Biblically, you know, the closer you get to Jesus' Second Coming, the Great Harlot Babylon (Rev. 17-18) will emerge in the midst of a self-indulging, worldly-pleasure-seeking, pornified generation. The devil seeks to build world-wide-worshipping statues of Humanism (ancient Prince of Greece), and Radical Islam (ancient Prince of Persia) (see Dan. 2:31-45; Rev. 13; 17-18). These two strongmen are taking rise in our hearts and within our culture. They are fueled by hatred for God and taught to a mindless internet generation, setting the stage for a showdown of Good vs. evil, as Jesus, the warrior King, returns to planet earth fulfilling His Father's will (Rev. 5:1). Will you partner with Jesus, or will you buy another blanket as Satan lulls you deeper into sleep? NOW IS THE TIME TO WAKE UP, FAST AND PRAY, AND DECLARE THE MESSAGE OF JESUS!

Young people tell me all the time that they are tired. But are you? Seriously, are you? If you're tired, then what are you doing to overcome this? Are you eating differently, going to sleep on time, or exercising? Make wise choices in the wisdom of God so you can see revival in your generation. Do you know what Jesus did when He was tired? He woke up early and was renewed by God. Jesus was strengthened by talking with His Father through the night (Luke 6:12). He prayed for the sick late into the night, which is revival, and instead of Jesus sleeping in the next morning, we found Him out in the secret place with His Father (Mark 1:32-39). And when He needed to be supernaturally strengthened, God the Father sent angels, and servants of old to encourage Him. Today, God wants to strengthen

Part 2: My Practical Tips to Help You Fast

you to enter into His secret place; the secret place where the Father will strengthen and encourage you. As Jesus said, "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." (Matthew 6:6)

At His Second Coming, He will unleash the King's righteous sword (Isaiah 63:1-6) and through His righteous Justice, our King will mount an air attack as He unleashes the storms of heaven (Rev. 6; 8; 9;16), while leading the ground assault wielding His swords of righteousness and justice, shedding the blood of wicked kings (Isa. 63:1-6; Rev. 19:1-16), defeating the antichrist armies of earth (Rev. 19:17-21). No type of voting will stop OUR KING.

Today, Hope is not dead! God is Alive! The wheat and tares grow up together; in the midst of darkness, the Gospel will still be preached throughout the whole earth followed by signs and wonders (John 14:12; Acts 2:17-21). You must resolve to live a fasted lifestyle positioning yourself to grow deeper in God and to receive more while diligently partnering with Him the greatest harvest of souls in human history (Matt. 24:14; Rev. 7).

Daniel fasted to purpose himself to encounter God more by praying 3x daily (Dan. 6:10) which led to Him standing as a biblical watchman (Dan. 9:3). Also, he humbled himself (Dan.10:12), renounced compromise (Dan. 9:20), and asked for greater insight into God's love (Dan. 9:23; 10:11, 19) and His end-time plan (Dan. 7:16; 8:15-19; 9:2-3, 22-23; 10:1, 11-14; 11:33, 35; 12:4, 9-10). Furthermore, he prayed for a greater breakthrough in God's purposes, including for Jerusalem (Dan. 9:1-3). He was an ordinary person called to do extraordinary things—just like you and me.

START YOUR FAST

God has called you to fast. Below are 7 step-by-steps to starting your fast. Now the rest is up to you. You can do this in the GRACE of God!

STEP-BY-STEP TO STARTING YOUR FAST

1. Read through this book completely.
2. Choose which type of fast you are going to do.
3. Invite a friend to fast and pray with you.
4. Set a schedule together of when you are going to start and end your fast.
5. Organize what you are going to eat, drink, and sleep.
6. Set a schedule of what you would like to study in the Bible or pray.
7. PRAY FOR THE GRACE OF GOD TO FAST.

PART 3

***THREE INSPIRING STORIES OF
ACTUAL FASTS & THEIR OUTCOMES***

INTRODUCTION

Understanding your dreams is an amazing journey that is similar to being called by God and giving your life to follow Him day and night in loving obedience. I am saved because I said yes to Jesus as Savior and Lord. Then, when He gives me a dream, that is a deeper call; an invitation to follow Him more. Jesus first called Peter and his brother by saying, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matt. 4:19) The Bible declares that they immediately left their nets and followed Him. But that is not the end. They had to say yes to Jesus day and night. Every day they had a choice to make. They could continue to follow Jesus or not. Also, they had a choice to make every time Jesus spoke; either conform to the words Jesus spoke, or turn and do their own thing. Peter daily made the choice to follow Christ.

At one point, Jesus had said something offensive and there was a major disruption in the followers of Jesus, causing offense to rise up in them. Jesus, not wanting to conform to the ambitions of humanity, instead invited His followers into something greater. In fact, John 6:66-67 declares, "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" They had to choose to follow Jesus every day. They had to choose to say yes, to die to their own fleshly desires, and to conform to the revealed will of God. And this was not always certain or crystal clear.

The disciples were confused at different times following Jesus. Remember when Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick? Instead of rushing off to help, He declares, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." (Luke 11:4) So, the disciples had the overall plan. But then Jesus stayed for 2 extra days. Then Jesus, following the will of His Father, arose to go to Judea. The disciples, afraid for His life and theirs, tried to stop Him. But Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps (dead), but I go that I may wake him up" (John 11:11). Thomas, not understanding God's will, said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." (John 11:16). In the same way, God gives us dreams.

You might not know how the dream will end. Instead you have to grow in faith and trust. You have to grow closer to God's heart, and you must trust that He is the great leader. Like the disciples, there will be moments of unknown, moments of confusion, moments of clarity, moments of being sure, and maybe like Thomas, moments you make bold statements that are completely wrong. But don't worry. Jesus has resurrection power. He raised Lazarus from the dead, and He will raise you from the dead also. If you keep following the dreams that God gave you, eventually it will lead to His plan and His will.

Dear Reader,

The following is an intimate story that I have never told publicly. This is a story where God met me in my weakness and brokenness, and He took me on a journey. There were lots of ups and downs. There were moments of clarity, moments of confusion, and moments like Thomas where I was completely wrong, but I kept following Jesus. And eventually, He answered my weak fasting and prayers with His resurrection power in—HIS TIME AND HIS WAY. So, follow the story and learn the lessons along the way.

STORY 1: FASTING FOR WOMEN IN IRAN

PRAYERS FROM THE WOMEN OF IRAN AND THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH

In 2010, I was invited to speak at a conference on the coast of Florida. I was excited for several reasons. First, I was going to minister at a House of Prayer that I absolutely love. They are amazingly faithful people and have a heart of gold. Second, I was going to see my amazing friends and mentors, Kirk & Dee Bennett. (We were staying in the same guest house with them).

Last, and most importantly, I was going to spend time with my wife Nadia and three children (our youngest was one year old—we have since grown to six children). So our family arrived late at night to an empty house, because Kirk and the team were at the House of Prayer interceding for the evening. Having travelled all day, I put my weary children to bed, and drifted off to sleep.

By nature, I am a light sleeper, but this night was particularly taxing. I was tired and there were strange sounds all around. Somewhere around 3 am, I slept soundly. Then, I had a life altering dream, which rescued me out of my small perspective, and drew me into God's dream for humanity. I got to play a part in His dream on earth; my weak prayers and fasting made a difference.

That night, I was able to glimpse God's heart for the women in Iran. I saw they were oppressed and needed to be set free. I knew that they needed to get freedom so they could take off their hijab (or burka) and walk free. But in the dream, I knew the answer was not a law that allowed their hijabs to come off. Instead, their freedom had to come from the heart of the Father, who loves His daughters with unending love. A good Father would not cover His children with clothes of shame. This is what happened when Adam and Eve covered themselves in uncomfortable fig leaves (Gen. 3:7). The Father loves His daughters so much that He gave His only Son Jesus as a sacrifice, so that His daughters could uncover their heads of cloth and be covered by the protective healing blood of His Son Jesus.

In the dream, God invited me to participate in what He was about to do with the women in Iran. He said, "I am doing a great thing in Iran. I want to invite you, and many others, to participate in what I am doing." He continued, "I want to hear My daughters' voices in the night."

As He said this, I saw a picture of Iranian Women, particularly mothers and daughters, united, gathered together and worshipping/singing/praying in the night. Watching the women worship/sing/pray was so powerful, as you could see their faces change. At first, their faces were filled with fear and pain, but as they came together and sang, their faces were filled with faith and hope, while they desired tears of joy. I knew their songs and prayers were shifting the spiritual atmosphere over the Middle East, and this would lead to a great revival of their husbands, sons, and daughters. Their prayers really mattered; finally, their voices were being heard in the High Court of Heaven. As they prayed, I knew God would answer the verse spoken to His servant the prophet Jeremiah, when he declared the overthrow of a wicked Iranian leader and the establishment of God's remnant church. Jeremiah proclaimed God's future victory when he rightly prophesied (with 100% certainty this will come to pass),

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

"I (God) will set My throne (seat or authority) in Elam (modern day Iran), and will destroy from there the king and the princes,' says the Lord. 'But it shall come to pass in the latter days (end times): I will bring back the captives of Elam (exiled believers in Jesus),' says the Lord."(Jeremiah 49:38-39)

I cried watching their tears and seeing the unfolding of Biblical prophecy right before me. Then God continued to speak. "Ben, your nation, your children, will be hidden when the time of trouble comes to test those that dwell on the earth (Rev. 3:10), if you will read the Bible until you understand My heart for Iran and the women of the Middle East." He paused and then continued. "Pray for My will (as found in the Bible) until it comes to pass." (Then, in the dream, I was flying up and down the East Coast and Route 95, from Maine to Miami, and inviting people on a journey into His heart, and then to pray for the women in Iran). (I also knew that these women would pray for the fullness of God's redemptive plan for Israel; Rom. 9-11). As the dream faded, I woke up crying in the natural; I cried myself awake.

In the morning I shared my dream with Kirk, who I was so excited to see. Upon listening to my dream, he eagerly told me that miraculously the night before in the prayer room, the prayer leader had changed the topic of prayer at the last minute, from prayer for revival in the nation to praying for Iran. My heart almost skipped a beat as I knew that God was inviting me into His divine plans.

I wrote down the dream, finished the conference, and then returned to the prayer room in Richmond, Virginia, where my wife and I served on staff. It was there that I started to pray a simple prayer like this, "God, I thank You for the dream. I wrote down the dream and now I am sitting down, praying, asking you for the next steps. Please, in Your mercy, and Gracious love, because You love the people of Iran and the Iranian people, release Your divine strategies for such a time as this. Let me know how I can participate." I then began to pray and fasted weekly for God's kingdom to come and His will to be done.

8 LESSONS I LEARNED FROM MY DREAMS

LESSON #1 BE FAITHFUL WITH THE LITTLE

I knew from the dream that I had to learn God's heart for the people of Iran, as found in the Bible, and then pray those promises until they came to pass. So I applied a HUGE principle in the body of Christ. (You can apply this in your life today.) I WROTE DOWN THE DREAM, and was faithful until God gave me the next thing. (Remember, a dream is just God further calling you, inviting you, to follow Him.)

When God gives you something, be faithful with that one thing until He gives you something else. Jesus said, "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?" (Luke 16:10-12). And, in Matthew 25:23, Jesus further preaches, "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'" I knew that I had to be faithful with the little things that God had given me so that I could get the next steps.

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

So, I grabbed my Bible and began to search for every verse about Iran. After I exhausted my search, a thought came to me, which I knew was straight from God, "Look up books of those that have already been made, books about Persians." Next, I looked up on the internet, "Persians in the Bible." And immediately, a little book popped up, which had been written by an American missionary who spent years of his life planting seeds for the Gospel in that land. The book was a line by line study of all the Scriptures referencing Iran. It was a Biblical call to prayer, fasting, and missions for the Persian speaking world.

As I purchased the book and read through it, I felt a surge of the Holy Spirit blast through me. I knew that I had picked up a mantle laid down from the generation of those that went before, and I was being cheered by the great cloud of witnesses that had given their lives for an amazing revival in Iran, the Middle East, and particularly among the women of the earth. I read, fasted, and prayed through this book line by line (I was faithful with what was in front of me), then I learned my second lesson.

LESSON #2 FIND OUT WHAT GOD KNOWS, THINKS, AND FEELS

As I studied the book "Persians in the Bible," I found Bible verses that God had already written. But I found much more than that. I found a hidden treasure. I found God's heart. Anyone can read the Bible, but it takes a child of God to find God's heart in between the lines. Every time I read a Scripture about God's promises, it seemed to take me on a journey deep into His emotions. (God has rich emotions for the Middle East, and especially the Iranian women).

So, I read and prayed those verses over and over again, until I fell in love with His heart for the Persian people. Then, my prayers were not in vain repetition as the heathen does (Matt. 6:7). Instead, they were according to His will and rooted in the heart of a Father that wants to have His children rule and reign with Him forever; these were prayers that would be answered. As John the Beloved Disciple said, "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14). The closer I got to His heart, the more sure I was about praying according to His will. Faithfully, like the good Father that He is, He then God gave me the next lesson.

LESSON #3 GOD CARES ABOUT INWARD AND OUTWARD JUSTICE

The second lesson I learned was that justice is completely tied to God's heart, love, and plans for people. He loves justice, but wants inward justice over outward justice. This means God wants to save you from your sins before outwardly saving you from your present circumstance. For instance, in Luke 5:17-25, Jesus, when confronted with the crippled man who was lowered to Him through the ceiling, first forgave His sins (Jesus brought inward justice), and then He miraculously healed him so that he could walk (Jesus, changed his outward circumstances; outward justice). Jesus cares about both circumstances, but ultimately, cares that the man's sins are forgiven so that the man can be with Him in Heaven forever. In the same way, I had to learn that God cares about justice both inward and outward for the Iranian women. But getting their hijab off their head is not just the end goal; eternal life is.

I want to encourage you to become a student of God's character and emotions. King David was such a student. He wrote, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face." God's desire and plan is for His Justice to come to earth, but it will not

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

come outside of us being faithful with His heart. (Just like we must be faithful with the heart of our spouse or our own child). Then I was ready to learn my next lesson.

LESSON #4 EVERYONE YOU MEET ON THE JOURNEY IS SUPER IMPORTANT

After a season of prayer, I was divinely introduced to this woman who seemed insignificant, but her story was heavenly. As a young person in her church, she had such a heart for the women of Iran that eventually, she gave her life and moved to Iran with a work program.

On the outside she seemed like a tourist working within the protected borders of that nation, but on the inside, she was a fierce prayer warrior that had walked the streets for three years planting seeds of the gospel while praying for revival. She then married a Persian speaking Iranian believer and moved back to America. Upon return to the US, they set up a ministry that exposed the crimes against believers and women in Iran and helped to provide basic things for the church. However, tragically, her husband was struggling in many areas, and divorced her and moved away. I cried as this woman told me her story; I learned my fourth lesson.

The day by day journey to the goal is just as important as reaching the goal itself; every person that I meet along the way is as important as the last person I meet. Jesus loves people so much that He listened to them, had patience with them, and presently wept with them (John 11:1-44). It is equally important for you to hear the story of each person along the way. Why? First, when you listen to people's stories, you find out what God is doing in their lives, right now. And this tells more about His character, emotions, and actions. This will help you get a bigger understanding of what He is doing, which will motivate you to continue, because you may be tempted to give up soon. Second, as you hear the stories, you fall in love with real people. So you grow in the 1st and 2nd commandment; loving God and loving people. It was at this point that God led me to the next person and my next lesson.

The first woman that I met, in our fifth hour of meeting, felt comfortable enough with me to let me meet her friend from Iran. This next woman had immigrated to the US when she was younger, learned English, went to school, then university, and lastly Law school. She had done so well that she was now the chief advisor to the Chief Justice to the State Supreme Court. After she and I met, I was able to pray with her in the State Supreme Court building, for Justice in our state and for the Iranian people, specifically the Iranian women. What an honor! But then I learned my next very important lesson.

LESSON #5 GOD SHOWED ME WHAT TO PRAY FOR

This woman was the very living answer to God's dream for the Iranian women; God had shown me what to pray for. She was free on the outside and the inside (Justice, from Lesson #3). She was free from the tentacles of Islam; she was free of her hijab. Also, she was free in her heart; Jesus Christ was her Savior and Lord. But that is not all. She was also able to grow and rise, using her gifts and talents, into a place of prominence in the world. She was successful in her life and heart. But I knew she was just one of many that had to begin to walk in God's freedom. That is when the phrase from the original dream hit me like a ton of bricks, "I want to hear My daughters' voices in the night. Let the mothers and daughters unite, gather together. Raise up a Daniel 10 justice movement of the women singing in the night."

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

It was at this time that I moved my family back to the International House of Prayer in Kansas City. Why? Because I knew I needed to have more focused prayer and fasting to see this Daniel 10 justice movement of Iranian women singing in the night come to fruition. Upon arriving at IHOPKC, I eagerly shared the story with as many people as I could until I found four people that could join the prayer team. First was a well-known worship leader who had a dream where God invited her to pray for the women of Iran. Second was another well-known worship leader who was also invited by God in a dream to pray. Next was the woman from the House of Prayer in Florida. It was the same woman that had led the prayer meeting and felt called to switch the focus of the meeting to pray for Iran. And last was a fiery college student who had done several long fasts, had served with ministries overseas, and had an Iranian friend on her local campus. She was preaching the gospel to an Iranian student that was also struggling with same-sex attraction (we put her on the speaker phone so she could attend). I gathered them to pray each week and learned my next valuable lesson.

LESSON #6 STAY STEADY AND WITHOUT OFFENSE, EVEN WHEN OTHERS CAN'T

Who you start the race with may not be who you finish with. Just stay steady, without offense, and faithful. Only the grace of God can draw people into something, and only the grace of God can keep them there.

Everyone came to the first prayer meeting, we shared stories, and everyone was committed to having our weekly prayer meeting be their fast day. I left the meeting excited, feeling like I was on top of the world. I was justified to follow God's call and move my family halfway across the nation, taking my children away from friends. But the next meeting a few people came late. Then by the third meeting, it was just me and the young lady from the distant university. Regrettably, by the fifth meeting, the young university student was also gone. She had decided that she was going to engage in a same-sex relationship with the very Iranian woman she had been sharing the Gospel with, and she began to tell me that she felt Islam might not be all that bad (I believe she has come full circle fully back to Jesus). After two months, I knew that I had to make some changes if I was going to stay faithful to this invitation.

I began to fast and pray more intentionally. I decided that only God would bring the new team together in a super natural way. Each week, I would sit in the room, and try to faithfully keep the prayer and fasting schedule we had originally set. I would remind God of the promises. I would remind Him of the dream that He had given me awakening my heart, and inviting the east coast into prayer for the Middle East (particularly Iran). I would remind Him of His heart found in the Scriptures. Then I would remind Him of the dreams He had given others. I would mostly pray the Lord's Prayer, the "Our Father," and ask for Him to send like-minded friends. I learned a very important lesson that day.

LESSON #6 DIE TO YOURSELF AND DON'T QUIT

Jesus was alone in the Garden when He prayed. He prayed for strength. He prayed to continue on. He prayed not His will be done, but the Father's will. Jesus was dead to His will, but faithfully fulfilled the Father's will. When you are praying for the Father's will, you win. You might not see the answer in your time, but you will win because you are praying for His will. But you may see the answer to your prayers if you don't quit; If you don't quit, you win. (This is one of the most important lessons that I learned. Die to yourself, and Don't quit. Don't quit. Don't quit. Don't quit. When you are weakest, He is

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

strongest. After all the battle belongs to the Lord and not you, but you have a major part to play). Then I learned my next lesson.

LESSON #7 STAY FAITHFUL EVEN WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE THE ANSWER.

Who died on the mountain when Abraham brought Isaac up for the sacrifice? Abraham? Isaac? Or a ram? Traditional answer is the ram. But my answer is Abraham and Isaac (and of course the ram). Abraham had to die to himself to actually carry out God's will. He had to go to a place of faith; He had to trust that God would raise up His son if He killed Him. (That is some trust). Also, Isaac had to die. Remember, he carried the wood and he had to get up on the altar (Isaac could have run away once he realized that he was the offering). Instead, Isaac stayed, trusting his father's relationship with God, and Abraham obeyed, trusting God would provide. This is where I learned my next lesson. I had to die to myself and trust that He who began a good work was faithful to complete it.

Abraham stayed faithful to God while God was bringing the answer, even though he could not see it. Picture this: God has Abraham and Isaac walking up one side of the mountain. Then on the other side, walking at the same speed, is the ram. The ram will arrive at just the right time, not a minute late and not a minute early. And most importantly, Abraham can't see the ram coming. He just has to trust. In the same way, I could not see the answer to our prayers for the Iranian women, but God was working, and I just needed to trust Him while dying daily to myself.

Just a side note—I had immense pressures at this time. My marriage was under intense pressure as my wife was in pain. (And I don't blame her). I was explaining about having faith for Iranian women and revival, but then I did not have faith to pay the bills. I was also not fitting in at IHOPKC. I had been offered a position of leadership, but God told me to say nothing and take the lowest position I could find. Many people thought I was losing it or not really a leader that could be trusted, while others outwardly made up lies about me and propagated them viciously throughout the community. Either way, it was an intense season. But still, I went to the room, now daily, to fast and pray, believing for a breakthrough with the Iranian women. And then the day came, and I learned another major lesson in the place of prayer and fasting.

LESSON #8 DO NOT DESPISE THE DAY OF SMALL BEGINNINGS

Do not despise the day of small beginnings. An outwardly small Egyptian man came to me one day and asked to have a meeting with me. I said yes. He pulled out the book "Persians in the Bible," and asked me if this was mine. (Long story short I had loaned it to others, hoping to gain momentum in prayer, and I thought it was lost). He then proceeded to tell me that he had been praying for a long time for the Iranian people, and asked me how many people I had committed. I told him I had gotten the prayer meeting down to me. So together we shared stories and started to pray. It seemed to be a small beginning, but God was working.

GOD WAS WORKING FROM THE FIRST DAY WE STARTED TO PRAY

When you pray and fast, God will answer, but you might not always see it. And in this case, God was working mightily. He was saving women, not just in Iran, but in the Persian speaking world, and really across the Muslim world in general. I cannot tell all these stories, but I will tell of two. Their names are changed and stories shortened.

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

FAITHFUL FRANA

First, Frana. She was an amazingly faithful Muslim who had been so zealous, she helped to put others in prison for not following the strict rules of Islam. And she was also a martial arts champion (as a woman in a Muslim nation), so she became a local hero and spokeswoman for “successful and happy women in Islam.” By all accounts, she was successful, but on the inside she was dead.

She was radically saved through a dream, by Jesus, and then had to flee for her life. Her family confronted her, but she did not repent and return to Islam, so her brother beat her mercilessly with a hammer to outwardly show that she was dead to the family. Next, her sister also converted to Christianity. Having been well-known before, the Taliban began to harass her until they found their local church. Wanting to kill her, they planted three bombs. Upon the detonation of the third bomb, my friend Frana died and went to Heaven. There, Jesus, the kindest Man who ever lived, looked her in the eyes, and lovingly said, “Do not be afraid to preach the Gospel.” Then, she instantly was raised back to life again after having been dead for some time. (She always talked about how kind Jesus was. How His eyes were filled with love, and His voice was overwhelming). Well, Frana and her sister moved to IHOPKC to be a part of day and night prayer. Yep, you guessed it, they joined the prayer meeting, but that is not it. The next ones that joined had an equally amazing story.

KIND KARA

Kara, her mother, and her brother fled from Iran, running for their lives. She had been happily married in Iran with a two-year-old son when she met Jesus as her Savior. Not only did she get saved, but her brother and mother also. (Her father had passed away). Unable to keep her Christianity a secret, she bubbled over with songs like a joyful bird in the morning. While working in her home, she would sing worship songs to Jesus. Her husband, noticing the difference, called her out and threatened her life. When she would not relent, he beat and stabbed her, took her son away, and was ready to turn her over to the police. Fearing for her life, she escaped in the night with her mother. (Her brother followed later). She lived two years in a refugee camp in Turkey.

Ever in love with Jesus, desperately defeated with sorrow, she did what she always did to survive. She sang. Needing to worship Jesus, she searched on the internet for “worship and Jesus.” It was then that she came across the International House of Prayer in Kansas City. There we were, in KC, hosting day and night prayers. She watched this prayer room nearly daily for two years and sang. She wept from the pain of losing her husband and son, but she cried tears of joy as she sang to Jesus. It was an immensely hard time. (Coincidentally, at this time, I was in Florida, receiving a dream from the Lord to pray for women in Iran).

One day, after two years of eagerly waiting and trying to guess where they would be placed, they were finally given notice; they were heading to a small town in the US. But once they went to the US, things were not easy as Kara had to work in a Taco Bell. It was there that her heart desperately longed to sing, her brother wanted some work with meaning, and her mother was seeking some sort of stability. These were faithful immigrants who loved Jesus, trying to make a home. And everything changed one day.

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

FARNA AND KARA MEET

Farna, who was attending our Bible school, would typically go out to share the gospel with whoever would listen. (You would too if you died, met Jesus, and then came back to life again.) This time, she drove 50 miles away to share the Gospel, and stopped for lunch at the Taco Bell where Frana worked. Growing up speaking Farsi, she was so happy to meet Kara, who also spoke Farsi, and was a believer. But what happened next was extraordinary. Kara retold the story of her time singing in the refugee camp. She told Kara of a place in the US where they let you sing day and night to Jesus, and that someday she wanted to go there. Farna told her that she could actually do that anytime because she attended that Bible school that was 50 miles away.

Imagine how happy Kara and her family were to know that God had miraculously helped them escape. He had kept their hearts pure during the two years in the camp, and then He had actually moved them 50 miles away from the singing Bible Seminary at the International House of Prayer. Kara was overjoyed. Quickly, we helped the family move closer, and guess what? They also joined our prayer team. But remember the original dream? He said, "I want to hear My daughters' voices in the night. Let the mothers and daughters gather together. Raise up a Daniel 10 justice movement of the women singing in the night." Somehow, I knew this would come up soon.

One day, in our weak prayer meeting, I just sat back and cried. God had done an amazing thing. Literally, I was watching a mother and daughter who loved Jesus and had escaped from Iran sing in the night. I was watching a young lady, who had died, met Jesus, and came back to life, singing powerful prophetic songs over the very country which had beaten and persecuted her. To the left of me was my new best friend, a small Egyptian man, with a heart of gold, whose equally amazing wife was learning Farsi so that we could learn to sing in their native language. God had done this. I never could have done this. But I had participated with Him on this journey.

But the story does not end there. If I was to continue to retell the testimony of Jesus in Iran and the surrounding area, it would fill multiple volumes of books. Suffice to say, Iran went into a season of revival. One day, I was contacted by a woman from the magazine, 'Voice of the Martyrs' wanting to interview me on this story. She told me this would be a follow up to another story they had done. She explained that the previous article was titled "Voices in the Night." It was a story about Iranian women singing and praying in the night. In fact, to hide themselves, some of the women had gone out into the woods to sing. She sent me a copy of the magazine in the mail.

When I held the magazine in my hand, I was overwhelmed. Slumping to my knees, I began crying. This was it. (Honestly, this is just the continuation of what God has been doing, is doing, and will continue to do). This was what I had been partnering with Jesus for. This was the answer to what Jesus had placed in my heart and said, "Watch with Me for an hour." A, "Daniel 10 justice movement, mothers and daughters, united, gathering together, singing and worshipping in the night." I continued to weep as the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart, "Thank you for fasting and praying." I was overwhelmed that my little yes, my weak fasting and prayers, had made a difference.

Only God knows who else prayed. But I was thankful to play a little part in His bigger plan. I was thankful to have learned more about His heart for Iran and the Persian speaking world. I was thankful

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

to learn that Justice is not just outward, but inward also. I was thankful for all the friends that I had made along the way. I am thankful to be able to look at the 1000's that have said yes to Jesus. But the story does not end there—just last week (I wrote this book in December 2020), I met with another leader from the underground church in Iran. After listening to Him, I am so excited to give the next 10 years of my strength, prayer, and action to see a great stadium movement of the Gospel being preached, which transforms Iran.

But after I had been faithful to serve these amazing women, God began to challenge me and my heart for women. I had been faithful with the little that God gave me, but the story of prayer and fasting for God's purpose for women did not end there. In fact it was just beginning. Upon being faithful with this challenge, God gave more, and now I am more excited to fast and pray for all women.

WHY I BELIEVE THE HEARTS OF MOTHERS WILL TURN THE NATIONS BACK TO GOD

I believe God wants to challenge how men see women.

I believe God wants to challenge how women see themselves.

I believe God wants to challenge men that struggle with looking at women on the internet.

And I believe God wants to help men pray for their spouses and daughters.

I had several dreams about God's heart for women. After I had the dreams, I began to search the Scriptures to learn more on what God thinks and feels about women. And I found that God loves women immensely and has amazing plans for them. I believe God is going to partner with women to bring revival and reformation in our nation (and many other nations). Firstly, I will share Bible verses that I believe help us understand God's heart for women and how much He values them. Secondly, I will share dreams which encouraged and changed my heart to see God's plan for women (and taught me to pray for my wife). Lastly, I will share why I believe Godly women, organizing together, will gain heaven's attention and change history.

SCRIPTURES THAT SHOW THE VALUE AND PURPOSE OF WOMEN

(these are certainly not comprehensive)

First, Jesus kindly answers the Samaritan woman at the well by saying, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" (John 4:10). In one simple conversation, Jesus elevated the world's understanding of women as He confronted gender and race issues. He partnered with the Holy Spirit, through a word of knowledge, to accomplish the Father's will, empowering this woman to be a worshipper (1st commandment restored to first place) and an evangelist (2nd commandment given to her life's purpose).

This also served as an example for His future leadership team (disciples), who undoubtedly had gender and race issues to overcome (she was a Samaritan woman), so that they could be gospel preaching, servant leaders and martyrs. Today, God is elevating the value of women, so that they can live their life to the fullest in Christ.

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

Second, we can find revelation in the story of John the Baptist's beheading. This may seem strange, but follow me for a moment. We live in a grossly over-pornified society where women (and men) are exploited for sinful passions. This problem was evident in Jesus's day. King Herod, who liked to talk with John the Baptist, had him locked away in a prison cell. In a state of drunkenness and immorality, he had a woman provocatively dance for him. The result is that Herodias (under the Jezebel spirit of control) used her own daughter to control and destroy the life of John. How does Jesus respond? "When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick." After grieving only a short time for the life of John the Baptist, Jesus serves the people's needs, prayerfully reaches out to Father, contends for the miraculous, and feeds the 5000. "Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children." (Matthew 14:1-21). How does this speak about God's heart for women? Jesus had compassion.

Compassion is something that women/mothers have a rich supply of. In fact, we see another woman, Mary of Bethany, rise to the occasion when Jesus was about to go the cross (the hardest task of His earthly life). She pours out her extravagant offering upon Jesus. She gave all that she had because she knew the life and love of Jesus. She had compassion on Him, and poured out an offering on Him (Mark 14:3-9). Now compare the two stories. Herodias used her own daughter and sexual immorality to control her life and destroy another. Mary of Bethany used her wealth and talents, living with compassion, to pour out her life as an offering unto Jesus. He then rewards her life of devotion by explaining that what she had done will be remembered as an eternal memorial forever (Mark 14:9; we will talk about this for millennia to come). Today, women will arise in purity who are moved with compassion, and they will truly minister to the heart of God.

Third, and most important, the revelation of God's love (He is the Bridegroom and you are the Bride), will increase daily as we approach the end times. In the beginning, Jesus explained that man could not live alone. He needed a helper, comparable to him, one that would co-labor with him in his task of loving God, and loving people (Genesis 2:17-19; work of the garden). Jesus, who invented the idea of marriage, was at the first marriage when He brought Eve to Adam (Gen. 2:22). The Bible begins and ends with a marriage. The Book of Revelation declares, "And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17) Today, as we get closer to the end times, Jesus prophesied, "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold." (Matthew 24:12). So, God has used the institution of marriage to show us our role as the Bride of Christ and His overwhelming love for us. But the best is yet to come.

DREAM ONE: PRAYING WOMEN

In the first dream, I was in Washington DC, and it was several years in the future. I was looking outside at Washington DC. The streets began to flood. It started slowly at first; 1 inch, then 2 inches, and then 5 inches. I knew that the water level was rising, and soon there would be a flood. Next, different kinds of fish were swimming in the streets. I knew the fish represented ministries, movements, and political groups seeking change in our nation. Some of the groups were smaller while some were quite large. Some of the groups were more violent while some were very peaceful. I knew that this was not

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

going to get us the change we needed because people were not unified. There was a sense of urgency in the Christian believers. Something had to be done soon.

Shockingly, because of the sin in our hearts and in the nations, we were headed to a world war. Our rebellion against God had reached a point of tipping like unto the civil war (I knew it had to do with Psalm 2 and the rage of the nations against God). It seemed that we were close to this world war. Then a huge whale, bigger than anything I've ever seen, fell out of the sky. And when it landed in the water, there was the loudest sound that I have ever heard. Everyone in the nation took notice.

Interpreting, the whale spoke of Jeremiah 7:17-21. Where the LORD OF HOSTS says,

*"Consider and call for the mourning women,
That they may come;
And send for skillful wailing women,
That they may come.
Let them make haste
And take up a wailing for us,
That our eyes may run with tears,
And our eyelids gush with water.
For a voice of wailing is heard from Zion:
'How we are plundered!
We are greatly ashamed,
Because we have forsaken the land,
Because we have been cast out of our dwellings.' "*
*Yet hear the word of the Lord, O women,
And let your ear receive the word of His mouth;
Teach your daughters wailing,
And everyone her neighbor a lamentation.
For death has come through our windows,
Has entered our palaces,
To kill off the children—no longer to be outside!
And the young men—no longer on the streets!*

I knew that there were over 3 million women, united, crying out for their children to be spared, crying out for the nation, asking God to forgive us. Caring mothers and sincere women were asking for God's mercy on the land. They were praying and pleading, that their sons and daughters wouldn't be taken into war on foreign soils. I knew that many people would die if our nation did not repent and turned to the Lord. (This seemed to be the last effort, because all of the many unity movements did not change things. But there was a holiness and purity in these women.)

DREAM TWO: THE WOMAN OF AZUSA

This was the 2nd dream (and the most challenging). I was in a desperate season of my life. I had been serving in full-time missionary work for 12 years. My wife and I had only four children at the time. However, life was very hard. The pressure of raising our own funds, serving the body of Christ with a smile, and then going home to encourage your family, all with a meager budget, was putting a strain

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

on our marriage. But my wife was a champ. Not that she didn't struggle, we all struggled most days, but she was faithful to take time to turn to the Lord in the midst of her struggle, and sometimes that's all we can do. I remember the night of this dream like it was yesterday.

In the dream, I was on my way to a celebration. The body of Christ had gone through an amazing revival season. There were so many exciting things that happened. Many people had been saved, and many life changing miracles came forth. We were gathering together to talk about the amazing move of God and to encourage each other before the imminent return of Jesus Christ. As I got to my hotel room, I was told that I would stay in the Azusa Commemorative Revival room. I knew that this would be a room with pictures showing the story of what really happened, from God's perspective, during the Holy Spirit outpouring in 1906 to 1908 at the Azusa revival.

I was excited as I entered the room. I prepared myself to see photographs of Frank Bartleman (white man) and William Seymour (black man). These are the two men most highlighted during this historic outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I was shocked when I walked into the room at what I saw. I saw one picture of William Seymour. And then I saw several small pictures of Frank Bartleman. But there were thousands of pictures all over the walls of women. Some white, native, Asian, and mostly black. I knew that the size of the picture represented how much each person had prayed and lived righteously. I knew that I was looking at history through God's eyes.

I asked the Lord what was going on? Why were these pictures of women all over the wall? He replied, "You thought I raised up Bartleman and Seymour because of their righteousness and fervent prayer life. But I raised up Bartleman and Seymour as an answer to the prayers of the praying mothers and praying women of their generation. Both Frank Bartleman and William Seymour were My perfect answer to the crisis in that day." And what He said next changed my life forever. He continued,

"If you understood My heart and value for women, and understood their role in the revival to come, you would pray and serve your wife differently."

I do not have time to go into the long story, but my life was changed that day. I began to pray for my wife for one hour every day for the next year and a half. And now I have a rich vibrant prayer life with, and for, my wife. I am not just praying for her so that revival will come. Instead, I am praying for her to grow in love with God, enter into the fullness of God's destiny for her and her children, all while believing for her life and calling. This verse has been a constant prayer for her, "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4). Today, pray that our nation turns back to God. Pray that our children never go to war. Pray for the fullness of God's heart for women. Pray for forgiveness and revival. I pray for His Kingdom to come.

DREAM THREE: UNITED WOMEN

I saw God uniting women together, and they would talk and pray, write laws, vote, run for office, and basically, begin to turn the nation towards righteousness and justice. There seemed to be groups of women across political and denominational lines uniting at the cross of Christ. Really, there were no superstars. This was an even playing field. It reminded me of how compelling, convicting, and humbling it must've been to be around amazing ordinary women like: queen Esther, Ruth, Sojourner Truth, & the courageous Ann Atwater. These were just ordinary women called to do extraordinary things.

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

They just gathered together, talked about the issues at hand, prayed, and then acted. But their unity, prayers, and actions began almost a political revolution (but it was more than just policies that they changed).

IN SUMMARY

These three dreams helped me to look at God's heart for women differently while treating and praying for my wife with thanksgiving and gratitude (I get to pray for the daughter of God the Father in Heaven). And lastly, I am praying for the victorious Church and Godly women leaders to arise in the Body of Christ, which will help fill the vacuum of leadership all around us.

REMEMBER DREAMS ARE AN INVITATION TO FOLLOW GOD

It is one thing to get a dream. It is entirely something else to understand your part, fast, and pray until you complete your part. So, what is your part? What story God has called you into. I want to encourage you to read your Bible and pray until you find God's DREAM in between the pages. Then, give your life as a living sacrifice until you see it come to pass. Some will say you are fanatical. Others will say you're extreme and unbalanced. But I would rather give my life to live for His dream than waste my life dying while building my castle in the sand. In all you're doing, find His DREAM for your generation, and wholeheartedly give your life to this. Then you will never live with regret.

STORY 2: YOU CAN FAST LIKE ESTHER

DETROIT AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN PRIESTHOOD

Any able-bodied adult can do an Esther Fast. Seriously, unless a doctor says, "You can't," I want to encourage you to do an Esther Fast. That's right, I want to invite you to fast and pray with your friends for three days without food and water. Why? First, this is one of the most powerful ways you can fast; powers and principalities of darkness are defeated. Also, powerful divine revelation from God about who He is and what He is doing is granted when you enter an Esther fast.

I have done several Esther fasts and all of them resulted in something powerful happening. Literally, every single time. I want to take time to tell you one such story. BUT WAIT! As you read this story, I want to encourage you to become inspired to do an Esther Fast with your friends. Remember, read your Bible until you find Jesus's Dream and then fast and pray until you see His Dream come to pass.

This story is not my story. It is God's story; His dream. I just read my Bible and one day found His heart, then like Peter in the Bible, I was invited to serve. As you read this story, you will understand that this is certainly not over. In fact, it is just beginning, and there is so much more to come.

JESUS' DREAM: AFRICAN AMERICAN PRIESTHOOD

I was 30 years old when God's Word struck my heart. What He said tied together years of encounters with Him. Seemingly random dreams, promises, and words all collided together in a moment, with just a still small voice, bringing clarity and life-giving vision. He said, "I [God] will raise up 1 million African American men that will stand as watchmen on the wall for Israel [Jerusalem]." Next, He fervently proclaimed, "Call them a radical Nazarite army and tell them to sing." As those words

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

saturated my heart, He continued, "They must first be a priesthood before me and then watchmen on the wall for Israel/Jerusalem." SELAH. I stood still and waited.

In the middle of the living room, late one night in prayer, these words riveted my heart and held me in place. Two life-changing events happened that night. First, God began to connect different things that He had told and shown me since I was a little boy. I had many dreams about the African American people. As a gangly white country boy who grew up across the street from a cow farm, I did not come across many black people. However, I had always felt a draw to spend time, hang out, and live near my African American brothers and sisters.

Secondly, I knew that what God said was a Scripture verse from Isaiah 62:6-7. I want to take you on a journey and tell you a story, God's story, and the story of others that spoke to me along the way. I want to bring perspective, biblical fortitude, and rich stories, which I believe are inspired by the Holy Spirit. So, let me start with the Bible verse the Holy Spirit spoke (Isa. 62:6-7), then I will share when Jesus quotes this verse while on earth in His earthly ministry.

*"I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem;
They shall never hold their peace day or night.
You who make mention of the Lord, do not keep silent,
And give Him no rest till He establishes
And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth." (Isa. 62:6-7)*

Isaiah spoke these words after God shared His heart. How many times have you shared your heart with someone? (Did you really feel understood?) Do you really understand God's heart in the Scripture above? If you do, and I hope you do, you would feel God's earnest desire to dwell in His beautiful home in Jerusalem. And in His beautiful home, His children will love Him wholeheartedly while loving their neighbor as themselves. In Jerusalem, Jesus will have a beautiful Bride who loves Him with dove's eyes (those are eyes of singular devotion). In Jerusalem, the worship room never stops and the sun does not need to shine, because God is that—Son!

But before God lives in His heavenly home in Jerusalem, He is going to lead a mighty victorious army. The army will be the greatest army ever established in world history. Men and women, young and old, vibrant and frail, rich and poor, standing before God in Heaven, but singing while on earth. The army will love; they will know it is all about that heavenly wedding to come. The army will sacrifice; they will not need the pleasures of this world and they will not waste their time or energy. This army will dance; they will joyfully think about His Kingdom come. This army will fast and pray; they will give up legitimate earthly pleasures. This army will sing; they will be watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem. God is inviting you into this army! Let me tell you how God led me on this journey.

My wife and I moved to Richmond, Virginia, to see this dream come to pass. God spoke absolutely clearly, beyond a shadow of a doubt, and told us to go to Richmond and we would see the beginnings of this grand adventure. (Note: my wife and I do not think we are God's answer for the plight of black America. We are just a small part, but I believe a vital part.)

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

After moving to Richmond, Virginia, which was a former slave market in America, we spent three years praying daily and serving in the inner city. It was really important for me, a skinny white country boy, to move to a predominantly black community to learn empathy and serve without an agenda. During that season, we watched, learned, listened and served. We watched the heroes of the black community, moms and dads that had relatively nothing, but gave themselves to continue putting food on the table and paying their bills on time. We watched single mothers work their hands to the bone, and smile, thankful to raise their amazing families. I watched grandmothers, tired, long past tired, raise another generation of grandchildren so they could get a fresh start.

And we saw the pain. Young men, wanting to make a difference, wanting to be loved, wanting a chance to do something in life. Regrettably, they ended up in jail at a young age. We saw the single mom carrying a backpack and running drugs, just so she could put food on the dinner table. We watched moms have to go into subpar stores to buy food with little or no nutritional value. We listened to young men cry because they never knew their father, and they lived with the pain of this day in and day out. I had to watch a grandma try to sell me weed out of a van with her grandkids in the vehicle. Why? Not because she was an addict. She had to make money while watching her abandoned grandkids so they could have food that morning.

It is then that I learned something very profound. Not only was I white, but I had white privilege. (I am not a racist, nor did I ever know what white privilege was.) However, one evening I could not sleep so I sat outside on my porch. Not wanting to wake up my children, I lit a candle so I could read the Bible. At the same time there was a group of young men, who happened to be black, walking by. They saw me light the candle and then asked me if I was lighting it up (smoking weed), because they wanted to join. Not wanting to miss the moment, I jumped up to talk with the guys. Eventually, the leader sat down and talked. He asked me what it was like to be rich. I told him I am not rich at all. He said, "You have to be rich, you're white." I laughed. But then, he proceeded to explain how he was brought up without a father in poverty, and he had never been outside of the city limits.

I pondered the words he said and thought deeply. I did have white privilege and did not even know it. (In the natural world I was living very close to the poverty line). However, I could pick up the phone if I was in need and call someone, and they would help me. I could walk into a bank and get a loan with little to no problem. I could walk into a store to shop, and most people would not think I am about to steal something. I could drive at night and would not get pulled over because of the color of my skin. It was at that moment that I saw this man's life and future life differently, and I was filled with empathy. After I finished my three-year task in Richmond, I moved my family back to the International House of Prayer in Kansas City. (As you know from earlier, to serve God's call for the Iranian woman.) It is here that I begin this story about Esther fasting.

6 MONTHS AFTER WE MOVED FROM RICHMOND TO KANSAS CITY

Holding the word that God would raise up 1 million African American men in my heart, I felt to share the word with my immediate prayer team. At that time in my life, I was a prayer room supervisor at the International House of Prayer. I was in charge of a small group of intercessors to provide pastoral oversight in their life. I loved my job and I absolutely loved the people I was called to serve. We met five days a week and encouraged each other, read the Bible, shared stories, and prayed with one another. One of those people was named Jong Kim.

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

Jong came from a very strict Asian family. He was well educated and his parents had hoped he would lead in the marketplace successfully. However, Jong had felt led to move to IHOPKC and join the staff. As his prayer room leader, I would meet with him regularly to discuss how he was doing and what he wanted to do. He felt content to serve in the prayer room, but I always knew no matter what God asked of him, he would do it. He was a faithful man.

One day, I shared with my team about the dreams I had for the African American people. I remember explaining with fervent passion about how God would raise up 1 million African American men to stand as Watchmen on the wall for Israel. I explained how this would be a part of revival in our nation. I shared how our nation had a Biblical call to provoke Israel to jealousy (Romans 11:11). But before we can provoke Israel to jealousy, we would have to unite across political and denominational lines (at the cross of Christ; Eph. 2:15-16). Paul proclaimed, *"Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity"* (Eph. 2:15-16).

God said, He would bring Peace but only by bringing Jews and Gentiles together through the Cross. THERE IS NO OTHER WAY. Before God brings Jews and Gentiles together, He would have to unite Gentile believers together under the power of the Cross. And then He will have to unite Jewish believers (of Jesus as Messiah) together under the power of the Cross. And then He would unite them (Jews and Gentiles) together as Paul taught in Ephesian 2:15. But how would the unity come? Only through the Cross of Christ.

So, before we could unite together and provoke Israel to jealousy, we would then have to unite together and serve the African American men into their calling. The Lord has asked me 1000 times, "How can you unite together and provoke Israel to jealousy, and serve them unto their calling, when you have not learned how to unite, get low, humble yourselves, and serve the African American male into their calling?" There is no other way than the path that the Lord lays out.

(side note: The African American male is the only people group that is decreasing at an increasing rate; see <http://www.theradiancefoundation.org/>).

Also, when Jesus came as a baby, God had not spoken to the Jewish people for over 400 years. Jerusalem, and the Jewish people, were under intense Roman occupation, and also intense governmental persecution of their own Jewish leaders. The Jewish people were treated as second-class citizens in their own land. They suffered intense political, cultural, and economic pressure. Their only hope was for the Messiah to come and rescue them. But the prophet Micah had spoken some 700 years earlier, and said,

*"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth are from of old,
From everlasting."
Micah 5:2*

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

What does this mean? Even though Israel was small, and suffered much, the Messiah would still come and bring forth salvation. Today, the African American brothers and sisters suffer intense persecution, but out of them, the African American male will arise and serve God's redemptive plan for true peace; peace that only Yeshua can bring.

I continued to share that this would come with extreme tension. As the African American people would have to stand up and lead with meekness and humility, other races would have to reach out in empathy. I knew the path forward had to do not just with social justice, but with the cross of Christ.

I shared the stories of how my grandfather and grandmother had served the African American sharecroppers in the 1940's and 50's. They did this by building them homes, helping with food, providing spiritual instruction, and providing jobs. I explained how the KKK would organize, pressure, and protest against my grandfather and the community he worked with. I recalled stories of my grandfather and grandmother being shot at by the clan, buildings being destroyed, and other stories of fear and intimidation. But I remember my grandfather saying that's not the end of the story. God has something great planned for this nation and the black people.

I told our team how I believed God was going to move supernaturally in our land, but we all had to do our part. I remember looking at Jong that day; it was as if God had already spoken something in his heart. As I shared the story God had told me, God was mixing a dream that was already in his heart. I remember Jong stood up and walked out the door, and I never heard from him for the next 8 months. (More on this later).

ONE MONTH LATER

Then I was approached by a black woman one day. She was anything but ordinary. This woman had grown up under an intense and extreme parental situation only to overcome; today she is a Godly prophetic leader in our land. She had a strong desire for a generation to embrace their spiritual identity through intimacy with Jesus. She also had a passion to see healing between races, the ending of abortion, and revival in our land. (She later went on to lead a prolific prophetic movement called 818 The Sign Gathering).

She asked if I would pray with her in regards to these areas. Excited, I shared God's dreams and desires for 1 million African American men to stand as watchmen on the wall for Israel. I asked if we could pray for this also. She agreed, and together, with a few friends, we started to pray together daily for 3 months, 5 times a week, for two hours each day. (That is 10 hours a week, over 3 months, which is 120 hours of prayer.) We prayed for the African American people, we prayed for the ending of abortion, and for revival in America. Sometimes it was hard, and sometimes there was a sense of God's presence and His desire for revival. It was about that time that God began to speak to us about His plans and purposes for the city of Detroit.

Each time that we would gather, all were encouraged to share any dreams that they had. There began to be several dreams where God was speaking about His plans and purposes for the city of Detroit. Many people know Detroit as a failed economic area. But God was talking about touching the

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

heart of people and bringing a spirit of revival. And I remember one day that forever changed my life as we stayed steady in fasting and prayer, bringing each dream before the Lord.

A man named Lou Engle burst through the door of our little prayer meeting one day, and made a ferocious statement, "Do we bring the call to Detroit?" Lou, or Papa Lou, as we affectionately call him, was a prophetic intercessor who led a ministry called The Call. (Today he leads Lou Engle Ministries). In 2000 Lou had sent out a call inviting people to stand for revival in the nation at the Washington D.C. Mall, and remarkably 400,000 young people showed up believing God would change the nation. Several things happened that day.

First, the lives of everyone who came were impacted through the inspirational worship, teaching, and prayer. Second, many historic ministries came forth, which had monumental impact in the areas of the gospel being preached and justice for the oppressed. We were also believing for the ending of abortion in America. Unfortunately, we have not seen this happen, but we believe the best is to come.

Lou had come to our humble prayer meeting because he heard we had been praying for the African American people and the city of Detroit. His team was also sensing from the Lord that God wanted to do something significant. He came to our meeting to hear the dreams and listen to what the Holy Spirit had been saying. After 40 minutes of sharing stories it was evident that God wanted to do something rich and vibrant in the city of Detroit that would have lasting impact.

I knew that God would do amazing things. I also know that He is able to do several things at once. God is the master chess player. He can play chess on 100 different levels at once. But in my heart, I knew that somehow, I had been called into this because to see young black men stand up as a radical Nazarite army that would sing. I continued in the cause because I believe God would raise up 1 Million African American men that would stand as Watchmen on the wall for Israel (Isaiah 62:6-7).

As we began to move towards the event in Detroit, several ministries came together. It is always extraordinary to watch the body of Christ arise and unite together. As we fasted and prayed, there was also much opposition. First, we were not able to get the building secure as we did not have the finances to do so. Second, it seemed that the local ministries were not as excited about the event as we were. We knew something supernatural had to be done.

Lou Engle follows the Daniel 10 Biblical principle for intercession. Lou understood that the battle was first won in the place of prayer and fasting. Daniel spent his whole life living, eating, and praying differently than the culture. Daniel 6:10 shows that Daniel prayed three times a day from his youth. Daniel chapter one affirms that after a 10-day fast, Daniel looked fitter than all of those around him, and God blessed him by making him ten times smarter than others, and gave him skill to understand all dreams and visions (Dan. 1:17). In Daniel chapter 10, we see Daniel fasting and praying, defeating the enemies of God in the heavenly realms in order to see victory on the earth. In fact, we see in Daniel 10, he is praying for the restoration of God's plans and purposes for Jerusalem just two years after the Israelites had returned to the land after fulfilling their 70-year judgment. Daniel understood how to win the battle in prayer.

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

In the same way, Lou began to ask if there was any place for a small group of people to live in a community while fasting and praying for God's purposes in Detroit and for the African American people. And this is where we find our friend Jong. Jong, after hearing the story about God's heart for the African American people (but not knowing we would eventually pray about the city of Detroit), had moved to Detroit from the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and he was now working with an after-school program. This after-school program occupied an old public school which was no longer functioning.

The building was unkempt and near falling down. A faithful man and his wife gave up their lives to serve the poor of the community and to provide a place for the children to come after school. There, they were able to get help with school, get fed a decent meal, and have an overall safe environment. The building's heating system did not function properly, so they had to plug stationary heaters in rooms. Jong approached this fateful man and his wife and asked if he could serve. Jong was allowed to work with the children and serve within the community.

Jong understood the importance of prayer for the salvation of Israel. Therefore, he asked the faithful man and his wife if he could use one of the rooms for prayer (Jong became a literal watchmen, and made the way for Detroit to also stand as praying watchmen for the salvation of Israel; Isaiah 62:1-7). So, Jong volunteered with the children and set up a room dedicated to prayer. He placed Scriptures on the wall for revival and transformation in the city of Detroit, as well as Scriptures for the salvation of Israel. Little did he know that little room would be the birthing center for transformative revival in the city.

11.11.11. THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CALL

We had already set the date for the event 11.11.11. This was going to be a Call event that was different in two ways. First, this would have the theme of God's redemptive heart for the African American people. Second, this was going to be a 24-hour event, which we had never done before. However, there were some setbacks.

The first setback was that we did not have the building, Ford's Field. When doing these large gatherings, you have to take time to build relationships with churches and city officials so that they release the venues at the proper times. Second, we did not have the finances. To do this event, you need at least 1.2 million dollars. Also, you need a story. (The story drives the mobilization for the event. Our story was heavenly and divine, but most people don't really care enough about the African American people to be a part of a prayer event focused on them.)

So, Lou gathered the team together and said, "If we are going to host this 24-hour prayer event for God's redemptive call for the African American people, then we will have to win the battle in the heavenlies. We have to go to Detroit and do a 40-day prayer and fasting strike. I have found a place where a young man has been hosting day and night prayer for the African American people in the heart of Detroit. We are going to go there, fast and pray for 40 days, and then believe God for a miracle." (At this point I did not know that it was Jong who had paved the way in prayer to make this all happen.)

So, we went to Detroit, lived in the elementary school with blow-up mattresses on the floor for 40 days. The building had a rat infestation, so the after-school program would put out rat poison all over.

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

The rats would eat the poison and die in random places. Many died behind the walls (boy did it stink). There was only heat in a few rooms with the portable electric heaters. There was no shower, but we found a janitor closet which had an old water spicket line hanging out of the wall. Whoever got there first was usually able to get a warm shower for about 5 minutes before it turned freezing just like the cold Detroit air.

We set up two prayer meetings. Since this was an event for God's heart and redemptive call for the African American people, we knew that we had to win the battle over racism. So, each day we stood on Eight-mile road and prayed for an ending of racism and revival in Detroit. Jonathan Tremaine Thomas, an African American leader who leads a ministry called Civil Righteousness led this section of our prayer time. As a show of humility, we stood in a line facing the road, with a black man or woman every other person. It was a powerful statement that gave us courage and strength as we prayed. And for 2 hours a day we prayed there, then we went back to the school, slept, and got up in the middle of the night to pray while the city was sleeping. And pray we did. Over the course of the 40 days, it seemed there would be no victory and we would not get the stadium. Then someone had a dream.

The dream was an invitation for us to do a 3-day Esther fast during the night watch. There was no guarantee that we would get the stadium, but there was an invitation from the Lord to fast and pray. Up to this point, I had done many extended water fasts, and was currently on a 40 day liquid fast. So, I was not that excited to go on a 3-day Esther fast with no water. But I was willing to do this because I had felt God's heart and heard His plan for the African American people. It was actually not as hard as I thought it would be.

Jonathan Tremaine and I were sleeping in the prayer room. (We slept during the day, because remember, we were doing the night watch.) Both of us started the fast at the same time and encouraged each other that God was gracious and He would sustain us. We had to wake up around 1 pm, because we stood on Eight mile road praying for unity among races from 2-5pm.

It was during this time that two amazing things happened. First, we had been standing in prayer, asking for revival in Detroit and an end to racism along Eight mile road. There were several businesses in a shopping mall behind us. We really did not know what businesses were represented. However, during the Esther Fast, a man came out of his business and was mad at us. He said that his business had all but dried up. We were not trying to shut down local businesses. However, this man was selling marijuana for medicinal purposes. (We understood that most of the people going to this business were not there for medicinal reasons.) The second thing which happened was God gave me massive revelation.

GOD BRINGS DIVINE REVELATION DURING THE ESTHER FAST

I was reading in my Bible during the night watch as we prayed. I remember reading from Daniel chapter 10, Revelation 13, Revelation 17 and 18, and several other Scriptures. And most significantly from Zechariah 9:9-13 (particularly in verse 13), and how this would fit in with African American people.

*The Coming King
"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!*

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

*Behold, your King is coming to you;
He is just and having salvation,
Lowly and riding on a donkey,
A colt, the foal of a donkey.
10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
And the horse from Jerusalem;
The battle bow shall be cut off.
He shall speak peace to the nations;
His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.'*

*God Will Save His People
11 "As for you also,
Because of the blood of your covenant,
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.
12 Return to the stronghold,
You prisoners of hope.
Even today I declare
That I will restore double to you.
13 For I have bent Judah, My bow,
Fitted the bow with Ephraim,
And raised up your sons, O Zion,
Against your sons, O Greece,
And made you like the sword of a mighty man."*

Verse 9-10 declares Jesus's first coming. He came through the virgin Mary, just as Scripture declares, and He entered Jerusalem riding a donkey. Next, He went to the cross to save the world from its sins. Then verse 11-13 shares how God will set Israel free, from the waterless pit (earthly; imprisoned in other countries and eternally; hell, Luke 16:22-24), because of the blood covenant He made with Abraham (Gen. 15:9-11), and with Moses (Exodus 24:3-8; Exodus 29:38-46; Mark 14:24). This is a revelation that is already known. But what struck my heart and caused me to weep was verse 13.

*13 For I have bent Judah, My bow,
Fitted the bow with Ephraim,
And raised up your sons, O Zion,
Against your sons, O Greece,
And made you like the sword of a mighty man."*

God, as the Divine Warrior, would use Israel as a weapon to subdue the Gentiles. Judah would be His bow, and Ephraim would be His arrow. God is sovereign; He is in complete command of Israel's affairs. Historically, this verse saw initial and partial fulfillment when the Jews overthrew the Greeks during the Maccabean revolts in the second century B.C. But the complete fulfillment is still in the future at Jesus' second coming. God will defeat the demonic power behind the "spirit of Greece."

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

(It is important to know that God loves the Greek people. However, principalities and powers of darkness have led Greece at different times and tried to release a “spirit of Greece” or an anti-God/anti-Christ culture, which stood against the covenant of God and served idols, and came against the Jewish people.) But the Biblical fulfillment of the future end-time scenario is not just God against the Spirit of Greece. It also has to do with Islam. (Again, we do not hate Muslim people, they are amazing people. Instead, in love, mercy, and compassion we lay down our lives to preach the Gospel to them.) Consider this.

BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF GREECE AND PERSIA

The Bible shares the rich history of what God has done in Iran and will do. In Daniel 10, we see Daniel standing as a praying intercessor against the Prince of Persia; today the whole church will stand like Daniel, with the Iranian women in prayer (remember these amazing women), asking for His Promises for Iran to come to pass. Daniel 2 tells us that “The Rock” will smash the statue whose feet is of clay and iron;

CLAY (Prince of Greece, spirit of humanism/jezebel/harlot)

IRON (Prince of Persia, jihad, radical Islam).

Today, we are seeing the manifestation of the combining of the feet, and God is calling the praying church to arise and take our Biblical stand in prayer and fasting. (But this will not happen in its fullness until the African American believers are the primary leadership of the prayer movement at the end of the age; also we must first confront our toleration of the “clay” in our own hearts to have authority to pray against the “iron” across the face of the earth). In, Rev. 7:9 God is bringing revival to Iran. From, Isaiah 62:6-7 we can see that God has an army of Persian believers that will arise. Their hearts will be on fire with passion for Jesus and their songs of praise and prayers of prophecy will build a wall of intercession unto all Israel being saved.

During that 3-day Esther fast, my life was changed. I saw something amazing happen, and I was inspired to give my life to prayer. It was as if an angel had come down straight from God’s Throne and pointed out the Scripture’s meaning right into my ear. My heart burned within me as I read. At the same time, the Holy Spirit was bursting inside me like lightning as He revealed God’s plans and purpose. Prayer and fasting was the divine key that released understanding that brought revelation. God was going to raise up the African American people to stand as a witness against the Prince of Greece (the spirit of humanism/jezebel/harlot) and the Prince of Persia (jihad/radical Islam).

How? God raised up the Rechabites as a divine witness of a remnant of faithful Israelites during the Babylon judgment and captivity (Jeremiah 35). Revelation 10 declares that God would raise up 7 Thunders. The 7 Thunders are 7 different people groups from across the earth that stand as prophetic witnesses, living holy, standing against the Prince of Greece (global humanism) and Prince of Persia (Islam). During this 3-day Esther Fast, in the midst of Detroit, I was overwhelmed with Divine Revelation straight from the heart of God. Little did I know that God would actually answer this prayer, from this Revelation, in as little as 30 days. But that is not the only thing that happened during the 3-day Esther fast.

DIVINE REVELATION ON A FAST USUALLY FOLLOWS THIS FORMULA: WORD + SPIRIT = UNDERSTANDING

The Word of God is sacred (holy). The writer of Hebrews taught that God's Word was alive and active (Heb. 4:12). This means that His Word is truth that will transform you, and that it is the light to your path (Ps. 119:105), today and in the age to come. The Word also reveals the heart, longing, and loving affections of God, teaching you who He is and what He thinks about you. During your fast, as you search the Scriptures the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, will speak truth.

The Spirit of God is a Counselor, a Guide (John 16:13), a Friend, and a Teacher (John 14:26). Also, the Holy Spirit has creative power, bringing living and fresh revelation to your heart, soul, mind and strength (Eph. 1:17). The Holy Spirit searches the deep things of the Father (1 Cor. 2:10-11). During the fast, as you search the Scriptures and seek the Holy Spirit, this provides the opportunity for you to enjoy and cultivate a fresh, vibrant, deep and loving relationship with God. He will bring divine revelation which leads to understanding.

As you combine the Word (lamp) with the Spirit (guide), you will grow in Divine Understanding (powerful revelation). Divine Understanding is like a rushing, life-giving waterfall in your life. Imagine a river flowing along a stream bed, quickly cascading over the edge, plummeting down, crashing upon the rocks below. The river bed is the Word, which provides firm foundations and boundaries, while the water is the Spirit of God, which flows along powerfully. The waterfall is the moment when the Word and the Spirit combine and LIFE explodes forth, taking everything from one level to the next! Fasting and prayer provides the tools you need to go from one level to the next, so that Divine Understanding bursts forth out of your innermost being like a waterfall of living water (John 7:38), touching the ends of the earth.

Upon the completion of the fast, I remember my first drink of water. After taking in nothing for 3 day, you love water. Water never tasted so good. Nor was it so satisfying. But what happened next left me crying and in awe of God.

THREE MORE MIRACLES

First, we did not have the finances for the event, and needed at least \$1.2 Million to pull off a mediocre event. This would cover the cost of renting Ford's field, pay to get the worship teams and speakers in place, and pay for the hundreds of additional costs. While we were praying, God was answering prayer. Just like when Abraham was walking up one side of the mountain to obediently sacrifice his son Isaac, he could not see that God was bringing the ram as an answer up the other side mountain. Upon the end of the fast, the financial miracle happens. Lou was handed the biggest check he had ever had in his life—\$1 Million. (We were able to raise the rest in offerings.) Yep there is more!

Second, the event was less than 30 days out, and we had advertised it would be at Ford's Field, but we did not have the field open to us. But with a miracle, God opened the door to the arena and set the stage for the 24-hour prayer event to sow into God's prophetic redemptive plan for the African American people. The door was open, but it was more of a heavenly stake going into the ground

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

agreeing with God's plan. Now with the finances and the location given by God, what more could happen? Actually, the biggest miracle was yet to come.

DAVID WAS THE LIVING ANSWER TO OUR PRAYERS

The biggest miracle came in the answer of a young black man who overcame the Prince of Greece (global humanism) and was divinely inspired by God and thrust as an arrow of light to fight against the Prince of Persia (radical Islam). How? The night that we held the 24-hour event, a young black man (we will call him David) who had grown up in horrible circumstances, was caught in a gay lifestyle, and fighting drug addiction came to us. Wanting to get free of the lifestyle, he had run away from the horrible living situation that he had been trapped in. He found himself in the freezing cold outside of the Arena. The security team was trying to get the homeless people away from the building, so he snuck into the "free" event. In his own words, "I just wanted to get warm." During the event, after hearing the Gospel, David gave His life to Jesus. He then moved to Atlanta, joined a missions training school, moved to Northern Africa, and opened up a home to help orphan children say yes to Jesus. During the 3-day Esther Fast, God broke in and David became the living answer to the prayers.

This story is not over. In fact, it is in some ways just beginning. God has a plan for the African American people. But this plan is not just one of social justice, nor, I am afraid, is it one that can be won only from marches. Instead, this battle must be won before Jesus, in prayer first. We must pray with empathy for God's redemptive heart for the African American people, search the Scripture for His Truth, and lay down our lives, again not for social justice only, but that Heavenly Justice would spring forth. (Truly the best is yet to come.) Currently, our team is working on debt reduction plans so that our black brothers and sisters can not only get saved, healed, and delivered, but they can achieve God's call for their lives, just like David in our story.

NOW WHAT ABOUT YOU?

What about your story? What does God have for you? Remember, read your Bible until you find God's dream, and then thrust yourself into that story with unrelenting prayer and fasting. Your weak yes, your voluntary weakness, will grow your heart in love with God and people. Also, it will bring you divine revelation of what God's doing. Lastly, you will see the very answer to God's plan come to pass right in front of you, just like we did with David. So, gather your friends to fast and pray safely and successfully. You may meet the life that you are meant to help change.

STORY 3: FASTING & PRAYING WITH MY WIFE UNTIL GOD ANSWERS

PROMISES OF THE #VISITATIONOFJESUS

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And then He made woman and man. And God saw that it was not good for them to be alone; instead they should be together in life, love, work, and play. So, Jesus was the first matchmaker; He brought Eve to Adam. He also performed the first wedding. Marriage has always been deep in the heart of the Lord.

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

Did you know the Bible begins with a wedding and ends with the wedding? Therefore, I take my marriage with my wife very seriously. I have fasted and prayed with my wife for 17 years, including one year before we were married. It has not always been easy, but it has been absolutely life-changing as my wife and I have prayed almost daily for the past 17 years.

There have been so many testimonies of what God has done miraculously. There have also been many lean years where God was not necessarily speaking, but truly we knew the best was yet to come, so we persisted.

We have prayed multiple times, and fasted, for our own hearts to grow closer to God according to the first commandment. This is the most important prayer we pray in our lives, along with the "Our Father" from Luke 11. But it is the stories of God's great Mercy that have helped keep us going.

I remember one of the houses down the street from us had turned into a meth house. We began to pray every morning for the house and the people within it. After about a month of praying, we noticed that all the furniture and clothing was put on the front yard. We did not stop praying. We began to press in and ask for transformation. Eventually, all of the furniture was picked up and a very lovely couple with amazing children moved into the home.

However, after living there for a year, one of the children became deathly ill with the medical prognosis of death. The parents awaited the end and struggled with the emotions of losing your child. And then one night while the child was near death, the father sang and played the guitar while reading Bible scriptures. It was that night he asked his son if he wanted to live. To which the boy replied, "yes!" It was that night that the boy miraculously recovered.

But the story does not end there. As a community, we all came together and sent the family on a vacation, much needed rest from this ordeal, and then began to fix up the house. Each of us took a room and did what we could to buy appliances, supplies, and fix things. While I was installing a new toilet, I began to weep. I wept tears of joy. I wept because the little boy was alive. I wept because my wife and I were able to take part in this miracle by just fasting and praying.

My wife and I have hundreds of other stories of fasting and praying together. We pray for our hearts to grow in love with God. We pray for each one of our children. We pray for our neighbors. We pray for many other things that are in the heart of the Lord. I want to talk about some things that God has shown me, but have not yet come to pass.

A MOTHER AND FATHER, FAST AND PRAY

I want to share what is next for me, and possibly you, too. Let me share one story (my last story, I promise). This is something that I have to fast and pray about until it happens. But this is so huge, I will not be able to do this on my own. I want to invite you and your church to join me in this. It all began the night of Sunday, December 16, 2018.

I had not been able to sleep for the past few months because of extreme pressure. My wife and I had been missionaries, raising our own support, in the US for over 15 years. But we had not been able

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

to raise the necessary support, and we were behind in funding by well over 10k. Also, we had some people in the body of Christ assaulting us and spreading various lies. Lastly, some other things, which will go unmentioned, were striking at the door of our hearts. Needless to say, we were hurting, and we were asking the serious question, "Should we keep doing the missionary life, or should we transition into something else?"

Not wanting to give up on serving the body of Christ, we fasted and prayed from the month of October into November. (We were not fasting for a set time. This was real life, with real consequences. We were fasting until God answered). But actually, He did not answer, and things got worse, a lot worse. Finances really dried up. Accusations and lies flew through the air landing on gullible ears. We decided not to do any desperate fundraising, nor to publicly defend ourselves. Either God was with us or not. And still He was silent, so morning after morning, we got up early and sought His face.

And then, at the start of December, He gave us a glimmer of hope by saying, "Hold on, don't quit, I will do a new thing, and I want your family to be a part of this." Then, on the night of December 16th, 2018, I went to sleep. Only, I could not sleep. I was once again strangled with tormenting thoughts of bills unpaid, a wife that was feeling hurt, unprotected, and uncertain of the future. It was in that sleepless night that I just prayed; I cried out for God to rescue me. I pleaded, "You don't have to, but if you can, will You rescue our hearts, and give us vision for this new thing You want to do?"

Not able to sleep in my own bed, I was laying on my back on the living room floor, drenched in a cold sweat, clenching my Bible, tears streaming down my face in desperate pleas for breakthrough. It was in this weakened state that Jesus entered the room. I am not saying I felt God's presence in a hopeful way. I am not saying I just had a sense that things would get better. I am not saying I put on my favorite worship song and life felt better. No, JESUS, the Son of Man, literally came into my room.

The first thing that happened was that I was paralyzed from head to toe. I could not even look at Him, but I knew He was there, and His glory was radiating all around me. Second, I knew that He was good, and everything He did was a directive from His Father. Third, I knew that God was sovereign; He was in control of everything. He was not here to make my life easier, but He was there to show me His will. Last, I knew that I had to trust Him, but if I actually listened to what He was about to show me, I would be held responsible for completing the task. (Don't ask me how I knew these things, I just did.)

Then He started to tell me what was to come, and what He said was not an answer to my pain, but a rebuke for my immaturity. (I was living as an orphan, complaining about my present circumstances, instead of living as a child of God, trusting God the Good Father and seeing my present painful circumstances as an opportunity to grow closer to Him. I needed to allow Him to increase; allow God to rescue me.)

His answer honestly had nothing to do with me and everything to do with His will. He said, "Ben, you fast and pray, and believe that I will show Myself to Muslims in other countries?" "Yes!" I enthusiastically replied. (Many of my friends were former Muslims who had personally had a dream or encounter with Jesus that had drawn them into salvation). Then He continued, "Why do you believe I will visit the people in other countries, but don't pray for me to visit the young people of your own country, or other countries of the earth?" (He kindly and lovingly rebuked my lack of faith, but invited

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

me deeper into His story). I wanted to move, but could not, still paralyzed by His presence. He placed both hands on me and my body began to fly with His.

AWAKENING IN EUROPE #VISITATIONOFJESUS

I remember being in a room, somewhere in Europe, and a very humble preacher (who I have learned a lot from) was ready to take the stage to speak. (I knew that God loved all of Europe and wanted to send an awakening, but until that moment, I was not aware of His intense zeal.) I watched the worship start, and the people lifted up their voices to sing. But it was not normal. Two things were different. First, this was not a performance for people, it was for God. The Worship leaders had an immense meekness and hunger for righteousness, while the people wanted more and more of God. I watched the preacher arise and preach a message entitled, "God is changing the understanding and expression of Christianity in one generation." (I took extensive notes.) At the end everyone was completely undone, wanting only His Kingdom Come and His will to be done. Then Jesus turned to me and said, "Watch this!"

The next thing I knew, Jesus stepped over a line from the spiritual world into the physical world. He literally made Himself known, and people could see Him physically. Everyone reacted differently. Some just screamed His name, "JESUS!" Others cried out loudly. Some fell to their knees and bowed down gasping. Still others stood unable to move from awe. It seemed that He made contact with the hungry, and as fast as it started, it was over.

Jesus then proceeded to take me from place to place and do this over, and over again; He manifested His presence to the faithful, and the hungry ones. He showed Himself to those that had no desire to meet Him. (Yet, Jesus felt it was important to meet them.) He was visiting people. He told me, "Ben I want to visit my people. My Father is going to make Me famous. Some will believe, while others will not, but all will have a chance to know me." I remember standing behind the veil of group after group. One thing was also evident. Jesus listened to every sermon, and He could hear the thoughts of every person all at the same time. Some of the preachers cared immensely, while others did not seem to care, and preached with agendas. But Jesus loved them all. Some of the people listened carefully, while others barely paid attention, most were distracted by their phones, and still Jesus loved them all.

I remembered how much Jesus cared. He was so personal. He cared about every word the pastor said. He cared about every thought the people thought, and He wanted nothing more than to visit His children. To make Himself known to His Bride. I began to feel His immense desire to be with His Bride.

He quoted Matthew 9:14-17

"Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying,

"Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?"

And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

He kept saying this Scripture over and over again as a prayer that would be answered when His desires and ours meet. I felt His immeasurable love for people over and over again. And I knew He wanted to meet with people. He wanted to visit His people. And then our church services changed.

(Remember this is from 2018)

First, I noticed that we were meeting outside, but I did not know why. Second, the pastors started to preach differently. They talked to God, and were teaching the people to become New Testament priests. Basically, we ministered to God and to the people around us. The pastor in the last encounter was not really preaching powerfully or profoundly. He was just simply preaching about how to be a priest. The people were just trying to minister to God. They were not amazing Biblical saints. Just ordinary people called to do extraordinary things. But then something happened.

They began to sing to God about God, and it was touching His heart. Weak people were ministering to God, and He was so thrilled. Then Jesus did it again, HE stepped over the line and met the people. Mostly they wept and cried. Not one was left unchanged. It was powerful, but then something happened that shocked me.

Jesus took me years into the future before His Second Coming. I knew that many people had been saved through the visitation of Jesus. (Some called it the Great Awakening). But then in the delay of His Second Coming, some had grown cold or tired of waiting. Even some who had been affected during the visitation. I remembered one woman.

I had seen her in one of the visitation moments, and she had been encountered in a powerful way. But the encounter had become fleeting because she did not change through the years. In fact her faith had grown cold and now she was a professing atheist. I watched as her friends asked her why she did not believe in Jesus. "After all, weren't you affected by the Great Visitation of Jesus?" (Apparently, she had talked about it on social media and in person with friends.) Then I knew that even Satan was created, encountered God, but had turned away. The Israelites had seen the 10 plagues against Egypt, watched the Red Sea split, saw many other miracles daily, but still did not believe. They did not enter into His rest.

They did not believe and did not enter into the promises of God. The writer of Hebrews says,
"...But Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

*Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:
"Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
In the day of trial in the wilderness,
Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,
And saw My works forty years.*

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

*Therefore I was angry with that generation,
And said, 'They always go astray in their heart,
And they have not known My ways.'
So I swore in My wrath,
'They shall not enter My rest.' "*

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said:

*"Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."*

GOD'S GLORY IS COMING TO THE NEXT GENERATION

The greatest revival ever known to humankind is upon us. How do we know? Jesus said, "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."

This means the greatest revival will come when the enemy is releasing lawless evil upon the earth, but the Gospel will be preached in all the nations (Through you). The Word of God further confirms in Revelation 7:1-8 that there will be a powerful move of God in the nation of Israel (Revelation 7:1-8). And there will be a world wide revival in all the nations. "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands." (Rev. 7:9)

Many Old Testament Prophets share that the Power and Glory of God will bring the greatest revival every. Consider the Prophet Habakkuk 3:3-4 as He declares His Glory will flow From His hands (Rom. 10:15), and through our hands as we are His hands and feet.

*"His glory covered the heavens,
And the earth was full of His praise.
His brightness was like the light;
He had rays flashing from His hand,
And there His power was hidden."*

He further declares His intentions to strengthen us to partner in a powerful revival so we can overcome our daily struggles and run with Him upon the nations (Habakkuk 3:16-19):

*"When I heard, my body trembled;
My lips quivered at the voice;
Rottenness entered my bones;
And I trembled in myself,*

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

*That I might rest in the day of trouble,
When he comes up to the people,
He will invade them with his troops.*

*Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls—
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
The Lord God is my strength;
He will make my feet like deer's feet,
And He will make me walk on my high hills."*

YOUNG PEOPLE YOU ARE CALLED!

Young people, I want to warn you and invite you all in the same sentence. Jesus is coming back, and He is inviting you into the greatest Harvest of souls ever. But how will your life be different from the Israelites that came out of Egypt? Remember they had everything that they needed, but not everything they wanted. How many of you have everything you need and everything you want? If they stumbled and fell, what about you? How are you living differently? How about the friends you hang out with, and the people you "follow" on social media? Are they pursuing Christ, or their own agenda?

The writer of Hebrews was facing a major problem. The Hebrew/Jewish people had left Judaism and were following Jesus. However, they became tired and discouraged with the process of sanctification. (Jesus invited all of us to be Holy as He is Holy). Instead of walking deeper into the life Jesus was asking of them, they wanted to give up, leave Christianity, and return to Judaism. The writer was imploring them to not give up and continue on. He used ancient Israel as an example.

Hebrews 4:7-9 says, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said:

"Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts."

For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His."

The writer continues to tell them how to stay on the right path, to read their Bibles,

"Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:11-12)

Also, the writer implores them to search out and know Jesus, by saying,

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.” (Hebrews 4:14)

Maybe you think your sin is too BIG, and your gifts are too small. Maybe you feel your temptations are overwhelming and disqualify you. No! Remember this Jesus was tempted in all ways and so will you be tempted in every way. (Hebrews 4:15)

“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

Remember, just as Christ was tempted, you will be tempted, and sometimes you will fail. BUT THAT IS NOT THE END OF THE STORY. Christ makes all things new (2 Cor. 5:17). So when you make a mistake, let's be like David and not Saul. When Saul made a mistake he made up excuses, and did his own thing, thus disobeying God. When David made a mistake he ran to God, repented, and asked God to make Him new.

David, though he struggled because of sin, ran to the Mercy of God, repented, and was made new (Ps. 51:11). In the end, it was said about his life that he was a man after God's own heart, and he did the will of God in his life (Acts 13:22; 1 Sam. 13:14). Also, David still has promises of God in the Millennial Kingdom (Eze. 37:25). And Jesus ultimately overcame temptation by quoting the word of God, and so should you (Lu. 4:1-13).

Maybe, you feel a little bit like David felt after he committed his sins. Remember, he got Bathsheba pregnant, killed her husband Uriah to try and cover things up, and then had to deal with major family issues (2 Sam. 12:9-15). But he returned to the Lord. He returned to the Mercy of the Lord (God's Mercy is that He does NOT give you what you deserve). David, repented and God washed Him clean. Yes, he still suffered consequences, but God restored him. I want to tell you plainly, no matter how disqualified you feel, God can and wants to restore you. Turn to Him. Repent, ask Him for mercy, and let God skillfully write the next season of your life. David had his greatest days ahead of him— so can you.

Paul says, as one star differs from another, so will you in the age to come (1 Cor. 15:40-42). In other words, the deeper you pursue your individual path of holiness, the greater this will reflect in your heavenly garment in the age to come. So, even if you feel disqualified, get back into the game, just like David. The best is yet to come! (I always look at my life on earth like an internship. It actually counts; what I do now positions myself to serve God in the age to come.)

So, as the writer of Hebrews shared with the early church, God says to you and me right now: when you sin, don't live in the past. Instead, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16). As you struggle, turn to Him, as the best is yet to come.

God is inviting you into the deepest depths of His love, and He is inviting you to be the most powerful messengers since John the Baptist. God wants to reveal His Glory to you and partner with you in a great harvest of Souls. Now is the time to believe. Now is the time to enter into His heart. Now is the time to fast and pray.

Part 3: Three Inspiring Stories Of Actual Fasts & Their Outcomes