

# **Impact Bible Study Series**

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## **Impact Four Prayer And Fasting**

This Bible study and discipleship series is designed to take a Christian through some basic concepts taught in the Bible concerning Christians. Hopefully, you will be challenged to think about the things you have believed in the past as you carefully compare your thoughts with God's Word in this guided study. I would encourage you to reckon that God and His Word is always right and reliable. There may be times in this Bible study that you question what God's Word has to say. When that time comes I hope that you will remember that the Bible is God's revelation of Himself, His purposes, and His plan for us. It was written along time ago and we are assured by God that it will not change. These principles are those which lead us into the abundant life and rewarding relationship we all want to have with God.

You may find it more rewarding to go through this Bible study with one or more other people, this is Discipleship. Feel free to print as many copies of these units as you need. While this study is posted here for your use it was originally designed for use in a classroom. If something is hard to understand, please email me with your question, I will answer you and will change the study unit for future use, if required. Take your time, pray before each time of study, and let God work in your heart.

## **Lesson's In This Study**

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# UNIT ONE

## THE METHOD OF PRAYER

There are two essential elements that provide the vital Spiritual nourishment that helps keep Christians close to God. One might think of these as spiritual vitamins. The first is the Word of God, and the second is prayer. Sever either one from a Christian's life, and a carnal (worldly) Christian is the outcome.

One of the major problems in Christianity today is that many Christians never really learn to pray, and without prayer one cannot mature into the spiritual Christian that God wants them to be. The need for a proper Scriptural understanding of prayer cannot be over emphasized; it is critical to Christian Spirituality.

The focus of this unit will be to study, in depth, what Jesus had to say about prayer, but before we begin this study, record what you currently think about prayer.

1. What is your personal definition of prayer?

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2. What are the goals of prayer?

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3. Can you think of anything that should not be a part of our prayers?

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Most people have some type of method to their prayers. Some people have developed good methods, while others practice a ritual that merely helps them feel

better about themselves and God. So, the question is what should our method of prayer be?

Jesus taught His disciples to pray and actually gave them a method to follow. We find this recorded in **Matthew 6.9-13** and **Luke 11.1-4**.

Take a moment to read both of these passages carefully.

4. Why did Jesus present this prayer to His disciples?

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Notice that Jesus actually said "*when ye pray, SAY . . .*" Jesus was actually giving the disciples a specific prayer to pray, and this prayer is our example. So, let's study it carefully.

## THE RECOGNITION OF PRAYER

5. What do you think is meant when one states "*our Father which art in heaven*"?

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6. What do you think "*hallowed be thy name*" implies?

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The first step in the process of prayer is for one to recognize and know to whom they are approaching. Since the word prayer actually means "to make a request humbly" [Webster's], then a prayer can actually be presented to about anyone. However, when a Christian prays, they intend to address **Almighty-God** and must, themselves, understand to whom they approach. This is why the Bible tells us to "*come boldly unto **the throne** of Grace . . .*" (Hebrews 4.16).

As we approach God in prayer, it is important that we approach Him with the right attitude and understanding. God is our Heavenly Father and loves us unconditionally, but God is also the all-powerful (omnipotent) creator and sustainer of all things. God is holy, just and pure and is worthy of the highest honor and regard. Yet God is also personal, graceful and compassionate and longs for us to seek His presence in our lives.

As we prayerfully approach God, we must recognize to whom we are coming with our requests.

## **THE VISION OF PRAYER**

7. What do you feel is meant by the phrase "*thy kingdom come*"

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It ought to be every Christian's desire for God's kingdom to manifest itself here on this earth and for it to do so soon. By looking ahead to God's future kingdom, Christians must recognize the state of our current world and the promise of what is to come. They also must realize that, as Christians, their place in that kingdom is secured forever.

Therefore, our vision in prayer ought to be longing for the manifestation of God's glorious kingdom and anticipating its appearing. In so doing, Christians will be compelled to a higher standard of living, because that anticipation will have a purifying effect on their lives (1 John 3.1-3).

## **THE DESIRE OF PRAYER**

8. What is meant by the phrase "*thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*"?

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It is interesting and important to note that no personal request has been prayed for yet in this prayer. It is equally important to realize that before one can properly understand his or her personal needs in respect to God, they must first realize and understand God's divine will.

If there is an ultimate goal in prayer, then it must lie in this particular statement and the Scriptural truth it presents for the ultimate goal of prayer is **TO KNOW THE DIVINE WILL OF GOD!!** Prayer, when properly understood, strives to establish God's will as one's personal will, here and now.

The late Adrian Rogers often said,

“Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father and putting that desire in our hearts to return it in the form of a request to Him.”

He would also say,

“The prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven.”

We all state “If God wills” and know that God's will shall be done. However, we always seem to distance ourselves from that statement. When we pray for God's will to be done in earth, we are asking for God to take over in our personal lives and are asking for His will to become our own. **This is a yielding on the Christian's part** as he or she surrenders their personal life to God and allows themselves to be used by God.

Hence, a spiritual Christian learns to allow the Holy Spirit to pray through them to their Heavenly Father, seeking to realize His will in life's situations and circumstances.

## THE PETITION OF PRAYER

9. Describe what you think is meant by *"Give us this day, our daily bread"*?

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God has promised, in His Word, to supply our needs (Matthew 6.33). However, we Christians often fail to recognize the difference between a need and a want. In prayer, we are often brought to the realization that while God has promised to provide our needs, He has not necessarily promised to provide them in advance.

We need to learn to patiently trust God and to faithfully stand upon His Word instead of our personal abilities. We become uncomfortable when we have less than two weeks worth of groceries in store or when our bank accounts become empty; we need to trust God more than our money or possessions. The Bible tells us to be content with what we have for God is always with us and will indeed provide for us (Hebrews 13.5). In prayer, spiritual Christian's learn to ask for God's provision to meet the needs for the present day, leaving the future in the hands of our Heavenly-Father.

## THE CLEANSING OF PRAYER

10. What do you think the statement "*forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*" means?

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Forgiveness is a two way street; we must seek forgiveness from God for our sins, and we must also be willing to forgive our fellowmen when they have offended us. Thus, prayer becomes a cleansing act as we evaluate where we stand in respect to God and our fellowmen and strive to make all things right.

## THE SUBMISSION OF PRAYER

11. Describe what is meant by "*lead us not into temptation*"?

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Notice that the key word here is **lead**. In order for someone to be led, they must be willing to follow. Hence, the statement "*he leadeth me beside the still waters . . .*" (Psalm 23.2) takes on a new meaning. God can strive to lead us for all eternity, and it won't do us any good if we are not willing to follow. God will not force you in this life, yet, Scripture reveals that there are consequences if we fail to follow and rewards if we continuously follow.

We need to realize that our world is full of temptations just waiting to draw unguarded Christians away from God and we will fall to many of these temptations if we fail to follow God's guidance. However, there are times when God will allow His children to be tried, and that brings us to our next point.

## **THE POWER OF PRAYER**

12. What is meant by the phrase "*deliver us from evil*"?

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When we do come under the allurements of some temptation, it is the wise Christian that realizes that the ability to overcome these temptations is found in God. Yes, there are some things that we may be able to overcome through our own resolve, but there is nothing that cannot be overcome through the power of God in His time and by His will. You do not have to fall to temptation!

Again, the late Adrian Rogers often said,

*"There is no sin in your life that proper prayer could not avoid or no need that proper prayer could not supply."*

Never lose sight of the fact that temptation is not sin until one falls to its allurements. The fish is not caught until he bites the hook. The greatest resource for the tempted Christian is the power of God, and that strength and ability is found only in prayer.

## THE WORSHIP OF PRAYER

13. How would you define the phrase "*for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen*"?

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Remember, the ultimate goal of prayer is to come into the presence of God and discover the will of God. Once you have truly found the will of God, an overwhelming sense of God's greatness will come with it. It is this awesome experience and realization that will cause the prayerful saint to humble themselves in thankfulness and worship.

So, the example that Jesus gave us teaches us to:

1. Realize to whom we approach.
2. Yearn for the Kingdom of God or Jesus' coming.
3. Seek the will of God.
4. Trust God's providence.
5. Contend for God's cleansing.
6. Submit to God's leadership.
7. Ask for God's deliverance.
8. Worship God's presence.

These are the elements of Scriptural prayer; learn them and use them daily.

## **ACTS**

One well known pastor uses the word ACTS to guide his prayers [his name currently eludes me]. He suggests that ACTS used in prayer means:

A—Adoration (adore God)

C—Confession.

T—Thanksgiving.

S—Supplication and Intercession.

## UNIT TWO

### SCRIPTURAL FACTS ABOUT PRAYER

In our last unit, we studied the divine method of prayer. In this unit, we want to study the Scriptural facts about prayer. Just what does the Bible tell us about personal prayer?

1. Look up and read Hebrews 4.14-16. Who can pray to God, and why?

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2. Does the average Christian need a personal human intercessor, like a priest (1 Timothy 2.5; Matthew 23.9; Ephesians 3.12)? Why or why not?

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3. If every Christian has access to God through Jesus Christ, then what types of things can they pray for (Philippians 4.6)?

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4. Is there anything that can not be prayed for? \_\_\_\_\_

It is wonderful to know that every born again Christian has personal and direct access to God. There is no need to go to a priest or any other human being for your high priest; the Lord Jesus Christ dwells in your heart and makes intercession for you as you pray.

It is equally wonderful to know that there is nothing that is outside of the scope of your prayers when you come to your Heavenly Father. God loves you, knows everything there is to know about you and wants to hear and answer your prayers.

Whatever you find in your heart and life is worthy of your prayers and enlightened by our God when we bring it to Him in prayer.

## The Types Of Prayer

5. List some different types of prayer found in the Bible (Ephesians 6.18; Philippians 4.6).

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The types of prayer discovered in the Bible include:

- Adoration (Psalm 34.1) - This is praising God for who He is.
- Supplication/Petition (John 16.24) - This is praying for your personal needs.

E.M. Bounds has said supplication *"is the very soul of prayer in the way of pleading for some one thing, greatly needed, and the need intensely felt."*

- Confession (1 John 1.9) - This is agreeing with God about your sin.
- Thanksgiving (1 Thessalonians 5.18) - This is thanking God for what He has done.
- Intercession (1 Samuel 12.23) - This is praying for the needs of others.

E.M. Bounds also said intercession *"is an enlargement in prayer, a going out in broadness and fullness from oneself to others."*

Understanding the various types of prayer described in scripture helps a Christian to grasp just how broad and encompassing our Heavenly Father's concern for our lives really is. There is nothing in our lives that God is not interested in.

## Hindrances To Prayer

Someone might ask “If God is so interested in my life and prayers, then why does it seem like there are so many unanswered prayers in my life?” The Bible not only records the types of prayer God’s children might pray, but it also reveals those things that will hinder our prayers.

Listed below are some verses that reveal some Scriptural hindrances to prayer. In each of these verses, define what will place an obstacle between your prayers and God:

James 4.3-6

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 66.18; Proverbs 15.8; Isaiah 1.15

\_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 28.9; 1 John 3.22; Zechariah 7.11-13

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John 9.31; Proverbs 1.24-28

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Hebrews 11.6; James 1.6-7; Mark 11.24

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Scripture also reveals some types of praying that are not effective with God. Read the reference and then describe the type of prayer:

Luke 18.9-14 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 6.5-6 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 6.7-8 \_\_\_\_\_

Since prayer is getting in touch with heaven and then praying God's will into your life, then it only makes sense that those things that reveal that we are not in God's will (disobedience, rebellion, stubbornness, and pride) would hinder our prayers. Clearly, we pray because we want to be heard by God. When Christians prayers are hindered and go unanswered, we get discouraged and stop praying. What should a child of God do if their prayers are being hindered? Repent and confess the sinful actions and attitudes that are causing hindrances to our prayers.

### **Things To Pray For**

Look up the following verses and describe those things we are told to pray for:

Matthew 5.44; Luke 6.28

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Ephesians 6.18

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**Matthew 26.41; Mark 14.38; Luke 22.46**

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Luke 21.3

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Philippians 4.6

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Again, we are reminded that there is nothing too small to pray for. There is also nothing too sinful to pray about. God already knows what you need. He knows the answer to your situation. He knows the remedy to your sinful choices. All you need to do is seek His wisdom and direction through prayer.

## **A Proper Attitude**

Having a proper attitude in prayer is as important as praying itself. What should our attitude be in prayer? Look up the following verses and list what you find:

Colossians 4.2; Romans 12.12

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Matthew 26.41; Luke 21.36; 1 Peter 4.7

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Often, when people come to God in prayer, they come with a mask on. It is our human nature to think that those things that we don't bring up will be overlooked. But God does not look on outward appearances; He looks on the heart. We must come to God in honesty and integrity, allowing Him to reveal what is in the deepest parts of our hearts. We must bring all that we are before Him and allow Him to transform us into spiritual temples worthy of His presence.

## **How God Answers Prayer**

Just as our earthly fathers, our Heavenly Father will always hear and answer the prayers of His Children. It must be emphasized here that not everyone on this Earth is one of God's children. Each individual becomes a part of God's divine family when they accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior (John 1.12-13). As His child, you are loved far too much by Heavenly Father for him not to answer you when you pray. As we study the Bible, we discover that God answers our prayers in a number of different ways. These include:

1. Yes, here it is.
2. Yes, just not that way. This deals with God's plan for our lives.
3. Yes, just not right now. This deals with God's timing.
4. No.

## Other Things To Know

Consider the following Scriptures and what they teach us about prayer.

How often should we pray? (**1 Thessalonians 5.17; Luke 18.1**)

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What is praying in Jesus name and what is its result?  
(**John 15.7,16; 14.13-14; 16.23-24**)

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Is praying in Jesus' name simply saying His name at the end of your prayers?

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Praying in Jesus' name is a matter of praying in keeping with God's will for the situation you are praying about and your life. It is more about knowing the heart of God than it is about compelling God to give you something you want.

13. Is prayerlessness a sin according to Scripture? (**1 Samuel 12.23**)

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"Prayer is a privilege, a sacred, princely privilege. Prayer is a duty, an obligation most binding, and most imperative, which should hold us to it. But prayer is more than a privilege, more than a duty. It is a means, an instrument, a condition. Not to pray is to lose much more than to fail in the exercise and enjoyment of a high, or sweet privilege. Not to pray is to fail along lines far more important than even the violation of an obligation." E.M. Bounds

## UNIT THREE

### THE FASTS OF GOD

If there is a general lack of knowledge within our Christian ranks concerning prayer, then there is an even greater lack of knowledge concerning fasting. Some denominations emphasize fasting: some in a Scriptural sense, and some in an unscriptural sense. Other denominations just avoid the subject altogether, treating it as though it were something from the past.

However, fasting is a Scriptural reality with clear Biblical guidelines and purposes. The following two units are intended to guide you into an in depth study of Scriptural fasting. Let's investigate what God's Word has to say about this powerful resource. But first, record your current understanding about fasting:

1. How would you define or describe fasting?

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2. What are some valid reasons to fast, or do you need a reason at all?

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3. What is the expected result of fasting?

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#### **Reasons To Fast**

Fasting is the act of depriving one's self of something (usually food or drink) for a time in order to focus one's self upon God and His will for the sake of some

important cause or need. While there are some that arbitrarily fast just for the sake of fasting, with no clear goal in mind, this is not Scriptural. God's Word is clear about fasting and its results.

4. Read **Isaiah 58.3-4** and list some reasons not to fast:

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Fasting with the intention of getting God to do what we want Him to do or to gain a victory in some debate or fight is wrongful fasting. This type of fasting will not be honored by God.

5. What is the result of wrongful fasting?

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## THE FASTS OF GOD

6. There are four types of deliverance that can be achieved through fasting. What are they? **Isaiah 58.6**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

7. There are four types of provision that can be received through fasting. What are they? **Isaiah 58.7**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

8. There are four results of godly fasting. What are they? **Isaiah 58.8**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Your list should reveal that fasting should be used for spiritual and physical deliverance. Fasting will lead to the provision of basic needs as well as a personal knowledge of one's self. Fasting will manifest the glory of God in our lives, cause us to live righteous lives, resulting in greater spiritual and physical health, and will manifest the light of our Lord Jesus Christ through us. What an incredible list!

The phrase in verse 7, “. . . *and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh,*” is particularly revealing. This indicates that those things that you have denied about yourself, or refused to acknowledge, will be manifested by God to you. Through fasting, God will cause you to understand things about yourself that you may not have known before, or refused to acknowledge. Why? For the purpose of transforming you and maturing you as His dear child.

What does this mean? There are things in your spiritual and physical life that cannot be fully matured without the spiritual experience that fasting provides. God uses fasting to bring deep spiritual growth into your life.

## **Fasting and the New Testament**

Is fasting supported in the New Testament? Let's find out.

9. What did Jesus say about fasting? **Matthew 17.21; Mark 9.29**

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10. So is fasting supported in the New Testament? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Who can and should fast?

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The truth of fasting is that it allows the Christian to put self aside for a while and to approach Almighty-God with a fixed resolve; it is a complete demonstration of one's self-determination. Fasting does not always deliver what the Christian might expect, but it has been known to touch God's heart and to draw God's people into a closer relationship with Him. Fasting is a powerful ally for any Christian.

12. How has this study impacted you?

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## UNIT FOUR

### BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF FASTING

In our previous unit, we studied the Scriptural case for fasting. In this unit, we are going to study some Biblical examples of fasting to see what they demonstrate and teach us. We will look at five examples of fasting demonstrated in the Bible.

#### ONE - FOR A CRISIS (Esther 4.1-5.3; Acts 9.1-18)

1. Read **Esther 4.7 thru 5.3**. What was Esther's crisis?

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2. What was the goal of the fast she requested?

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3. How long was this fast? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What did they fast from?

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The story of Esther covers 10 years in the Persian empire. The king had placed Haman as his prime minister. Haman hated the Jews especially Mordecai, Esther's uncle who raised her. Through a series of events, Esther had become queen, and Haman, not knowing Esther's heritage, determines to kill Mordecai by exterminating all the Jews in the land.

In your text, Mordecai sends to queen Esther and begs her to plead with the king on behalf of her people. In order for Esther to come before the king, he must

summon her, and he has not done that for a long time. For Esther to come before the king without his summon would mean her death.

Hence, a three-day total fast is called for in hopes that God would provide a great deliverance both for Esther and all the Jewish people. As a result, God grants the deliverance requested and turns Haman's evil schemes back upon him and his family. In the end, Mordecai is exalted and placed as the prime minister of Persia in Haman's place.

5. Read **Acts 9.1-18**. What was Paul's crisis?

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6. How long did he fast? \_\_\_\_\_

7. What type of a conclusion can you draw from these two examples?

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Saul, who after his salvation became Paul, was traveling to Damascus to persecute the Christian Church. As he journeyed, Paul had a supernatural experience in which Christ appeared to him and spoke to him. As a result, Paul was left blind and was led by those present to Damascus.

Paul fasted for three days in a total fast for his eye sight and direction. As a result, God sent Ananias to restore Paul's sight and give him God's Word. Paul needed God's supernatural intervention and God met Paul's need.

As we consider these different fasts, there are three things we need to take notice of:

1. What was the occasion of the fast?
2. How long did they fast?
3. What did they abstain from?

## **TWO—FOR REDEDICATION (1 SAMUEL 7.1-12)**

8. What was the occasion of this fast?

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9. How Long was this fast? \_\_\_\_\_

Note: It is uncertain what they fasted from, but a total fast is assumed.

Here Samuel leads Israel to rededicate themselves to the Lord. However, their rededication resulted in an unexpected reaction from the Philistines. Christians need to understand that whenever God's people do those things that will bring them back to a right relationship with their Lord, all of Satan's wrath will be unleashed. Even the mighty force of the Philistine Army could not prevail against an Israel that was in a right relationship with Almighty-God.

## **THREE - FOR REVELATION (DANIEL 10.1-5)**

10. What was the occasion of this fast?

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11. How long was this fast? \_\_\_\_\_

12. What did Daniel fast from?

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This is a biblical example of a partial-fast. Daniel selected certain things that he liked and abstained from them for a long period of time for the sake of drawing closer to God and, in this case, being granted a revelation from God. It should be noted that there is no revealed crisis or impending need connected with Daniel's

fast. It was merely something that Daniel chose to do for his spiritual growth and enlightenment.

#### **FOUR - FOR PROTECTION (EZRA 8.21-23)**

13. What was the occasion of this fast?

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14. How long was this fast? \_\_\_\_\_

Note: We are not certain about what was abstained from; however, once again, a total-fast is the assumption. The extent of ones abstinence would be directly connected to the level of deliverance needed.

Ezra had been ordered by the king to take as many Levites and Jews as would volunteer to go and return to Israel to rebuild the Temple. The king vowed to provide all of the expenses for the project and to return the valuables of the Temple as well. This journey would prove to be a very difficult journey through treacherous country sides. Thieves and robbers roved along these countrysides in bands seeking all that they could get.

Our text indicates that Ezra was ashamed to ask the king for the protection of soldiers for their journey because he did not want to exhibit a lack of faith. So Ezra called for a fast and God answered. According to verses 31 and 32, Ezra and his party arrived safely in Jerusalem.

#### **FIVE - FOR DOMINION AND POWER (LUKE 4.1-14)**

15. What was the occasion of this fast?

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16. How long was this fast? \_\_\_\_\_

17. What was abstained from?

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This was a supernatural forty day total fast that can only be accomplished through the power of Almighty-God. Jesus fasted and then was tempted by the devil when he was weak, but he prevailed against the devil by using God's Word. Jesus was not the only one to fast for forty days in the Bible. Moses also experienced such a supernatural fast when God gave him the law (Genesis 34.28; Deuteronomy 9.9-11).

### **Privacy in Fasting**

There is one more point about fasting that every Christian needs to realize.

18. Read Matthew 6.16-18. What does this passage reveal about fasting?

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There are times when fasting is not only an option but becomes the only real remedy to the situation at hand. Therefore, every Christian must learn about and understand powerful Scriptural fasting.

### **Basic Purposes For Fasting**

- To gain spiritual alertness and overcome temptation (Matthew 4.2)
- To seek God's will in a specific matter (Judges 20.26; Acts 14.23)
- Fasting in repentance for sin (1 Samuel 7.6; 2 Samuel 12.16; 21-23; 1 Kings 21.27; Nehemiah 9.1-3; Daniel 9.3; Joel 1.14; 2.12;15; Jonah 3.5)
- Fasting in concern for the work of God (Nehemiah 1.4; 1 Corinthians 7.5)
- Fasting as a prerequisite for spiritual authority (Matthew 17.21; Mark 9.29)
- Fasting for deliverance or protection (2 Chronicles 20.3; Ezra 8.21-23; Esther 4.13,16; 9.31; Jeremiah 14.12)

- Fasting to humble one's self before God (Psalm 69.10-13)
- Fasting as a part of worship (Luke 2.37; Acts 13.2-3; 10.2,30)
- Fasting when in deep sorrow (1 Samuel 31.13; 2 Samuel 1.11-12; 12.16; 21-23; Psalm 35.13; Daniel 6.18)

Fasting is found permeating the pages of God's Word. People are found fasting for one, three, seven, twenty-one and even forty day periods. Some fasts are total-fasts while others are partial-fasts. In almost every case where fasting is motivated by a pure heart that is interested in glorifying God, the fast is answered.

Christians need to learn to incorporate private and corporate fasting as a part of their spiritual disciplines. Through fasting, God's children will develop a closer walk with their Lord and a powerful and pure influence in our world. Spiritual Christians are those who have learned the importance of fasting and prayer.