

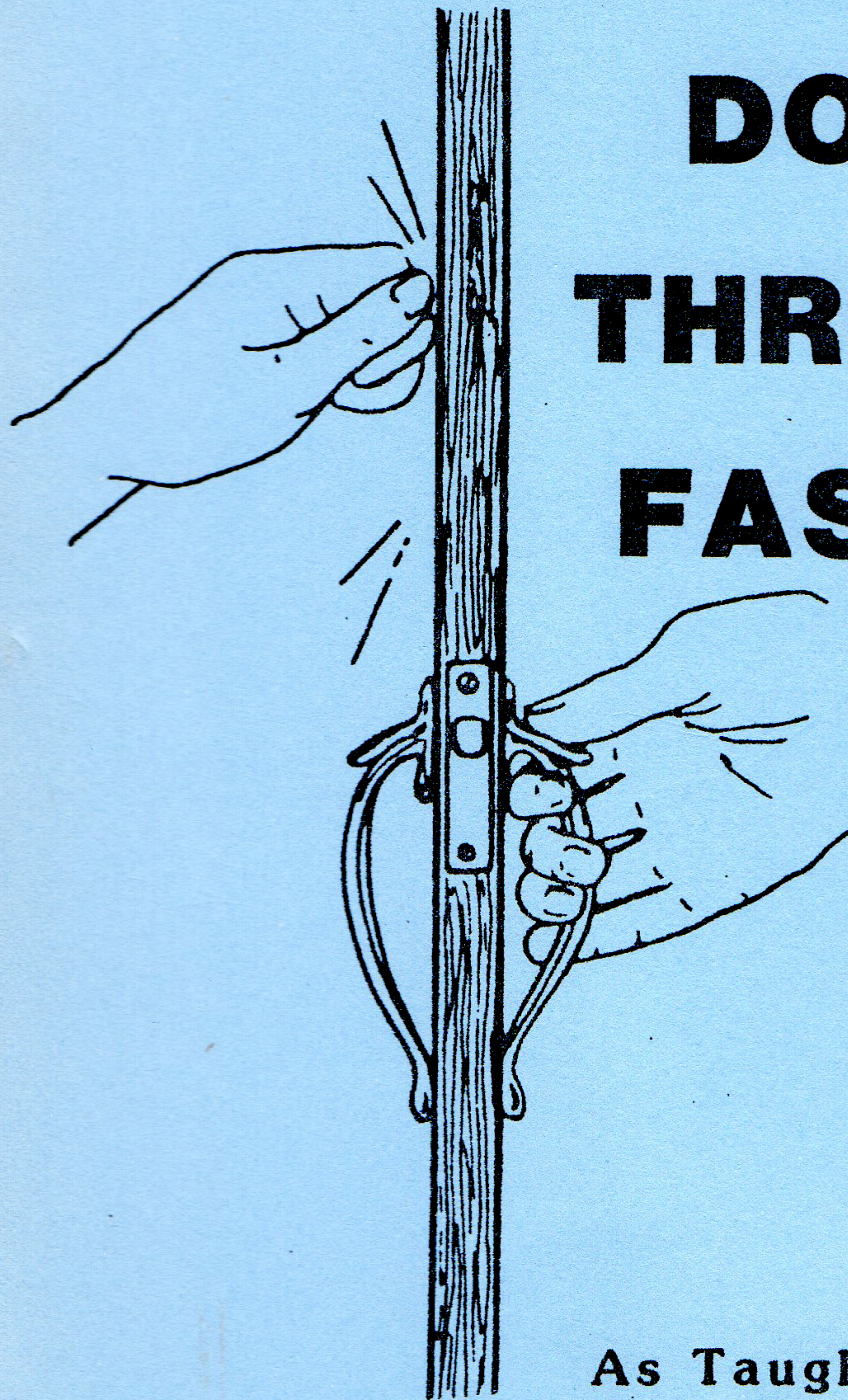
OPENING

SPIRITUAL

DOORS

THROUGH

FASTING



As Taught By

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Water of Life Christian Center

"And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days."

- Mark 2:18-20

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Lesson #1	"Not If, But When"
Lesson #2	"Spirit vs. Flesh"
Lesson #3	"Voluntary and Involuntary Fasting"
Lesson #4	"Types and Kinds of Fasts"
Lesson #5	"What Will I Gain?"
Lesson #6	"Practical Considerations"
Lesson #7	"Practical Considerations", cont.
Lesson #8	"Breaking the Fast"

NOTE:

Each of these lessons was taped as Pastor Vic originally taught them. The cassette tape copies are available as a set or individually. Contact the church office for information.

Lesson 1

"NOT IF, BUT WHEN"

A. The Bible speaks

1. Fasting is an historical fact from O.T.
---over 30 direct references and examples
2. Historical fact from N.T.---nearly 20 direct references and examples
3. Our instruction comes from N.T. but we look at O.T. for further insight.

B. The epistles (letters to the church)

1. No one mentions except Paul.
2. Paul has only 3 direct references.
3. No command to churches to fast in the epistles and no instruction as to method.
4. Paul said they would fast (I Cor. 7:5).
5. He said he did fast often himself (II Cor. 11:27).

C. The instructions of Jesus

1. Teach what I taught and commanded you (Matt. 28:20).
2. Don't teach otherwise - Paul. (I Tim. 6:3-4a).
3. When you fast, not if. . . (Matt. 6:16-18)
a. Compare to "when you pray" (Matt. 6:5).

Lesson 1, page 2

- b. Compare to "when you give" (Matt. 6:3).
- 4. Time to fast is now (Mk. 2:18-20).
 - a. During time bridegroom is present, there's feasting and rejoicing.
 - b. In his absence, there will be fasting and afflicting of self.
- 5. "They shall fast" (Mk. 2:20)
 - a. Christians will want to fast
 - b. Holy Spirit will lead and prompt you.
 - c. You'd have to knowingly resist.
 - d. We fast not before men to appear spiritual (Matt. 6:16-18).

D. What fasting is

- 1. Taking no food (Matt. 15:32)
- 2. Can include taking no drink (Luke 5:33)
- 3. Hebrew - TSUWM (tsoon) = to cover over (the mouth)
- 4. Greek = NESTEIA (nace ti'ah) = abstinence
- 5. Denying the flesh something it wants.
 - a. Usually denial of the body
 - b. Can extend to other than food and drink, such as sexual relations, etc.
 - c. Can also extend to the mind where a bondage exists, such as TV, movies, certain friends, etc.
- 6. Length determined by God's leading and what you want. More on this later.

E. What fasting does

- 1. It weakens the flesh by denying it

Lesson 1, page 3

nourishment and thereby strength
(Ps. 109:24)

a. Gal. 5:16-25

(Continued in lesson 2)

Lesson 2

"SPIRIT VERSUS FLESH"

E. What fasting does (cont.)

1. Weakens the flesh (Ps. 109:24)
 - a. Gal. 5:16-25 & I Pet. 2:11
 - b. Rom. 8:5-8
 - c. I Cor. 9:24-27
2. It strengthens the spirit for a variety of purposes (Matt. 17:14-21).
3. Especially can this be the case when fasting is coupled with other spiritual disciplines
 - a. Prayer (Acts 10:30, Dan. 9:3)
 - b. Humbling self (Deut. 9:18)
 - c. Confession of sin (Neh. 9:1-2)
 - d. Scripture reading (Neh. 9:1,3a)
4. However fasting is effectual all alone and is not by necessity linked to prayer, etc.
 - a. Matt. 6 - separated from praying, giving, etc.
 - b. Esther 4:16 - no mention of prayer here
 - c. Acts 13:2 - ministered to the Lord

Lesson 3

"VOLUNTARY & INVOLUNTARY FASTING"

A. God is looking at the heart, not how technically correct the fast is.

1. Anna served God with fasting (Luke 2:37)
2. Joel 2:12-13 Rend hearts
3. Luke 18:12 Religious emptiness of pharisee
4. Zech. 7:5 Not unto me ye fasted.
5. Jer. 14:12 Cannot twist God's arm without right heart attitude.
6. Is. 58:3-7 Not a cover-up for wickedness and disobedience.

B. Broad types of fasts

1. Individual personal voluntary fasts
 - a. Agreed to between you and God.
 - b. Specifics (what kind, how long, etc.) worked out between you and God.
 - c. May be initiated by:
 1. The believer - a decision to fast, an act of the will (Dan. 9:3)
 2. The Lord - as he calls or draws the believer to a fast, an act of obedience (Matt. 4:1-2)
 3. A combination - when the believer requests the Lord to draw him to a fast, an act of commitment.
2. Involuntary fasts
 - a. When no food available (Matt. 15:32, II Cor. 6:5 & Phil. 4:12)
 - b. In times of:
 1. Anxiety & fear (Ps. 35:11-17,

- Dan. 6:18, Acts 27:33)
- 2. Mourning & sorrow (Ezra 10:6,
Neh. 1:4)
- c. Death of a close friend or relative
(II Sam. 1:12, 3:35, I Sam. 31:13)
- d. Depression (I Sam. 1:7-10)

Lesson 4

"REGULAR & PUBLIC FASTING"

Continued from Lesson 3:

B. Broad types of fasts. . .

3. Regular fasts

- a. Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27, Acts 27:9)
- b. To commemorate other Hebrew festivals (Zech. 8:19).
- c. To remember Purim (Esther 9:31)
- d. Pharisees had regular fasts (Luke 18:12)
- e. In 2nd & 3rd century AD, the Christians fasted each Wednesday and Friday.
- f. John Wesley revived this custom among the early Methodists.
- g. Fast for 6 months each Friday for former pastor and church.
- h. Must be individual decision, and not a religious bondage as customs and traditions often produce.
- i. A regular fast day(s) does. . .
 1. Give time from busy schedule for prayer and spiritual nourishment.
 2. Provide a regular reminder of importance of spiritual things.
 3. Develop or encourage a fasted life.

4. Public fasts

- a. Called for the community or nation as a whole
- b. Joel 1:14 For national repentance and shame.
- c. Jonah 3:5-9 Ninevah
- d. Ezra 8:21-23 For guidance, wisdom & direction as well as help and protection from enemies.
- e. II Chron. 20:1-4 For instruction, help and protection from enemies.

5. What do you think would happen (How many would participate) if our president called for a public or regular fast? Our governor? Our Pastor? The head of a denomination?
6. All fasts should be unto the Lord (Zech. 7:5-6)
 - a. Selfish fasting is unproductive (Is. 58:3-7).
 - b. See also Luke 2:37. Anna served God with fasting.

C. Three kinds of fasts IN SCRIPTURE

1. The normal fast - abstinence from all types of food, solid and liquid, but not from water.
 - a. A water only fast
 - b. Fasting means primarily not to eat.
 - c. Luke 4:2 is an example
 1. "He did eat nothing. . ."
 2. He was tempted with food, not water.
2. The absolute fast - abstinence from food and water.
 - a. A complete and total fasting of food and drink.
 - b. Normally for 3 days duration or less
 1. Esther 4:16
 2. Saul of Tarsus, Acts 9:9
 3. Ezra 10:6
 - c. Longer than 3 days requires supernatural sustaining
 1. Moses for 40 days twice
 - a. Deut. 9:9, 18
 - b. Ex. 34:28
 2. Elijah - I Kings 19:5-8
 - d. A drastic measure to deal with a drastic situation
 - e. To go beyond a few days requires a

definite leading of the Lord.

3. The partial fast - restriction of intake of food rather than a complete abstinence.
 - a. Daniel 10:2-3 No pleasant bread (pastries, etc.), no flesh (meat), and no wine (nothing but water to drink).
 - b. Daniel 1:8-16 (esp. vs. 12). This fast was vegetable/fruit (pulse) and water.
 - c. John Wesley once fasted on only dry bread in a case of demon possession.
 - d. Rees Howells, the great intercessor, fasted dinner every day for a time - a partial fast.
 - e. Good fast for beginners.
 - f. Good where circumstances prevent a normal fast - work schedule, etc.
 - g. Normal eating may be resumed without special precautions.

Lesson 5

"WHAT WILL I GAIN?"

A. Set priority motive first

1. Not my gain but God's
2. We must fast unto Him (Zech. 7:5, Acts 13:2)
3. Motive is paramount to the Lord (Matt. 6:16-18)
4. We don't live unto ourselves. We shouldn't fast unto ourselves---for our own selfish purposes (II Cor. 5:15).
5. The proud pharisee "prayed thus with himself. . .I fast twice in the week" (Luke 18:11-12).
6. We give ourselves to God in fasting for His pleasure and purposes and secondarily obtain other spiritual benefits. (Matt. 6:33)

B. For personal humility

1. Fasting will weaken pride.
2. It humbles the soul (Ps. 69:10).
3. Pride and too much to eat are companions
 - a. Sodom (Ezek. 16:49-50)
 - b. Israel (Deut. 8:2-3, 8:11-14, Hos. 13:6)
4. Humble yourself (I Pet. 5:6)

C. Consecration to God and His work

1. Jesus (Matt. 4:1-2)

Lesson 5, page 2

2. Saul/Paul (Acts 9:9)
3. Apostles (Acts 13:2-3)
4. Elders (Acts 14:23)

D. To be heard by God

1. A great aid to effective prayer
2. Voice to be heard on high (Is. 58:4,9)
3. Drives back oppressive Satanic hindering powers (Dan. 10:2,3,12,13)
4. Adds to the "with all your heart" condition (Jer. 29:13-14, Joel 2:12)
5. Gives added force to prayer
 - a. Prayer is warfare
 - b. God is willing but. . .
 - c. Dark forces oppose us
 - d. Violent men take kingdom by force (Matt. 11:12)
 - e. Prevailing prayer needs all its weapons (Gen. 32:24-28)

E. To change God's mind

1. Actually God's mind doesn't change. We simply take advantage of His promise (Jer. 18:7-8).
2. Examples
 - a. Nineveh (Jonah 3:1-10)
 - b. Ahab (I Kings 21:20-29)
 - c. David (II Sam. 12:16-23)
3. "Who knows if God will. . ." (II Sam. 12:22, Joel 2:12-14)

Lesson 5; page 3

F. To deliver those that are bound (Luke 4:18)

1. Is. 58:6
2. Matt. 17:14-21
3. Fasting in this situation
 - a. Supports and strengthens the intercessory prayer preceeding deliverance
 - b. Provides authority to command the demon to release

G. To gain revelation and insight

1. Fasting sharpens and intensifies our receptivity to spiritual things
 - a. It dulls the senses and detaches the mind from the sensual
 - b. Even spiritists and demon-worshippers fast for this reason (I Tim. 4:1-3)
2. Daniel
 - a. Dan. 9:2-4, 20-23
 - b. Dan. 1:12, 17. He had a lifetime of visions and dreams and revelations.
3. Peter (Acts 10:10)
4. Cornelius (Acts 10:30-32)
5. Paul (II Cor. 11:27 & 12:1)
6. Is. 58:10-11

H. To bring the body into subjection---See Lesson 2.

Lesson 6

"PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS"

A. Preparation

1. Get the mind of the Lord
 - a. How long?
 - b. What kind?
 - c. When to start?
 - d. What objective?
2. How long?
 - a. One meal (Dan. 6:18)
 - b. One day (I Sam. 7:6, II Sam. 3:35)
 - c. Three days (Acts 9:9)
 - d. Seven days (II Sam. 12:15-23)
 - e. Ten days (Dan. 1:12)
 - f. Fourteen days (Acts 27:33)
 - g. Twenty-one days (Dan. 10:2)
 - h. Forty days (Matt. 4:2)
 - i. Until He tells you to break off
3. What kind?
 - a. Partial
 - b. Normal
 - c. Absolute---not more than 3 days
without definite direction of the Lord.
4. When? Sometimes dictated by circumstances and events.
 - a. Work
 - b. Vacation
 - c. Specific spiritual needs
 - d. Company or meetings, etc.
5. Be sure of your motives and determine to humble yourself and fast unto the Lord.
6. Discouragement and opposition from within and without
 - a. Within - Your flesh will resist. All

sorts of reasons why you shouldn't fast will come into your mind (Rom. 8:5-7).

- b. Without - family, friends, etc. accuse of fanaticism or danger, mostly because of lack of understanding (Ps. 69:9-12).

B. How fasting affects the body

1. Air, water and sleep are more necessary to life than food.
 - a. You can live only a few minutes without air.
 - b. Only a few days without water or sleep.
 - c. But you can live many weeks without food.
 - d. God has installed a food-retention system in man like the water-retention system in a canal.
2. The body will live on stored fat surplus and waste and decaying tissue.
3. Only when this is used up and the refining or cleansing is complete does starvation occur and sound living cells begin to be consumed.
 - a. Like a snow-bound person uses waste and scrap for firewood before furniture.
 - b. Body benefits from this cleansing and purging
4. God wouldn't ask us to do something that would harm the body. It's His temple (I Cor. 3:16-17).
5. Body benefits from a sabbath or rest. We rest our muscles and mind. Why not our organs?

6. There is healing in fasting
 - a. Usually first sign of acute illness is loss of appetite.
 - b. "Thine health shall spring forth speedily" (Is. 58:8).
 - c. "Health to thy flesh" (Prov. 4:22 & 3:5-8).
 - d. Some in medical profession believe we are digging our graves with forks and knives.
 - e. An ancient Egyptian doctor said: "Man eats too much. Thus he lives on only 1/4 of what he consumes. The doctors, however, live on the remaining 3/4."
 - f. Purging and burning off this surplus and waste is good for the body.
 1. You will feel healthier with more energy and vitality.
 2. Bad breath, unpleasant taste are evidences of what's happening.
7. Appetite and hunger are not the same.
 - a. Appetite is the craving of the flesh for what it is used to indulging in. Like a spoiled child with a temper fit.
 - b. Hunger is the signal of the body that starvation has begun and sound living cells are being consumed.
 - c. Note Matt. 4:2, "He was afterward an hungered". When? After 40 days of fasting, not during or at the beginning.

C. Phases of a prolonged fast

1. Phase 1 - craving of food. Lasts only a few days. May be accompanied by headaches due to caffeine withdrawal.
2. Phase 2 - no more food craving. Some

weaknesses or faintness. May last 2 or 3 days or longer. More need for rest. Bodily movements seem to require excessive strength.

3. Phase 3 - growing strength, little or no concern for food and only occasional weakness. A confidence that you could continue to fast indefinitely.
4. Hunger - body drawing on sound tissue. Warning bell to break the fast. Usually 21 to 40 days or longer.
5. A complete fast - from start of fast to real hunger.

D. Beginning

1. Start slow and get your body adjusted. Try a partial or short fast first.
2. Cut off all caffeine (coffee, tea, chocolate, soft drinks). Try to do this several days ahead.
3. Consider making fruit your only food on the last day before you start.

Lesson 7

"PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS" cont.

E. Other factors - primarily for longer fasts

1. Sleep - generally you will desire more sleep and rest. If sleeplessness is a problem at night because of the activity of the mind and spirit, resist the desire to sleep during the day. Be sure to rest however.
2. Headaches - generally occur during the first few days or so. Primarily due to cry of body for caffeine. Eliminate it.
3. Hunger pains and growling stomach - will disappear shortly. Drink water to ease.
4. Temperature - you will feel cold as you fast and need to consider this in your dress, etc.
5. Taste - your taste will be heightened as will other senses. You will be amazed how good water tastes.
6. Water - drink as much as desired. Sipping regularly will help stop craving for food. Lukewarm water is often best.
7. Juices - be careful of too acidic juices.
8. Work - conditional on nature of work, length of fast, etc. Should only be a consideration on a longer fast.
9. Underweight persons - fasting should not be a problem unless there is a severe medical complication.
10. Illness - diabetics are cautioned, expectant

mothers as well.

11. Fatigue - you will feel a weakness in muscles and joints. Not serious but you must consider this. (Ps. 109:24)
12. Dizziness - usually caused by a rapid change of position and temporary in nature. Move more slowly.
13. Foul breath - you will experience this so make provision to counteract.
14. Loss of weight - faster at first (maybe 2 pounds a day) then down to 1 pound per day. Overweight persons will of course lose more rapidly.
15. The bowels - will cease to function shortly into the fast. Nature will move them again when necessary, usually a few days after the fast is broken. Some prunes or other fruit will aid.
16. Hygiene - normal body care is appropriate. Use warm, not hot, water. (Matt. 6:17)
17. Sexual desire - will abate. (See I Cor. 7:5).
18. Progress - fasting will become easier the more you do it.
19. Prayer - may be harder while fasting. Opposition encountered. You're wrestling.

Lesson 8

"BREAKING THE FAST"

A. Breaking your fast - for longer fasts

1. God will give the direction as to when to end your fast. Stay close to Him.
 - a. Sometimes you'll know before you start.
 - b. Other times, God will direct during the fast.
 - c. Other times, circumstances will dictate.
 - d. Don't break off prematurely (See I Kings 13:7-24).
2. Easy does it
 - a. Stomach will have shrunk---not too much.
 - b. Digestive organs have been "sleeping". Watch kind of food.
 - c. Breaking fast requires self-discipline.
3. Start with these in sequence (I Sam. 30:11-12)
 - a. Fruit or vegetable juices - watch acidic juices. Consider diluting.
 - b. Milk or yoghurt
 - c. Fresh salads without dressing.
 - d. Vegetable soups (no grease)
 - e. Cooked vegetables
 - f. Bread - whole meal
 - g. Cheese, eggs, nuts
 - h. Fish and meat last
4. Eat slowly and chew.
5. Will take from a day or two to a week or so to regain normally.
6. Stop at first feeling of being full.

B. Consolidate your gains.

Lesson 8, page 2

1. Make a permanent change in your eating habits (I Cor. 6:12).
2. Enjoy your success in ruling over your flesh.
3. Expect to see results in the spiritual realm.
 - a. Answers to prayer
 - b. Greater liberty in prayer
4. Expect the power of the Spirit in fuller measure (Luke 4:14).
5. Be alert for the thief. Watch for temptations to brag about or talk about your fast.

C. The fasted life

1. Better to live a disciplined life with regard to eating than to binge and fast.
2. Kenneth Hagin says he has never fasted for as much as three full days.
3. Compare Smith Wigglesworth who never prayed more than 15 minutes at a stretch; but he never went more than 15 minutes without praying.
4. Remember fasting doesn't change God; it changes us (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8).
5. It's faith that pleases God (Heb. 11:6) not works---fasting.
6. God will always perform His Word. These promises are based on our faith/His grace, and not on works---fasting.

NOTE:

Much of the information contained in this study is taken from "God's Chosen Fast" by Arthur Wallis (Christian Literature Crusade, Fort Washington, Pa. 19034).

Interested persons are encouraged to read and review this book for additional helpful information on fasting.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES TO FASTING
(A partial listing)

OLD TESTAMENT:

II Samuel 12:16,21,22,23
I Kings 21:9,12
II Chronicles 20:3
Ezra 8:21,23; 10:6
Esther 4:16
Isaiah 58:3-6
Jeremiah 14:12
Joel 1:14; 2:12-17
Jonah 3:5
Zechariah 7:5; 8:19
Exodus 24:18; 34:28
Deuteronomy 9:9,18
Judges 20:26
I Samuel 7:6; 31:13
II Samuel 1:12; 3:35
I Kings 21:20-29
I Chronicles 10:12
Nehemiah 1:4; 9:1
Esther 4:3
Psalm 35:11-17; 69:7-12; 109:24
Jeremiah 36:6
Daniel 6:18; 9:3
Esther 9:31
Psalm 102:4
I Kings 19:8

NEW TESTAMENT:

Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14-15
Mark 2:18-20
Luke 5:33; 18:12
Acts 27:9
Matthew 4:2
Acts 13:2-3
Matthew 15:32; 17:21
Acts 10:30; 14:23; 27:33
I Corinthians 7:5
II Corinthians 6:5; 11:27
Luke 2:37
Acts 9:9