



LOVE YOUR LEGACY · MINI EDITION NO. 4

Fasting

Hungry for More of Him

“Return to me with all your heart, with fasting... for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.”

JOEL 2:12-13, NIV

PREPARED BY

Tay

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"Even now,' declares the Lord, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.' Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love." (Joel 2:12-13, NIV)

An opening prayer

Father, I did not come to this little book to impress You. I came because I am hungry for more of You than my ordinary days have held. Teach me to fast the way Your people always have, with a soft heart and my eyes on You. In Jesus' name, Amen.



I. What Fasting Is

A WORD BEFORE WE BEGIN

Somewhere along the way, most believers hear the word fasting and feel one of two things: guilt, because they never do it, or fear, because it sounds extreme. Set both down here. Fasting in the Bible is neither a punishment nor a performance. It is a hunger, deliberately chosen, that says with the body what the heart has been saying all along: Lord, I need You more than I need bread.

THE TEACHING

To fast is to set aside food, or something else your body and day lean on, for a set time, so that your hunger has somewhere to go: toward God. Every pang becomes a prayer reminder. Every mealtime you would have sat down to becomes a chair you sit in with Him instead.

Hear what fasting is not. It is not a way to twist God's arm. It does not earn answers, and it does not make you more loved. You are loved at the full measure already; No. 1 of this series will not let you forget it. Fasting does not change God's heart toward you. It changes your heart's attention. It clears the table of the noise so the one voice you most need can be heard without competition.

Fasting comes in more than one shape. There is the simple fast, water only, for a day or a few days, the kind Jesus assumed His followers would practise. There is the partial fast, Daniel's way, setting aside rich foods and eating simply for a season. There is fasting from things beyond food, media, sweet things, comforts, noise, for those whose bodies cannot fast from meals. Every one of them, offered honestly, is received. The kind matters far less than the heart.

READ HIS WORD

"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. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (Matthew 6:16-18, NIV)

When you fast, Jesus said. Not if. He spoke of fasting the way He spoke of giving and praying, as an ordinary rhythm of a life that belongs to God. And He placed it where it belongs: between you and your Father, in secret, where the truest things grow.

SIT WITH THIS

What is your honest first feeling about fasting, and where did it come from? If it helps, start here: "Lord, when I hear the word fasting, I feel..."

What are you actually hungry for? Say it plainly, underneath all the acceptable answers.



2. People Who Fasted

Open your Bible slowly across these five. Each one fasted at a different doorway of life. One of them is probably yours.

Esther, before the impossible ask (Esther 4). A young queen about to risk her life by approaching a king uninvited. Her instruction to her people: "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day." Reflect: Esther did not fast alone. Who could you ask to fast with you, or for you, at your doorway?

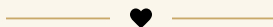
Daniel, for understanding (Daniel 9 and 10). An old man in exile, reading God's promises, mourning over what he cannot fix. In chapter 10 he eats no rich food for three weeks, and heaven sends him this word: "Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard." Reflect: The answer began travelling on day one. What might already be moving in heaven because you set your heart to seek Him?

Anna, for a lifetime (Luke 2:36-38). A widow in her eighties who "never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying," and who was standing right there, at exactly the right hour, when the baby Jesus was carried in. Reflect: Anna's fast was not an event. It was an address. She lived at the place of prayer. What does her steadiness say to your hurry?

Jesus, before the battle (Matthew 4:1-11). Forty days in the wilderness, hungry, and tempted at the point of His hunger. His answer to the tempter is the sentence this whole book stands on: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Reflect: The fast did not weaken Jesus for

the battle. It readied Him. What battle are you actually preparing for?

The church, before the sending (Acts 13:1-3). Leaders in Antioch, worshipping and fasting, when the Holy Spirit spoke the names of the first missionaries. They fasted, prayed, laid hands, and sent them off. Reflect: Some guidance only seems to come at the empty table. What decision in your life might be waiting on the far side of a fast?



3. The Heart of the Matter

READ HIS WORD

Read Isaiah 58 slowly, all of it, and linger on the question God asks His people, who were fasting faithfully and wondering why heaven felt silent: "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter, when you see the naked, to clothe them?" (Isaiah 58:6-7, NIV)

THE TEACHING

Isaiah 58 is the mirror every faster must eventually stand in front of. God's people were fasting, and fasting correctly, and nothing was moving, because their hearts were pointed at themselves the whole time. They fasted to be seen by God while exploiting the people God loved. Heaven's answer is one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible. The fast God chooses always ends at a table with room for someone else. It loosens chains. It shares bread, which is a rich joke from heaven, since the faster has set bread aside precisely in order to have more of it to give.

So before you fast, let this chapter do its gentle work. Check the motive without fear. Are you fasting to seek Him, or to be seen seeking Him? To hear His voice, or to hand Him yours? There is no shame in finding mixed motives. There is only honesty, and He receives honesty the way He receives everything true. Bring the mixture to Him and let the fast itself purify it as you go.

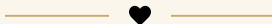
SIT WITH THIS

Where is your heart's motive mixed, said tenderly and plainly? If it helps, start here: "Father, part of me wants this fast because..."

Who might God want at your table, fed and freed, as part of this fast? Ask Him, and write the first name that comes.

WRITE IT DOWN

Write your Isaiah 58 sentence here: "On the far side of this fast, Lord, let there be..." and finish it with a person, a freedom, a table widened.



4. Preparing to Fast

A few days of gentle preparation will carry you further than a sudden, heroic leap. Decide the kind of fast and its length before you begin, and write them down. Beginnings that are decided in advance do not have to be renegotiated at every pang of hunger.

Decide the purpose. Section 5 of this book is a page made for it. A fast with a named matter before God is a different experience from a fast that is only an empty stomach looking for meaning.

Tell one trusted person. Not the world; Jesus was clear about that. One person, who will pray for you and check on you, and who can hand you a glass of juice and a wise word if you become unwell.

Prepare the body gently. In the day or two before, eat simply, drink water generously, and step down from caffeine so the fast is not fought on two fronts. During the fast, rest more than you think you need to. Hunger is not the only voice the body raises. Listen to all of them with respect.

A word of care, and it matters. If you are pregnant, nursing, taking medication, living with diabetes or any condition that food affects, or if you have ever walked through an eating disorder, please talk with your doctor and a trusted pastor before fasting from food.

There is no failure in that conversation, and there are other fasts, from media, from noise, from sweet comforts, that God receives just as gladly from a careful heart. He is not honoured by our harming the body He made. He is honoured by our seeking Him with all the wisdom He gave us.

SIT WITH THIS

What kind of fast fits your body, your season, and your matter before God, honestly? Write your decision below, and let simplicity

win over impressiveness. A one-day fast kept in love outweighs a seven-day fast kept in pride.

My fast will be: _____ For how long:

_____ Beginning: _____

LET'S PRAY

Lord, I set this fast before You as I prepare it. Guard my motives, guard my body, and let the hunger I am about to feel become a doorway and not a distraction. I am seeking You. In Jesus' name, Amen.



5. What I Am Praying About

This page is the centre of the book. Fill it in before the fast begins, and return to it at every hunger pang. When the stomach speaks, let this page answer.

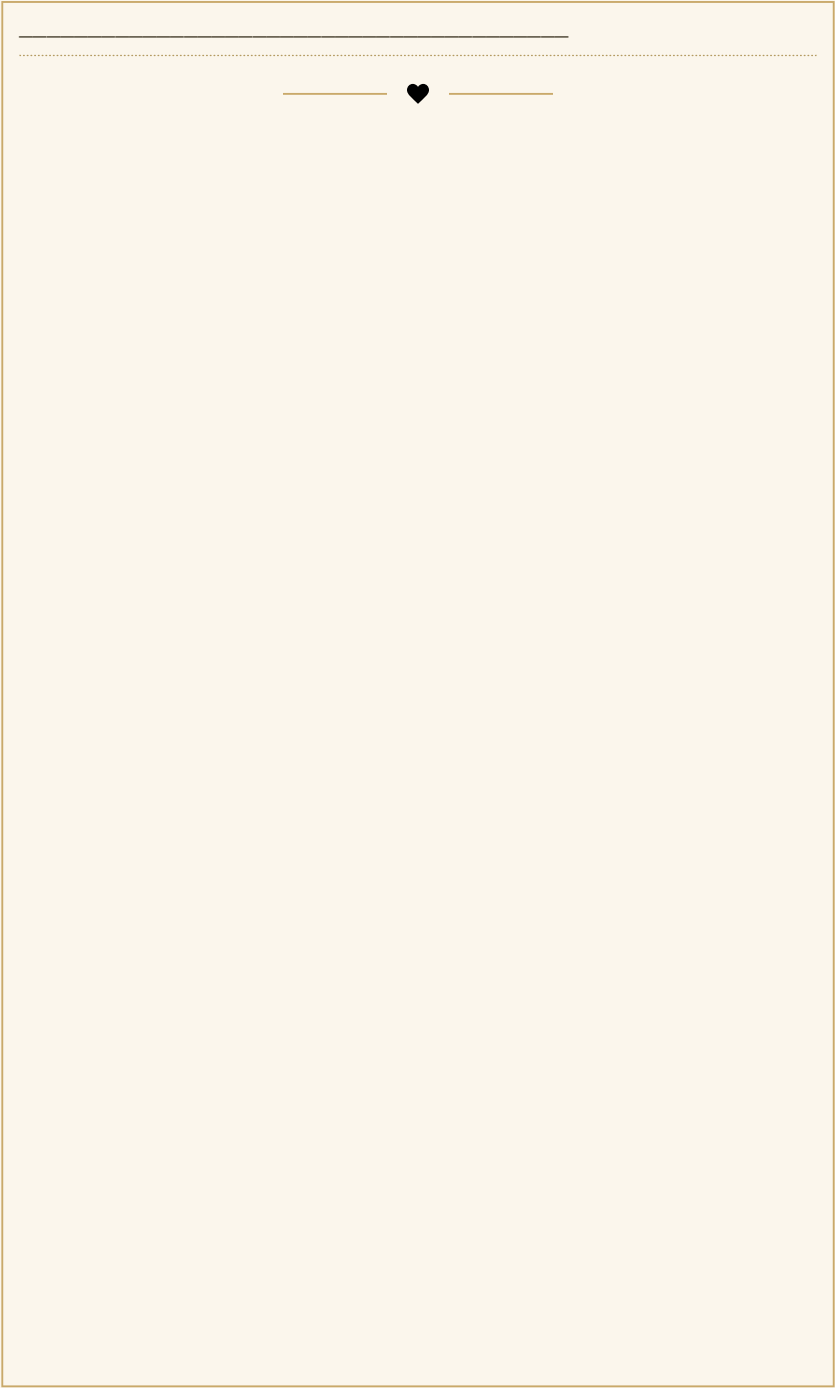
The matter I am bringing to God in this fast:

The Scriptures I am standing on (write the references, and keep them open nearby):

What I believe God has already said about this matter:

What I am asking Him for, in plain words:

For whom else am I fasting, and what am I asking for them:



6. Scriptures for the Fast

Keep this page open beside you. When hunger rises, read one aloud. Let God's word be the food that answers the body's complaint.

When you are hungry for God Himself: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" (Psalm 42:1-2, NIV)

When you need strength to continue: "but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." (Isaiah 40:31, NIV)

When you need guidance: "and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness... The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land." (Isaiah 58:10-11, NIV)

When you need to remember His nearness: "The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth." (Psalm 145:18, NIV)

When the matter is heavy and old: "if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV)



7. During the Fast

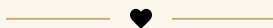
Keep the days simple. At the hours you would have eaten, sit with Him instead. Read one of the Scriptures from section 6. Pray the matter on your page in section 5, out loud where you can. Keep water near and drink it without apology. Hunger will come in waves, and waves, every faster learns, also go.

Write a line or two each day. Not a report. A record. God often speaks in things too small to remember and too precious to lose.

Day by day, what I noticed, heard, and carried:

LET'S PRAY

Father, here in the middle of the hunger, I am still Yours and You are still near. Let every pang turn my face toward You. Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening, and a little emptier than usual, on purpose. In Jesus' name, Amen.



8. After the Fast

Break your fast gently, with simple food, in small amounts, and with thanksgiving said out loud. Your body has been a servant in this. Treat it kindly on its way back to the table. Then, before the days blur, sit with this page while the fast is still fresh in you, and answer slowly.

What did God teach me about Himself?

What did He teach me about my own heart?

How did He answer the matter I brought Him, or how is He answering it still?

What did Isaiah 58 leave in me? Who is at my table now who was not before?

What will I carry forward, one rhythm, one conviction, one kindness?

Some answers arrive like Daniel's, with a delay the angels could explain and we cannot. If your matter is not resolved, your fast was not wasted. Heaven heard from the first day. Write the date you began, and leave a blank line beneath it in faith. There are lines in

our lives that God fills in later, in His own handwriting, and they are usually the most beautiful ones on the page.

LET'S PRAY

Father, thank You for the empty table and everything You set on it. You fed me in ways bread never could. Whatever You have begun in me in these days, finish it, gently, in Your time. I remain Yours, hungry for You above all. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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