

Day 1: Fasting to Regain Personal Focus

*“Did you really **fast** for Me?”
Zechariah 7:5*

Do you desire a closer walk with God? Scripture clearly teaches the importance of the discipline of fasting. Fasting often proceeds significant revival movements. For example, Jonathan Edwards fasted for 22 hours before preaching his famous sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” igniting the Great Awakening. Here at Whitesburg, we want to Ignite a movement of authentic followers of Christ, but we can’t do it alone. We as a church family must humbly and intentionally seek the face of God. Join us as we set aside time to ask God to move in our personal lives and the life of our church.

Our vision is to ignite a movement of authentic followers of Christ by reaching 1,000 people with the gospel and releasing 200 equipped leaders from the next generation for Church leadership by 2028.

For more information about Ignite and our path for sustaining, growing, and expanding our church’s ability to impact the world with the gospel, please visit WhitesburgBaptist.org/Ignite.

If you were honest, how often do you practice the discipline of fasting? Have you ever taken the time from your routine to practice fasting? The spiritual discipline of fasting is intriguing and important, yet rarely understood, discussed, or practiced. Intermittent fasting for health reasons or to lose a few extra pounds may not be difficult, but fasting with the intention to bring glory to God requires much more discipline. We enjoy eating and do not like the interruption that fasting is intended to be to our routine.

Fasting is taught and practiced throughout the Bible. It is a biblical discipline done for Kingdom purposes. Yet, the cost and sacrifice involved in fasting is difficult for some people to accept or easily discuss. Why? God intended for fasting to be hard! Fasting seems unnatural since our bodies need sustenance and nourishment from food. However, by refusing to fast, we do not reflect dependency upon God in all areas of our lives. Further, by refusing to take a season of fasting, one will never know a deeper level of desperation that causes the soul to reach toward God as our Provider. When we make time to fast, we make a declaration that we are willing to forgo what fuels our physical bodies and desire Christ above anything or anyone else.

Zechariah 7:5 presents a haunting question meant to linger in our hearts and minds. In Zechariah’s time, God reveals to His people that they are simply going through the religious ritual. Consequently, they are not pleasing their heavenly Father. Israel was simply “doing church” with no heart motivation behind their actions.

Let me encourage you today to be willing to find time to truly pray and fast. Ask God for forgiveness for ways you have become more focused on the routine than the relationship. Begin now by attuning your heart and ears to God’s voice, showing complete dependency upon Him in all things.

Day 2: Fasting that Leads to Revival

*“Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you.’ So, they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the Lord and **fasted** on that day.”
1 Samuel 7:5-6*

As we pray approaching our *Ignite Master Campus Plan Offering*, let us remember the church is more than a building. Elmer Towns states, “The church is the presence of the Lord among His people.” Go read 1 Samuel 7 and notice what initiated revival to break out among the people. Samuel led the people to bring the “ark of the Lord” and called the congregation to recognize their need for God’s presence.

Notice three things from 1 Samuel 7:

1. *“they gathered”* (v.6) – The whole congregation participated in seeking God’s face through prayer and fasting. This practice was not directed at those in leadership or a select few individuals. **Everyone** was involved!
2. *“We have sinned against the Lord”* (v.6) – During their time of prayer and fasting, God’s people grew serious about repentance and confession. We must humbly and honestly seek God’s face and demonstrate sincerity in our prayers. What areas of personal sin do you need to confess before God?
3. *“Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us”* (v.8) – This time of reflection and seeking the Lord was not just a one-time, momentary, emotional worship service. This was heartfelt, continual, and impacted their lives and worship. Are we eager to demonstrate our dependence on God? Are we willing for Him to interrupt our lives? Are we interested in continually seeking God’s face beyond just a momentary event?

Israel’s fasting and praying in 1 Samuel 7 resulted in *“The Lord thundered with a mighty sound that day”* (v. 10). Job 37:5 states, *“God thunders wondrously with His voice; He does great things that we cannot comprehend.”* What role could prayer and fasting have in Whitesburg? If we are to truly Ignite a movement of authentic believers and see revival break out here at Whitesburg, we must yearn for God’s presence.

Day 3: Fasting for Kingdom Influence

*“Why have we **fasted**, and you see it not?... Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice be heard on high.”
Isaiah 58:3-4*

Why do we fast? Is fasting a public display or some fake piety? Fasting is intended to be genuine, heartfelt seeking after God. Today’s devotional focuses on influence.

There are multiple examples throughout both the Old and New Testament of individuals who fasted in public only displaying a fake righteousness. This pharisaical lifestyle does not do anything to impact the world with the gospel for the glory of God. God desires the heart.

In Luke 1:17, God told Zechariah that his son John the Baptist would be different: “He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah.” Matthew 3:4 describes John the Baptist saying, “his food was locusts and wild honey.” John was considered a strange individual in his culture and practiced a type of fasting based upon a commitment to God. He willingly abstained from eating foods that were permissible by the law to keep his covenant and faithfulness to God. The result of John’s dependence upon God was that “then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins” (Matthew 3:5-6).

What about you? What commitments and vows do you need to make to God? Will you ask God to use you as an influential testimony that impacts others? For whom can you pray to come to saving faith? If we are to reach 1,000 individuals with the Gospel, we must fast and pray that God will expand our influence here locally, nationally, and globally to make much of His Kingdom instead of our own.

Day 4: Fasting that Seeks the Will of God

“And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.”
Acts 9:9

The dramatic conversion of Saul includes the practice of fasting. Saul gained life-changing insight and wisdom during this fast. Here are a few principles we can learn from Saul’s testimony in Acts 9:

Listen to God’s Voice - Saul sat in a house at *“the street called Straight”* waiting. This had to be a deep soul-searching time alone with God. Make sure you are listening and concentrating on God and the decisions He desires for you to make. *“Be still and know that I am God”* (Psalm 46:10).

Obey God’s Voice - The voice of Jesus instructed Saul to *“rise and enter the city”* (v. 6). What did Saul do next? *“Saul rose from the ground... and they led him by hand and brought him into Damascus”* (v. 8). Saul obeyed. What has God been teaching and instructing you to do during this time of prayer and fasting? Do not hesitate; go and do!

Wait Upon God - Read the second part of verse 6, *“and you will be told what you are to do.”* Saul was not told the time-period. He was simply instructed to wait. Ananias eventually came with further instructions. Do not see this period of fasting and prayer as wasted time. *“Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength”* (Isaiah 40:31).

God Uses Others - God also spoke directly to Ananias. Ananias may have been hesitant at first, but his faithfulness led to obedience. Do not be surprised if God uses someone else to impact and encourage you. Recognize that God may also want to use you to impact someone else.

As you fast, seek the will of God. He will reveal it! Submit yourself to His will.

Day 5: Fasting that Meets Needs, Comes with a Cost

*“Is not this the **fast** that I choose... Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?”*
Isaiah 58:6-7

Whitesburg is calling our church to pray and fast for personal devotion, to seek revival, to seek greater influence in the Kingdom, and to seek God’s will. Additionally, we ask you to pray in preparation for our *Ignite Master Campus Plan Offering* on Sunday, September 10.

Isaiah 58:6-7 reminds us that fasting comes with a price. It costs our comfort. It may cost us to give up something or adjust our schedule. Fasting may force us to divert our own possessions to meet others’ needs. Isaiah says God is calling for those who have a true relationship with Him to give of their *“bread”* and clothing. These are items we work for, spend our own money to obtain, and are either needed or willingly chosen. Yet, God instructs us to give our own possessions for others.

The *Ignite Master Campus Plan* is going to take time and come with a large price tag. Yet, we are intentionally choosing to express gratitude for the many blessings that God has already poured out and trust Him to lead in how we give. For this reason, we have not set any goals, but depend solely on God’s guidance. We understand buildings are simply a tool that God uses to reach others.

Take time during your fast to pray about what God may be asking you to give. He may be asking you to give of your *time* or *talents* to serve in a needed area of the church. He may be asking you to give of your *treasures*. Will you be a willing participant, joyfully excited to give generously of yourself to *Ignite a movement of authentic believers?*



PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE

August 21-25, 2023

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