

Beyond  The Veil
In-Home Fasting Retreat



Your Guide to an
Intimate Encounter
With *God.*

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Setting the Foundation

Have you ever wondered whether or not Christian fasting was for you? Maybe you've thought about fasting for God, but you just didn't know enough about it.

You may have wondered, "How can I know that God is really calling me to fast? Is fasting even still Biblical? And what am I supposed to be fasting for anyways?"

If you have ever wondered if God was calling you to a fast, this guide to creating your own personalized fasting experience will help you answer that question once and for all - YES!

What does it mean to go “Beyond the Veil”?

Before Jesus came, the Spirit of God was not freely available to all mankind. There was a thick veil in the Temple that separated the area where the Jews met for worship, and the area where God's presence actually dwelled.

In fact, there was only one man permitted to venture beyond that veil, and enter into God's presence. That was the high priest, and even he could only enter in once each year (Hebrews 9:7).

Though this plan lasted for a time, it could never be enough. God's love for you is too strong. He could not bare you living your entire life, never being allowed into His presence for yourself!

It was Jesus' sacrifice that literally ripped the veil that had separated God and His people from top to bottom. As He hung on the cross, "*Jesus cried again with a loud voice and gave up His spirit. And at once the curtain of the sanctuary of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.*" -Matthew 27:50-51 (AMP)

There is no longer a veil between you and the presence of God-Hallelujah!

But, why then do so many Christians feel as if there is still something blocking them from truly connecting with their Heavenly Daddy? Like there is some invisible wall standing between them and the breakthrough that they so eagerly desire.

The Beyond the Veil fasting program is designed to help you break down that invisible wall once and for all! It is your step-by-step guide to an intimate encounter with God so powerful that you will never be the same.

If you feel God calling you to a closer walk with Him, but you don't know exactly where to start, your in-home fasting retreat can be your springboard. Think of it as a *Spiritual Boot Camp* for Christians who find themselves in a bit of a spiritual rut.

Embarking on your own personal fasting retreat is guaranteed to turbo charge your relationship with God! And, when you seek first the Kingdom of God, all of the other needs in your life will always be supplied (Matthew 6:31-33).

I once heard someone say, "If you keep doing what you've always done you'll keep getting what you've always got!" So, when you're ready for a change in yourself or in your life, you have to ***Do Something Different!***

During your *Beyond the Veil* Fasting Retreat:

- You will deepen your relationship with God and your ability to surrender to Him.
- You will discover how to recognize the presence of God in your daily life, as you totally immerse yourself in His Holy Spirit.
- Totally engulfed in His Spirit, you will practice the art of listening to God's voice and writing out the things that He reveals to your heart.
- As you receive God's specific direction for your life, He will be your personal guide as you break free from spiritual, physical, and emotional bondage.

Why a fasting retreat?

You may be wondering, why is ***Beyond the Veil*** a fasting retreat. Couldn't you get the same results just through prayer? Well, the short answer is ***NO!***

As you will discover throughout this guide, fasting unleashes a very special transformational power. The power to not only change our circumstances, but to change us ourselves.

When we fast the way that God truly intended for us to, it opens us up to His Holy Spirit in a way that nothing else in this world does. That is because fasting is a true act of total surrender to the Lord.

You will hear me say over and over throughout this program: You are a *spirit*. You have a *soul* (mind will and emotions). And you live in a *body*.

Fasting buffets your *body* and quiets your *soul*, so that your spirit can truly receive from God. It is a

time of total consecration.

What is consecration?

Consecration is when you purposefully offer your whole self up to the Lord in total dedication and surrender. You hold none of yourself back, but offer him all that you are, all that you have, and all that you will ever become.

The Strong's Dictionary says that the result of true consecration is "sanctification of heart and life."

Many Christians believe that they have given their whole selves over to God but, in reality, they have not – And it shows. When they seek God in a fast, they're not trying to give their lives and circumstances over to God, but rather to get what they want from Him. When they go to God in prayer, they're not concerned about His will for their lives, but only their own.

Consecration releases your life plan, and receives God's ultimate desire for your life.

When you truly consecrate yourself unto God, you totally surrender your will to His, and that is one of the hardest things that we as human beings will ever do. But, in order to go deeper in God, we must seek to release any desires that are contrary to His perfect will for our lives. These desires could be anything from eating habits to career goals, but they all have one thing in common – They don't represent God's best for YOUR life.

Consecration is a personal, powerful and transformational act that changes us from the inside out. But, it is something that we must do ourselves, not something that God will ever force upon us.

We all have a spiritual need to set aside time in our lives to be apart with Jesus. And when that need is not fulfilled, we can feel it in our hearts. Just like a lack of physical food can leave us malnourished, a lack of spiritual food can leave us feeling weak and spiritually dizzy.

Fasting helps us carve out blocks of our lives to simply sit at God's feet and seek Him. It is in those quiet times that we gain the strength and wisdom required for the day to day battles that we all face.

Fasting is one of the best ways to feed that spiritual hunger that God has placed in us all.

Are All Christians Called to Fast?

*"Then the disciples of John came to Jesus, inquiring, Why is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, [that is, abstain from food and drink as a religious exercise], but Your disciples do not fast? And Jesus replied to them, Can the wedding guests mourn while the bridegroom is still with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, **and then they will fast.**"*
~Matthew 9:14-15 (AMP)

Many Believers have never experienced the wondrous power of fasting in their every day lives. One of the things standing in their way is that they question whether fasting is really something that God has called them to.

But, we see clearly here that once Jesus ascended back to heaven, He expected us as His followers to resume honoring Him with our fast.

But Jesus was talking about the disciples...that doesn't really include me does it?

Many Believers are confused when they read scriptures that give directions for Jesus' disciples. They think that God is talking about those following Christ during His time on earth.

But, Jesus said, “Go and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matt 28:19)

So, the term disciple is NOT exclusive to the 12 disciples that we typically think of.

In fact, the dictionary's definition of a disciple is simply anyone who believes in, and helps to spread the beliefs of another. So, if you have believed in Jesus, and your heart's desire is to help to spread His Word on to others, you ARE His disciple.

And, when speaking of His disciples in Matthew 9:15, Jesus did not say, “and then they *might* fast.” Or, “and then *some of them* will fast.” He said “and then **THEY WILL FAST.**”

In the Book of Acts, God gives us several examples of Believers in the early church setting aside time to dedicate themselves to fasting and prayer.

For instance, when they needed to know God's perfect will, they combined fasting and prayer to open themselves up to hear God's voice and receive His direction:

*One day as they were worshiping God—they were also fasting as they waited for guidance—the Holy Spirit spoke: "Take Barnabas and Saul and commission them for the work I have called them to do." So they commissioned them. In that circle of intensity and obedience, **of fasting and praying**, they laid hands on their heads and sent them off. ~ Acts 13:1-3 (The Message)*

Something very precious is revealed to us here: A purposeful dependence upon God.

The Bible says that they were “fasting as they waited for guidance.” Instead of doing what seemed logical, or what they thought was best, they were *purposefully* dependent upon God. They made a conscious decision that they were going to seek His face, and have FAITH that He would guide their steps as long as they were truly surrendered to Him.

When we embark on a fasting experience of our own, we are exhibiting the same thing - A totally surrendered heart.

What if we look at this in light of James 2:20 - Faith without works is dead!

These Christians had faith that God's Holy Spirit would guide them. So, to *ACT* upon that faith, they worshiped, they fasted and they prayed – **They were ACTIVELY seeking God.**

Many times we want and need God to step in on our behalf. We have read the promises He's given to us in His Word:

- **Promises of Guidance and Direction:** “*In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct*

thy paths.” ~Proverbs 3:6

- **Promises of Healing:** *“And the whole multitude sought to touch Him: for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them ALL” ~Luke 6:19*
- **Promises of Provision:** *“And my God will liberally supply (fill to the full) your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” ~Philippians 4:19 AMP*
- **Promises of Protection:** *“There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” ~Psalm 91:10-11*
- **Promises for our children:** *“Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it.” ~Proverbs 22:6 AMP*

We have **FAITH** that God will do the things that He's promised us He would do. But, how do we keep that **FAITH** alive by putting it into action?

Actively seeking the Lord through fasting and prayer can be the **ACTION** that we need to make our faith truly come alive!

Questions for Your Reflection:

1. Go back and review the section here of Consecration. Why do you think most Christians never truly consecrate themselves unto God? Do you think that you have? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever thought of yourself as one of Jesus' disciples? What does that mean to you?
3. Faith without works is dead. We discussed fasting as a way to put your faith in God's promises into ACTION by actively seeking Him. List 2-5 things that you are believing God for that could be incorporated into your time of fasting.

2

Do I Need To Fast? **Recognizing the Signs...**

For many of us, if we don't have some pressing physical need from the Lord, we don't even think about fasting. In reality, there are many signs in our daily lives that reveal our spiritual need for a time of consecration and surrender to God.

Here are just a few signs:

- **Not hearing the Lord.** You're having a hard time hearing and/or recognizing the still small voice of God in your life. You wonder if you are missing out on the leadings of the Holy Spirit, and sometimes question if He even speaks to you personally.
 - ✓ Fasting is one of the best ways to master recognizing God's voice in your daily life. It quiets down our lives so that we can hear God speaking to us, and find the answers to the problems we've been facing in our daily lives.
- **You feel somehow distant from God.** It's like there is some kind of invisible wall separating you from Him. You try to reach out to Him, but don't seem to be truly connecting. Something inside of you proclaims, "This can't be it - There has to be something MORE!"
 - ✓ Fasting will help you slow down and identify where that wall is coming from. As your flesh is buffeted, and your mind is quieted, you will be able to put your entire life into

perspective. Is it a fear that has been keeping you from connecting with God? Is it a feeling of unworthiness? Once you identify it during your fast, God will help you to tear it down once and for all and experience the relationship with Him that you are longing for.

- **You feel God drawing you to a closer place in Him.** You can hear God's voice beckoning you to go deeper, but you aren't sure how to get there or where to start.
 - ✓ Fasting is a sign of your total surrender to God. With your flesh out of the way, God is able to go to work on you spiritually! When your focus is on deepening your spiritual connection to God, and not on something that you can get from Him, God honors that by taking you to new depths in Him.
- **You feel like you're in a "Spiritual rut."** You've been in the same place spiritually for a while. You know in the back of your mind that you aren't spending the time with God that you need to. *Your relationship with God needs a spiritual jump start!*
 - ✓ Fasting truly is a spiritual jump start! While our spirituality is usually what gets put on the back burner in life, a fast moves everything else completely off of the stove. God's Word promises that when you seek Him early and diligently you will find Him. When you embark on a season of fasting, that is exactly what you are doing.
- **You're always busy!** In fact, sometimes you feel too busy to take out special time for God, or anything else for that matter. It's like your life is living you instead of you living it! You know you need to slow down and gain some balance, but feel like you can't afford to.
 - ✓ When we fast, the quiet time with God helps us to put every area of our lives into perspective. Remember, fasting is an act of total surrender, where we give every area of our life over to God. During this time of stillness, He is able to reveal to us His perfect will for how we should be living our lives, and helps us to put things into proper balance once and for all. If we continue to walk in that balance after the fast is over, of course, is our own personal choice.
- **You aren't bearing spiritual fruit.** You look at the list of the Fruits of the Spirit, but you don't see all of those things evident in your life. You know you need more of God's Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and/or Self-control in your life. But, no matter how hard you try, you can't seem to do it on your own.
 - ✓ Remember that all of the good things in us come from God, not from our own work or diligence. They come from God's Spirit living and working in us. When we enter into a time of fasting, we truly open ourselves up to God's Holy Spirit. As He works in us, we begin to look more like Him, and less like ourselves.
- **Your thoughts betray you.** Though you love the Lord, sometimes the things that you think in your own mind alarm you. You desire to truly have the renewed mind of Christ, but struggle to keep your thoughts in line with God's Word and on things "of good report."
 - ✓ As we've mentioned before: You are a *SPIRIT*. You have a *soul* (mind, will and emotions). And you live in a *body*. Your spirit and your body, or flesh as it is often referred to, are constantly warring for control of your soul – your mind will and emotions. The amazing thing about fasting is that it is designed to help you bring your

body/flesh under control. It tells your flesh who is boss! And, in doing that, it frees up your mind and emotions to receive from your spirit man instead.

- **You're missing the mark.** There are strongholds or addictions in your life that stand in the way of you being the person you know God created you to be. *Common Examples:* Smoking - Eating (too much or too little) - Over Working - Anger - Unforgiveness - Lust - Doubt - Fear - Depression - Anxiety etc.
 - ✓ As we've already said, fasting tells your flesh who's boss! How? Because when your body asks for something, every time you give in to it, you are making your flesh stronger. But, when you put your foot down and say "No!" you are depriving it of that power. Whatever you feed gets stronger! **Fasting starves the flesh and feeds the spirit.**
- You need His help and direction for your life.
 - ✓ There are certain things in our lives that will not change unless we invite God in to change them. Maybe there is a health challenge, or a financial problem you need God to fix. One of the most powerful ways to invite God into our circumstances is to surrender them to Him through a dedicated time of fasting and prayer. Just like in Bible times, fasting can open the door for miracles in your life! Still, we are not always met by a miracle, but often by God's still small voice giving us specific directions about what action we need to take to fix our problem. This direction is priceless, and will transform your life if you step out on faith and follow it.

There are many signs that pop up in our lives, revealing our need to set aside the special time with God that Christian fasting provides.

These little signs don't mean that you are a bad Christian! They simply reveal the need that we each have for more time alone with God and more of His Holy presence in our daily lives.

Your time of Christian fasting is your time of re-filling and re-fueling. It is you, setting yourself apart from the world, and consecrating yourself unto God for His use.

Fasting, done right, empowers you through a fresh outpouring of God's Spirit, to become the person that He created you to be.

Yes, there are many signs that you can look for in your life that tell you that you need to fast. But, really, the most important sign is that little nudge from the Lord.

Often, we dismiss it or ignore it. We say that it's just in our heads, but it's not. It's God urging us to step out of faith, and to enter into what He has in store for us.

So, if you feel that little nudge, don't ignore it - Follow it! I promise that you won't be disappointed!

Questions for Your Reflection:

1. Have you ever gone on a Christian fast before? Why or why not?

2. Take another look at the signs that you need to set aside time for seeking God through fasting. Do you see any of those signs in your life? If so, which one(s).

3

Why Fast? **The True Purpose of Christian Fasting**

Many Christians enter into a season of fasting for one reason and one reason only - **They Want Something from God!**

Maybe their church is doing a corporate fast because they need money for the new building fund.

Maybe they've lost their job, and they want God's help finding another.

Maybe their child is acting up, and they need God to intervene.

Maybe their health is in turmoil, and a special miracle from God is their last hope...

So, they decide to go on a fast.

But, is this really what Christian fasting is all about - Trying to convince God to come to our aid? Is this kind of self-seeking fasting truly pleasing to God?

*Therefore do not worry and be anxious, saying,
What are we going to have to eat? or, What are we going to have to drink?
or, What are we going to have to wear?
For the Gentiles (heathen) wish for and crave
and diligently seek all these things,
and your heavenly Father knows well that you need them all.
But seek (aim at and strive after) first of all His kingdom and His righteousness
(His way of doing and being right),*

and then all these things taken together will be given you besides.

~Matthew 6:31-33 (AMP)

When we choose to embark on a spiritual fast, we should always keep this scripture in the front of our minds. We should stop and ask ourselves, *What Am I REALLY Seeking After?*

This *spiritual gut check* is not just for when we fast. For some of us, the only time that we seek God at all, whether it be through fasting, prayer or reading His Word, is when we need something from Him in the physical realm.

Far too often our relationships with our Heavenly Father revolve around seeking His hand and NOT His heart.

But, I highlighted the last part of that scripture for an important reason: "*and then all these things taken together will be given you besides.*"

When we focus our time of fasting on seeking God's kingdom and deepening our relationship with Him, the result will be that our needs will be met.

Why?

Because when you turn your eyes towards the Lord, He ALWAYS turns His eyes back towards you.

So then, is it wrong to fast because you need something from God?

Of course not!

We all need God to go to work on our behalf in different areas of our lives. But, when we fast, we should always be fasting for God first and foremost, and not for ourselves.

What does it mean to fast for God? Think back to the early Christians that we discussed in part 1, *Setting the Foundation*:

*One day as they were worshiping God—they were also fasting as they waited for guidance—the Holy Spirit spoke: "Take Barnabas and Saul and commission them for the work I have called them to do." So they commissioned them. In that circle of intensity and obedience, **of fasting and praying**, they laid hands on their heads and sent them off. ~ Acts 13:1-3 (The Message)*

These early Christians were fasting for God, first and foremost. They wanted His perfect will for their lives – No less...and no more.

But, how does that translate into our modern world? And, what would it look like in the day to day life of an average Christian – Not a group of missionaries?

Let's look at a hypothetical example: *Meet Joe!*

Joe has been walking with the Lord for the past 10 years. He's always tried to serve God

with His whole heart, and has been an avid tither, even giving an extra offering from time to time.

Joe is married to Sally, and they are expecting their first child. Sally has already quit her job in preparation to be the stay at home mom that she's always dreamed of.

Suddenly, due to company cut-backs, Joe loses his job!

Immediately, the most human response possible kicks in – FEAR!

What are we going to do? How will we take care of this new baby with \$0 income? Will Sally have to go back to work?

We pay our tithes! Why would God let this happen to us?

After the shock wears off, Joe remembers a sermon that he heard on the power of fasting to unleash God's power. He goes to Sally, and recommends that they take their problem to God in a fast.

The two agree that this is a job for the Big Guy. So they prepare themselves to go on a fast.

QUESTION: Is it OK for Joe and Sally to fast for God to provide for them and their new child? Or, would fasting for this need be self-seeking and, therefore, not move God on their behalf?

ANSWER: It all depends on one important thing – *Their hearts!*

Remember, God is always looking at the true intentions lying deep in our hearts (1 Samuel 16:7). If Joe and Sally enter into their season of fasting full of fear, simply trying to earn blessings from God through their works (fasting), their fast will NOT be pleasing to God. Therefore, they should not expect to see any real results.

But, if they allow their new circumstances to remind them that Joe's former employer is not their source, and acknowledge their total dependence upon God as their Provider, they can turn what was a negative situation into something that draws them closer to God than they ever imagined. If they choose to embrace their season of fasting as a time to seek His perfect will for every part of their lives; a time of study, prayer, meditation and listening for the voice of God's direction; then their fast will be pleasing to God, and unleash His power in their lives.

Fasting for God's perfect will in all areas our lives, and realizing that His perfect will is better than our own - That is the place of total surrender that true fasting flows out of.

When we fast in faith, and not in fear, we are open to receive all of the things that God has in store for us: Both in the **spiritual** and in the **physical** realms.

But, when the entire purpose of our fast is to somehow bribe God into doing what we want Him to do, the fast may never open us up so that we can receive the amazing things that God truly wants to give us.

Remember, when we seek first the kingdom, God will supply all of our other needs. But, we have to be careful that our needs do not become our god – The thing that we are constantly seeking after.

Going Deeper...

Isaiah 58:1-11 gives us some powerful warnings from God about fasting for Him. Below, you will find the scripture broken down into smaller excerpts. Read each one. Then prayerfully write out your response.

“...Don’t be timid. Tell my people Israel of their sins! **Yet they act so pious!** They come to the Temple every day and *seem* delighted to learn all about me. They *act* like a righteous nation that would never abandon the laws of its God. They ask me to take action on their behalf, *pretending* they want to be near me. **‘We have fasted before you!’ they say. ‘Why aren’t you impressed?’** We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don’t even notice it!”

Your Response:

“I will tell you why!” I respond. **‘It’s because you are fasting to please yourselves.** Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers. What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. You humble yourselves by **going through the motions** of penance, bowing your heads like reeds bending in the wind. You dress in burlap and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the LORD?”

Your Response:

“No, **this is the kind of fasting I want:** Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help. **‘Then** your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind. **Then when you call, the LORD will answer. ‘Yes, I am here,’ he will quickly reply.** ...Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon. The LORD will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring.

Your Response:

Questions for Your Reflection:

1. We just talked about the importance of seeking God's heart, and not just His hand when we are fasting. Have you ever found yourself spending more time seeking blessings from God than seeking God Himself? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think so many Believers forget to seek God's kingdom first before we seek the things that we think He can give us? Do you think fasting can help us get away from this bad habit?
3. Reflect back on our hypothetical story about Joe and Sally. What can we learn from it about how to approach a time of fasting and prayer?

4

Fasting Opens You Up To Hear From God

One of the most common questions that I receive from Christians across the globe is, "Ameerah, how can I hear God's voice?"

Hearing God's voice in your daily life is not only available to every Christian, but it's **VITAL** to your spiritual survival!

Your Heavenly Father has specific plans for you, "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." (Jer 29:11 NLT)

But, how can you know that you are following God's plans if you can't hear Him speaking directly to you?

When we are fasting for God, it opens us up to hear His voice speaking to us. Let's look at Moses' example:

This happened when I was on the mountain receiving the tablets of stone inscribed with the words of the covenant that the LORD had made with you. I was there for forty days and forty nights, and all that time I ate no food and drank no water. "At the end of the forty days and nights, the LORD handed me the two stone tablets inscribed with the words of the covenant. ~ Deuteronomy 9:9 and 11 (NLT)

It was after Moses' fast that He was given the 10 Commandments - Words from God that not only blessed Moses and the Israelites, but millions of people over thousands of years.

Moses received that word from God because of His obedience and surrender to God through fasting.

Fasting for God helps you to hear His voice because:

- **Fasting quiets down your life!** Often times our lives are so loud that, even though God is speaking, we can't pick out His voice. It takes us getting quiet and focusing on Him to be able to tune out the world and hear His still small voice.
- **Fasting quiets down your flesh!** This is a biggie! Believe it or not, your flesh doesn't want you to hear from God. Why? Because it wants you to do what IT wants to do, not what God wants you to do.
 - That's why when your flesh is piping up; your focus is always on *God hearing YOU* - Not on *you hearing GOD*.
 - Our flesh can not only get in the way of us hearing from God, but can stir up fear and doubt that stops us from following through on the revelations we do hear, and receiving our breakthrough.
- **Fasting helps you renew your mind!** God Word tells us, "Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], **so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].**" (Romans 12:2 AMP)
 - When you renew your mind you will begin to know God's will for your own personal life!
 - There is no better way to renew your mind from the world's way of doing things than to take time apart from that world, and focus on God His presence, and His Word!

The Gentile Who Touched the Heart of God

Hearing God's direction in our lives is His gift to ALL who love Him. Fasting for God should be just that, an act of love towards Him. It is not the act of fasting itself that moves God, but He is looking at your heart. Just as He was looking at Cornelius' heart 2000 years ago.

This story caught my eye because Cornelius was the first Gentile in Acts to hear the Gospel. What made Him so special? He knew so little about the things of God that when Peter, under the instruction of the Holy Spirit, came to visit him, Cornelius began to worship him!

Why would God send angels to speak to such a man? Because of his surrendered heart as he committed Himself to giving, prayer and fasting.

*"So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was **fasting** until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter... So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now*

*therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.” Then Peter opened his mouth and said: “In truth I perceive that God **shows no partiality**. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.” (Acts 10:30-35 NKJV)*

As we see here, hearing God’s instruction is not for a select few. Even this Gentile who had not accepted Christ, because of His heart and passion for God, was able to receive a word from Him. When He was obedient to the instructions he received from God and sent for Peter, it even opened Peter’s eyes that God “shows no partiality”. Or, in the King James Version, “God is no respecter of persons.” God’s loving guidance is for all who truly love Him, and are surrendered to His will. Fasting can be just the act of surrender that will unplug your spiritual ears to finally hear God’s voice.

Fasting Opens Your Spiritual Ears...and Eyes: Seeing Visions & Dreaming Dreams

Most Christians pay little attention to what they dream when they close their eyes at night. But, God speaks to His people in many ways, and one of them is through dreams and visions.

*“...this is [the beginning of] what was spoken through the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, God declares, that I will pour out of My Spirit upon all mankind, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy [telling forth the divine counsels] and your young men shall see **visions** (divinely granted appearances), and your old men shall **dream [divinely suggested] dreams**.” -Acts 2:16-17 AMP*

We see throughout His Word that this is one of the many ways that God reveals things to His children, through dreams and visions. But, of course, not every dream is from the Lord. It’s important that we as Christians become sensitive enough to the Holy Spirit to discern which of our dreams are divinely inspired. If not, the messages God is trying to send us will unfortunately go unrecognized and, therefore, be lost.

It is also not uncommon for a time of fasting to open your spiritual eyes in a powerful way. Because of Daniel’s submission through consecration, “... God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” (Daniel 1:17)

So, be sure to pay special attention, and be on the look out for divine messages from God in your dreams, or even for waking visions from Him as you fast. God is always speaking to us, but we never know what method He will choose. It is simply our responsibility to be expectant and watchful as we wait upon a word from Him.

How do we know if a dream is divinely inspired? One clue that a dream may be from God is that you actually remember it when you first wake up. Most dreams are fuzzy at best, if not totally gone the next morning. So, if all or part of your dream seems very *bright* and *clear* there may be a reason for that.

What do you do? Write it down immediately! Then pray and ask God if He had something He wanted

to reveal to you through this dream. Stop and listen. Then write down any impressions that you receive about what the dream may mean. If you don't hear anything right then, that's okay. It may be that the meaning will become clearer to you as time goes on.

Over the past year alone, I have received many dreams from the Lord. Some concerning myself and things He wanted me to address in my walk with Him. Some answering questions I had asked Him. One revealing generational curses in my family's blood line. Another preparing me for a change that was coming down the pike so I wouldn't be caught off guard. God even used similar dreams to tell both me and my husband it was time for us to pack up and move across town.

If I had not been paying attention, I could have been deceived into thinking that God was being silent on all of those topics. If I would have just written off my dreams, assuming that God would not speak to me in this unique way (even though it's perfectly biblical), I would have missed His direction and made uninformed and wrong decisions in my life.

Make a commitment and refuse to miss out on anything God has to say to you! During your fast, keep your spiritual ears AND eyes open!

Questions for Your Reflection

1. In this chapter we read that hearing God's voice is not just possible, but required for your spiritual survival. Why is being able to hear the Holy Spirit's direction every day so vital to us as Christians?
2. In this lesson we talked about how fasting can quiet down your flesh so that you can hear from God. Do you think that your flesh may need to be quieted down a bit? Why or why not?
3. I stated earlier that our flesh keeps us focused on whether or not God is hearing us, instead of whether or not we are hearing God. Have you ever fallen into this trap? Why or why not?

5

Spiritual Breakthrough Through Fasting!

Most Christians have never experienced the power that fasting for God can unleash in their lives.

They have needs in their lives that are crying out for a time of total surrender and consecration, but they think that Christian fasting is something that was only done in the Bible, or that its power is reserved for the "ultra-holy."

So they miss out on their breakthrough, and live their lives constantly below the level of victory to which they are called.

What many don't understand is that fasting for God is specifically created to transform the life of ordinary Believers *extraordinarily!*

Fasting Opens the Door for Your Spiritual Breakthrough

"Jesus...rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, You dumb and deaf spirit, I charge you to come out of him and never go into him again...it came out; and the boy lay [pale and motionless] like a corpse, so that many of them said, He is dead. But Jesus took [a strong grip of] his hand and began lifting him up, and he stood. And when He had gone indoors, His disciples asked Him privately,

Why could not we drive it out?

And He replied to them, This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting."

~Mark 9:25-29 (AMP)

If we read Mark 9 in its entirety, we see that the disciples had been **praying**, trying to set that young boy free. But, they were missing something...

Then, Jesus reveals an important truth to His disciples, and to us all: **That there are some bondages that we struggle with in our lives that can only be broken through prayer AND fasting - PERIOD.**

Giving the Battle Over to the Lord

We see it over and over again in scripture: Believers who, in the midst of terrible circumstances, fasted and received a breakthrough!

When several forces had joined up against Jehoshaphat, and the people of Judah were in grave danger, what did they do?

*"Jehoshaphat was terrified by this news and begged the LORD for guidance. He also ordered **everyone in Judah to begin fasting.** ... "Listen, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Listen, King Jehoshaphat! This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid! Don't be discouraged by this mighty army, **for the battle is not yours, but God's.** Tomorrow, march out against them. You will find them coming up through the ascent of Ziz at the end of the valley that opens into the wilderness of Jeruel. But you will not even need to fight. Take your positions; then stand still and watch the LORD's victory. He is with you, O people of Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid or discouraged. Go out against them tomorrow, for the LORD is with you!"*

~ 2 Chronicles 20:3, 15-17 (NLT)

I've heard many Christians quote that Bible verse, "The battle is not yours, but God's". And, yet, they don't reference *why* the Lord was going to fight on their behalf.

It was specifically because they had surrendered themselves through prayer and fasting for God. If we look at this in light of James 2 (faith without works is dead) we can say that the people of Judah and Jerusalem brought their faith in God to life by putting it into **ACTION!** How? Through fasting.

We can do the same thing!

If we want the same results in our lives that we see in scriptures like these, we have to do the same things that they did. We can't expect the promise if we do not take part in the act of surrender and consecration that fasting for God represents.

Christian fasting is not something that we do to get something from God; it is what we do when we want to totally give ourselves over to Him.

It is an act of total surrender to our Lord that opens us up to receive all that He has in store for us.

Questions for Your Reflection

1. In Mark 9 we see that the disciples have prayed for someone to be set free, but to no avail. Jesus explains that this is because certain bondages only break through prayer AND fasting. Can you think of any bondages in your life that may require fasting for you to break free?

2. Have you ever heard Christians quote scripture by saying, “The Battle is not yours, but the Lords?” Why is it so important that we look at the story as a whole, and not just that statement alone?

3. How were the people of Jerusalem and Judea told to put works (action) behind their faith in God's provision for them? Do you think they would have gotten the same results without their personal “action”? Why or why not?

6

Is There More Than One Way to Fast?

There is much debate in the church today over what is and *is not* considered Biblical fasting.

Is it only true fasting is you cut out ALL food? What about a partial food fast like the Daniel Fast – Is that Biblical?

And can you just give up something you enjoy, like shopping or television, as a fast unto the Lord

What about a complete *media fast*? Cutting out all of those loud voices that seem to constantly drown out God's - that has to be pleasing to Him, right?

Well, as always, if we want to know the truth, we can't just take man's word for it. We can only take God's.

And, where do we find God's final Word on anything? Well, in the Bible of course!

So, the logical thing for us to do would be to look and see what God really meant when He spoke about fasting in the Bible.

Let's Start by Looking at Fasting in the Old Testament.

The word for Biblical fasting used in the Old Testament is *tsuwm* (Hebrew). It literally means *to cover over the mouth*.

Wow! Now that is a very clear picture as to what is expected from us when we fast for God. God used this term, *tsuwm*, to describe both individual fasting and corporate fasting in the Bible.

When we take the time to examine followers of God who fasted in the Old Testament, we see that food was ALWAYS involved.

Of course, that may not be what we would *like* to hear...but you can't argue with God's Word.

What About Biblical Fasting in the New Testament?

Many Christians may think that, although fasting in the Old Testament always required the sacrifice of food, this may no longer apply to us after Jesus' birth, death and resurrection.

But, is this new practice of picking and choosing what we give up for God based on Biblical fact, or simply an assumption rooted in human logic?

To find out, let's take a closer look at the word that God uses to describe Biblical fasting in the New Testament: *nēsteia* (Greek).

This word comes from the root word *nēsteuō*. *Nēsteuō* means "to abstain as a religious exercise from food and drink: either entirely, if the fast lasted but a single day, or from customary and choice nourishment, if it continued several days."

When looking at this definition, we can see once again that God continues to reveal to us the true nature of Biblical fasting.

Though Christian fasting does not require that we abstain from food and drink entirely, especially if it is for an extended fast, we should always be trading in some of our physical nourishment for spiritual food.

We see confirmation of this by looking at Jesus' fast in the desert.

Why is it so important that we look at Jesus' example? Because He, not other human beings, is always supposed to be our standard.

We are told that during His fast, "**Jesus ate nothing** all that time and became very hungry." (Luke 4:2 NLT)

If Jesus Himself needed to forsake physical food in order to build up and refuel His spirit, how much

more do each of us need this time set apart unto God?

One thing that has been lost to many over the years is that Biblical fasting for God is designed to be a time of total consecration.

Consecration means the, "sanctification of something by setting it apart as dedicated to God" (Princeton University's WordNet).

When we make the decision to engage in a true fast, we are making the decision to set ourselves apart unto God. The forsaking of food is our denying our most prominent physical need in favor of our spiritual needs.

It reminds each of us:

I am a spirit.

I have a soul (mind, will and emotions).

I only *live* in a body.

Fasting for God takes us before Him to put the 3 parts of our being into proper balance. But, it is making the conscious decision to deny our body that opens us up to receive the work that God wants to do *in us, through us, and for us.*

Questions for Reflection

1. Have you ever heard that you do not have to give up food to fast? Why do you think this idea has been so prevalent in the church today?
2. We learned in this lesson that the true purpose of fasting is consecration, or setting ourselves apart unto God. What does that mean to you?
3. We discussed the fact that you are a spirit, you have a soul, and you live in a body. How do you think forsaking physical nourishment, in favor of spiritual food, during a fast helps us to put who we truly are into perspective?
4. Though giving up all non-Christian media is not truly Biblical fasting, how do you think it could play a part in a Believer's consecration experience? In order to truly set ourselves apart unto God, do we need to take a break from these influences?

7

Creating Intimate Encounters With God

We all long for those intimate encounters with our Lord. Those moments where His presence surrounds us, His voice speaks to us and we feel lost in Him.

But, are we willing to develop the spiritual discipline that it takes to set the stage for these powerful experiences. Or, will we allow the stress and busyness of this world to steal the relationship with God we were created for?

God's Word promises us, "I love those who love me, and those who seek me early and diligently shall find me." (Proverbs 8:17 AMP)

That is the decision that we all must make. Whether we will develop the spiritual discipline to diligently seek God- To become true **God Chasers!**

Disciplined Through Spiritual Discipline

Our goal, really, should be to become modern day disciples of Jesus Christ. If you think of the word disciple, and the word discipline, they are very similar.

The Strong's dictionary tells us that the original word translated as disciple meant "learner or pupil." In our modern understanding, we might say a *devout student*.

So, if I am a disciple of Christ, then I am His *devout student*. I diligently study Him, His Words, and His ways. And, if I'm serious about my walk with God, then I must not only become a student of the written Word, but of His Holy Spirit.

Your time of fasting and consecration unto the Lord is the perfect time to develop good spiritual habits. As you discipline yourself to make seeking God more of a part of your daily routine, you will find yourself having more and more transformational encounters with Him.

Remember, if the enemy is trying to convince you that you don't have time to do your spiritual disciplines, that means you don't have time NOT to!

The only way we will ever gain control over our schedules and to-do lists, is to surrender them to the Lord daily. If we acknowledge Him in all our ways, He will direct our path (Proverbs 3:6).

There are many ways to seek after God. Here are just a few *Spiritual Disciplines* that you may want to weave into your special time of fasting and prayer. Prayerfully decide which ones will work best for you.

Meditation: Taking God's Word from Your Head to Your Heart

According to Webster's Dictionary, meditation is "to engage in contemplation or reflection; to focus one's thoughts on: reflect on or ponder over."

The difference between using Christian meditation techniques and pagan meditative practices is revealed when we look at one thing - The focus of those meditative thoughts.

In eastern religions, their focus is emptiness - To totally empty themselves and their minds.

But, the goal of Biblical meditation is exactly the opposite. When we meditate, our goal is not to be made empty, but to be made full.

To be filled to the brim with Christ-The Living Word of God!

We see several occasions in the Bible where God's children are meditating on His goodness, His deeds, and His Word. Here are just a few of the many examples:

*O God, we meditate on your unfailing love
as we worship in your Temple. -Psalm 48:9 (NLT)*

*I will meditate on your majestic, glorious splendor
and your wonderful miracles.
-Psalm 145:5 (NLT)*

But his delight and desire

*are in the law of the Lord,
and on His law (the precepts, the instructions, the teachings of God)
he **habitually meditates** (ponders and studies) by day and by night.
And he shall be like a tree firmly planted [and tended] by the streams of water,
ready to bring forth its fruit in its season;
its leaf also shall not fade or wither;
and everything he does shall prosper
[and come to maturity]
- Psalm 1:2-3 (AMP)*

These children of God are filling their minds with thoughts of Him. I love Psalm 1 because it reveals God's promise for those of us willing to discipline our minds through Bible meditation. It says that we will bear fruit, and that everything we do shall prosper.

Scripture meditations are one of the most effective ways of moving God's Word from your head to your heart.

Your Heavenly Father tells you to:

*Study this Book of Instruction continually.
Meditate on it day and night
so you will be sure to obey everything written in it.
Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.
-Joshua 1:8(NLT)*

We all want the prosperity, but are we willing to do what it takes to get it? Are we willing to develop the spiritual discipline of Bible meditation?

*More instructions on how to do this in the next chapter on planning out your personalized fasting retreat.

Need a Spiritual Detox? Abstain From Non-Christian Media

Why is avoiding different kinds of media something you may want to consider during your fast? Because these outside influences can be a huge distraction, stealing your time, taking your mind off of God, and filling your soul (mind, will, emotions) with the things of this world.

Stop for a moment and think about your typical day. Christians often complain that they just don't know how to fit their time with God into their busy schedules. But, how much time do you spend watching TV, reading the newspaper, on the internet, listening to the radio, etc.? All of these things not only take up valuable time, but they also take up mental space as they fill your mind with things that bear no spiritual fruit.

Our goal during this time is to make more room for God in our lives. What better way to do that than to cut out these things that are not building us up spiritually or bearing good fruit in our lives?

One thing that you could try during your time of consecration, is to replace your usual TV programs, radio stations, etc with Christian alternative that can actually feed you spiritually. Instead of listening to secular music, for example, tune in to a Christian station, play a Christian teaching series, or even listen to the Bible on audio. This sacrifice will help you to keep your mind focused on going deeper in the Lord daily, and keep you safe from avoidable outside distractions.

If you choose not to totally abstain from non-Christian media, you may at least want to limit your intake. Avoid things that you know will not be edifying to you spiritually. Be mindful of the Holy Spirit's guidance, and turn away from things that don't sit right in your spirit man. If it seems even the least bit questionable, don't allow it into your eye gate and ear gate. Keep yourself as pure as possible during this time of seeking the Lord.

Reading and Studying the Word of God

Though this may sound obvious, I wanted to include this in our list of Spiritual Disciplines. Sometimes we can get so used to reading Christian books about what God said that we forget to go back and read what God said for ourselves. If we never do this, all of the Biblical knowledge that we have will simply be second hand.

When we read the Bible for ourselves, it allows us to receive special revelations straight from the Holy Spirit of how to apply that Word to our lives.

Whether you decide to start at the beginning, to select a specific book of the Bible that God has put on your heart, or to use a concordance to study a specific topic, fasting prepares you to have the Word of God come alive in a whole new way. Even if you have had trouble understanding the Bible on your own before, don't be surprised if you find yourself "getting it" for the very first time!

One way to *Maximize Every Moment* of your day, is to listen to the Bible on audio. Rather than have the TV or radio playing in the background, get in an extra dose of the Word! As you hear things that really require more study, stop and make a note of the scriptures so that you can go back and study more thoroughly later on. This should not be your primary method of study, but you'll be surprised how much of the Bible you will cover in just a 20 minute commute to work with this method.

Practicing the Presence of God

Your Heavenly Father promises that He will never leave you or forsake you. That means that every second of every day, He is right there with you. Just like Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the day, you can have that privilege too.

But, many times, we get so caught up in our busy lives that we miss it!

When I say practice His presence, I mean keeping yourself **aware**, at all times, that God's Holy Spirit is right there with you-And **acknowledging** Him!

Just as a silly little example:

Each day, when my son wakes up, we sing a little song I made up. It's simply called *The Good Morning Song*. One verse goes something like this,

♪ “Good morning, Holy Spirit, You’re here too!
Good morning, Holy Spirit, we love You!
Thank You for joining us today!
Your with us today and everyday!” ♪

Now, he's still very young, but I want Him to grow up with the awareness that God's Spirit is with Him. We take the time to acknowledge Him daily because I NEVER want my children to take the presence of God for granted.

Two simple ways for you to practice the presence of God in your own life:

- ✠ Start your day off by smiling and saying, aloud, “Good Morning Holy Spirit!” Then personally invite Him to join you on that day's journey. This is great because it starts your day off by focusing your mind on God. Acknowledging His presence there with you, whether you feel Him there or not, reminds you that God's Word is true, and you are never alone.
- ✠ Stop and talk to Him throughout your day about any and everything. He says that He will be a friend that sticks closer than a brother. Take Him up on that! Chit-chat with Him in the shower, during your morning commute, etc. The more you treat Him like He is really there with you, the more aware you will be aware of His presence in your daily life.

Intense & Intentional Prayer and Worship

Each day during your fast, I encourage you to take some time out to simply *be* with God. It does not have to be an hour every day. If you just committed to setting your alarm clock 15 minutes earlier, by the end of the week you'd have spent almost 2 extra hours with God!

Imagine that! Two hours for you to pour yourself out before Him, and for Him to fill you back up with more of Him. More of His peace. More of His joy. More of His love. Just because you **made** the time.

What do you do in this time? How does one pour themselves out before God? Through intentional prayer and worship.

Whether it's directly out of your mouth, or written down in a journal, it's simply sharing your heart with your Heavenly Father.

How much you *love* Him-Worship. How much you *need* Him-Prayer.

Being totally transparent and totally vulnerable before Him. That is where true intimacy with God begins.

Reflective Journaling: Sharpening Your Spiritual Ears

One way to use your time of fasting to amp up your ability to hear God's voice is to begin **Reflective Journaling**, actively listening and then writing down what you believe God's Spirit is speaking.

Here's How It Works!

- **Prepare**: Get a notebook to use as your prayer journal. Set aside some quiet time for just you and the Lord. Worship music that truly ushers you into God's presence is great, but try to eliminate all other distractions.
- **Pray**: Write out your prayer to the Lord. It can be a specific question you have on your heart, general worship for who He is in your life, or even your reflection on something He's said in His Word. Address your journal entry to God personally, as if you are writing Him a letter or having a personal conversation with Him. Then draw a line.
- **Invite**: Ask God to join in on the conversation, and invite His Holy Spirit to speak directly to you. Then, expect that He will!
- **Listen**: Then, actually stop and practice listening for the voice of God. Be patient. As you wait to hear His voice, just continue in worship and pouring yourself out before Him.
- **Reflect**: Write down whatever you believe you heard from God below the line you drew on your page. Don't be concerned that it may not be right, or it might just be all in your head. This is practice! The more you practice actively listening for the voice of God, the easier it will be to recognize it in your daily life.

This is such a powerful tool to keep in your spiritual growth tool box long after your time of fasting and consecration is over! It will help you sharpen your spiritual ears, and build faith in your ability to hear the voice of God in your daily life.

Putting It All Together: Create Your own Personalized Intimate Encounter with God

What are the top 3 things you would like to get out of your time of fasting and prayer?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

How long will your fasting retreat last? Circle one.

3 Days

7 Days

21 Days

30 Days

60 Days

Other _____

What kind of fast will you complete? Circle one.

Water fast

Daniel fast

Other _____

What Spiritual Disciplines Will You Practice During Your Fast?

These are the things that turn a normal fast into your own in-home fasting retreat. Practicing these disciplines will not only open you up to hear from God in powerful ways, but can also carry over after your fast, as you realize which ones work best for you and your relationship with God. Take the time now to prayerfully create a personalized plan for how you will seek God throughout your fast. Choose as many or as few disciplines as you'd like, then try to stretch yourself by adding one more.

Seeking God Through His Word

- Daily meditating on specific scriptures (recommended).
- Listening to the Bible on Audio
- Reading specific books of the Bible. List Books _____
- Studying a specific topic related to your spiritual growth. List Topic _____
- Other _____

Seeking God Through Fellowship with His Holy Spirit

- Writing in a prayer journal (recommended).
- Using the Reflective Journaling technique.
- Setting aside time for intense intentional prayer.
- Having personal worship time alone with God
- Abstaining from non-Christian media
- Other _____

Daily Scripture Meditation

The only way to see real change in our daily lives is to apply God's Word to it! Your Heavenly Father promises that His Word will not return to Him void, but will accomplish what it is sent forth to accomplish! He says that His Word is your spiritual sword. Christian meditation helps you to weaponize the Word to pull down strongholds in your mind and in your life.

1. Revisit the top three areas you said you wanted to focus on during your fast.
2. Using a concordance or website such as www.BibleGateway.com look up what God has to say about that area.
✠ EXAMPLE: If I am believing God to restore my finances, I may look up words such as *money, provider, provide, care, etc.*
3. Make a list of the scriptures that really speak to your heart. These are the scriptures you will be meditating on throughout your fast.

Scripture Topic Focus #1 _____

List scripture references below:

Scripture Topic Focus #2 _____

List scripture references below:

Scripture Topic Focus #3 _____

List scripture references below:

Using Your Bible Meditations

There are a few ways that you can meditate on your scriptures throughout your fast.

- ✝ **Basic:** Each day, select a verse to be that day's meditation scripture. Write it in your Beyond the Veil Prayer Journal, and/or Daily Schedule sheet (see next page). Periodically, throughout your day, re-focus your thoughts on this scripture. Think about it from different angles. Pray and ask God to make it come alive to you.
- ✝ **Intermediate:** Write your scriptures out on 3X5 cards. Carry them with you, and read them aloud several times a day. Pray the scriptures, and use them to re-focus your thoughts throughout your day.
- ✝ **Next Level Meditation:** Record yourself reading the scriptures aloud. If you have a phone with a voice recorder, this is a great option because you can listen to your scriptures over and over no matter where you are. Remember, faith comes by hearing. Listen to your recorded scriptures every day of your fast.

Tip: When you write out or record your scriptures, personalize them. Replace words like “you” or “they” with “I,” or even with your name. This will help you to truly receive the Word as your own!

Fitting It All In

Fitting in our time with God is a skill we will all have to use long after our time of fasting is over. So, stop and ask yourself now, how will you fit your fasting retreat in with your current schedule?

Will you wake up early? Use your lunch time? Use your car drive to work?

Using the schedule on the next page, create a daily plan based on your typically weekday. Include your chosen spiritual disciplines along with your usual weekday activities.

By planning this out now, you will increase your chance of successfully making room for these powerful encounters with God within your daily routine.

My Fasting Retreat Daily Schedule

Print this daily schedule and create a *Master Schedule* for your fast, based on your typical weekday. Or, print a new schedule for each day to organize your retreat in a way that works best for you. You can even continue using this after your fast to help you keep making room for God in your daily life.

Morning	Time	Task
Afternoon	Time	Task
Evening	Time	Task
Night	Time	Task

My Spiritual Disciplines:

Today's Scripture Focus:

Special Notes: