

WEEK SEVEN: The Power of Doing *God's Chosen Fast*

Throughout the past weeks, we have talked about what can entangle our souls and create toxins in our minds; we've explored the nature of the soul, the properties of thought, the importance of identity, and the power of words. But as we come to the end of our 40-day soul fast campaign, I want to emphasize that above what we think or say, is what we do.

At the epicenter of what Jesus came to teach humanity was the healing power of love. It governed all He did and was the divine force by which He operated. Jesus was moved by love, led by love, empowered by love, endured the cross by love, and by love was resurrected to intercede on our behalf—continually driven by love—at the right hand of Love itself, for “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8,16).

Everything Jesus did was infused with the love of God. He demonstrated how we are to walk in the same kind of love. He filled us with His very own Spirit to lead us in the ways of love and empower us with an ever-increasing capacity to love.

We are told in Corinthians that without love we are nothing. Paul wrote, “*though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith . . . but have not love, I am nothing*” (1 Corinthians 13:2).

It doesn't matter how much you pray, worship, or discipline yourself if you are not walking in the love of God. What you *do* can clutter your soul as much as what you think or say. Your behaviors are just as toxic to your soul as your thoughts.

The purpose of a soul fast is to cleanse your heart and mind of toxic thoughts, words *and* actions, because everything you say *and* do is a result of what is in your heart. Not only that, but your every word and deed—attitude and behavior—either further pollutes or purifies not only your own soul, but also the world around you.

The purpose of fasting in the life of the believer is to take self off the throne and allow God's love to reign there instead.

This is why God was so adamant about the children of Israel rightly understanding the purpose and requirements of His “chosen fast.” He reprimanded the children of Israel through the prophet Isaiah because they fasted in the wrong way and for the wrong



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reasons. In Isaiah 58:6, God asked, “Is this the kind of fast I have chosen?” He challenged them for their fasting of food and their showy self-denial, when He would rather they cleanse their lives of selfishness, self-promotion, pride, and greed.

God wants His people to purify their hearts, not their intestines.

The purpose of fasting in the life of the believer is to take “self” off the throne and allow God’s love to reign there instead.

The practice of self-denial should be evidenced by putting the needs of others before our own, not gossiping, complaining, or blame-shifting, not indulging ourselves in sinful behaviors, not abusing people or taking advantage of them, but by making ourselves available not only to the needy but also to our own families.

In speaking of the great Father of Faith, Abraham, James wrote, “his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete.”

Take a moment to meditate on what God calls His “chosen fast” from Isaiah 58:2-12:

*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!’
‘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.*



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You dress in burlap
 and cover yourselves with ashes.
 Is this what you call fasting?
 Do you really think this will please the Lord?
 “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.
 “Remove the heavy yoke of oppression.
 Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors!
 Feed the hungry,
 and help those in trouble.
 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.
 Some of you will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities.
 Then you will be known as a builder of walls
 and a restorer of homes.

Isaiah is telling us, as Paul told the Galatians, “*faith works through love*” (Galatians 5:6). James told us that if faith “*does not have works (deeds and actions of obedience to back it up), by itself is destitute of power (inoperative, dead)*” (James 2:17 AMP). In speaking of the great Father of Faith, Abraham, James wrote, “*his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete*” (James 2:22 NLT).



**In other words, if we don't walk in the fruit of the Spirit,
then the gifts of the Spirit are of no use.**

Jesus shed new light on what it means to "fulfill the law" and live righteously when He said, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40 NKJV).

This is what we have come to know as "The Law of Love."

Think about God's Chosen Fast in light of 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 MSG:

If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing. If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.

*Love never gives up.
Love cares more for others than for self.
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.
Love doesn't strut,
Doesn't have a swelled head,
Doesn't force itself on others,
Isn't always "me first,"
Doesn't fly off the handle,
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,
Doesn't revel when others grovel,
Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,
Puts up with anything,
Trusts God always,
Always looks for the best,
Never looks back,
But keeps going to the end.*

Love never dies. Inspired speech will be over some day; praying in tongues will end; understanding will reach its limit. We know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete. But when the Complete arrives, our incompletes will be canceled.



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When I was an infant at my mother's breast, I gurgled and cooed like any infant. When I grew up, I left those infant ways for good.

We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us!

But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.

**As our souls prosper,
we will live in health and prosper in every other way.**

In other words, if we don't walk in the fruit of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22), then the gifts of the Spirit are of no use (see 1 Corinthians 12). God seeks to develop our character, not our charisma. God wants us to grow in godliness...or God-likeness...becoming more and more like Him. Peter gave us a step-by-step strategy for growing in love...and therefore God-likeness...from a small seed of faith. Listen to how he explains the process:

“By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life . . . We have received all of this by coming to know him . . . And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins” (2 Peter 1:3-9 NLT).

This is how we prosper our souls. And as our souls prosper, we will live in health and prosper in every other way. (See 3 John 2 AMP.)



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How shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed and keeping watch [on himself] according to Your word.

I ask you, what is the fruit in your life from having gotten all of the junk out of your heart, the clutter out of your mind, and your soul free from entanglements?

What evidence would you expect to see after having cleansed your mind from toxic thoughts, your soul from debilitating attachments, and your heart from unwholesome desires?

- What is different about you as a result of the 40 Day Soul Fast?
- How does a life lived from a detoxed soul look--and how will you keep it that way?

Isaiah 58:6-8 MSG: *This is the kind of fast day I'm after: to break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace, free the oppressed; cancel debts. What I'm interested in seeing you do is: sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families. Do this and the lights will turn on, and your lives will turn around at once.*



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