

## Fast to Draw Closer to Jesus

Deny yourself daily. During the Old Testament holiday called *Yom Kippur*, people were told to “deny themselves” (Lev. 16:29; 23:26-32) and “humble their souls” by fasting (Lev. 16:29; 23:26-32; Nu. 29:7). In the book of Acts, Paul admonished certain sailors with him after “the fast,” which was another name for *Yom Kippur* (Acts 27:9). Believers today are also called upon to deny themselves (Lk. 9:23). This includes fasting: “*Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.*” (Matt. 6:16). Jesus did not talk about “if” you fast. He talked about “when” you fast. Will you deny yourself by fasting?

Fasting helps you to be pure and holy. Today, the temple where the Spirit resides is in your body (1 Cor. 6:19). God cannot use you to transform the world if you are compromised by sin. Thus, you must avoid accommodating the idols of the flesh in your life. If you are in sin, repent. (1 Jo. 1:9). Then, let the Holy Spirit renew your mind (Ro. 12:1-2). God wants you to be pure and holy: “Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.’” (Lev. 19:2; Ex. 22:31; 1 Pet. 1:16; Ep. 1:4). “Therefore, you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matt. 5:48). You can keep yourself pure by guarding your fasting to guard and purify your heart: “Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.” (Prov. 4:23). “Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.” (Dt. 4:9). Job protected his heart by creating a covenant with his eyes: “I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin?” (Job 31:11). Are you fasting to guard and purify your heart?

Moses lived off the Word of God. While on Mount Horeb / Sinai, God revealed His desire for His people to find fulfillment by consuming His Word on a daily basis. Moses miraculously lived for 40 days on only God’s Word: “<sup>27</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.’” <sup>28</sup> So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.” (Ex. 34:27-28). Like Moses, Jesus went without food for 40 days (Matt. 4:2). When Satan tried to tempt Him, Jesus quoted from the Torah, “It is written, ‘man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’” (Matt. 4:4; Dt. 8:3). Jesus is the Word that became flesh that we consume (John 1:14). You should not expect your spiritual needs to be fulfilled by one Sunday sermon snack per week. Are you consuming God’s Word every day?

- Moses’ face shined from God’s shekinah glory. As a direct result of living off God’s Word, God’s light (His *Shekinah* glory) glowed off Moses’ face: “<sup>29</sup> It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses’ hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him. <sup>30</sup> So when Aaron and all the

sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. <sup>31</sup> Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers in the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them. <sup>32</sup> Afterward all the sons of Israel came near, and he commanded them to do everything that the LORD had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. <sup>33</sup> When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. <sup>34</sup> But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, <sup>35</sup> the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. So, Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him.” (Ex. 34:29-35). Like Moses, God's light will shine through you when you consume His Word (Matt. 5:14). Yet, just as the Jews feared Moses' light, many will fear your light because men love darkness (Jo. 1:10; 3:20). “But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.” (2 Cor. 3:14-15). God promises to remove the veil when any turns to Christ: “Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” (2 Cor. 3:16). Are you helping to bring sight to the blind through the light of Christ?

- Depend Upon God to sustain you when you fast. In the wilderness, the angel of the Lord showed compassion for Elijah and provided for him in his time of desperation: “<sup>5</sup> He lay down and slept under a juniper tree; and behold, there was an angel touching him, and he said to him, ‘Arise, eat.’ <sup>6</sup> Then he looked and behold, there was at his head a bread cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. So, he ate and drank and lay down again. <sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, ‘Arise, eat, because the journey is too great for you.’ <sup>8</sup> So he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.” (1 Kgs. 19:5-8). To teach him humble dependence, God previously ministered to Elijah by sending ravens to feed him when he fled from Ahab during the drought (1 Kgs. 17:5-7). Here, to reinforce the message, God again taught Elijah to depend upon Him.
- When you depend upon God, He will provide for your needs and restore you. When Elijah suffered and felt defeated, God taught Elijah to depend upon Him by sending the angel of the Lord to feed Elijah for 40 days and nights in the wilderness. The number 40 is associated with God's testing. God tested Moses and taught him dependence when He twice provided for Moses on Mount Sinai / Horeb for 40 days and nights (Ex. 24:18; 34:28; Dt. 9:9, 18). God also tested and provided for Jesus in the wilderness for 40 days and nights (Matt. 4:2; Lk. 4:1-2). God also tested and taught the Jews to depend upon Him by feeding them for 40 years in the wilderness (Ex. 16:35; Dt. 8:2). God further ministered to Elijah the same way His angels ministered to Jesus (Matt. 4:11). The destination of Elijah's journey, Horeb / Sinai, was the same place where God met Moses and where He gave Moses the Ten Commandments (Ex. 3:1; Lev. 27:34).