

# Fasting with POWER



*Fasting is a principle of power. It changes lives.*

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Of the Seventy

What if there were a way to overcome our habits, addictions, and burdens? What if there were a way to gain sufficient confidence in the Lord that you could call down the powers of heaven? What if there were principles you could teach your loved ones that, if applied, would allow them to overcome personal weaknesses and draw closer to God?

As we properly understand and live the law of the fast, these desired blessings can be ours.

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?” (Isaiah 58:6).

Our Father will free us from the bands of wickedness, He will lift our heavy burdens, and He will let the oppressed go free. In fact He promises to empower us to break every yoke. What an enabling promise, to have the power to break every yoke!

Proper and consistent fasting can help us overcome sins, bad habits, and addictions. Is there any of us who would not want to be



freed from the personal burdens we carry? Fasting allows us to avail ourselves of this cleansing and purifying power.

The key is to develop the faith and spiritual strength necessary to receive the blessings of fasting. How do we do that?

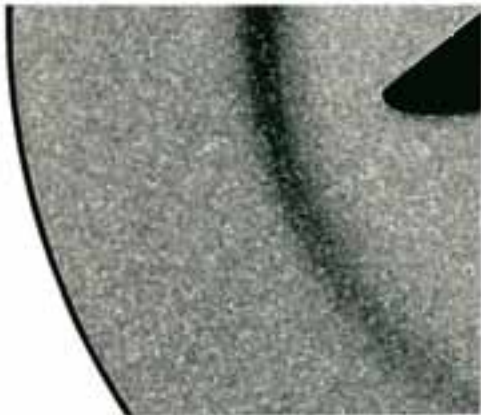
## Developing Spiritual Strength

To develop spiritual strength, we need to do our part. If we are not willing to work and be obedient, we should not expect the miracle. In my experience, miracles are always found through obedience and hard work.

A person who can discipline himself to fast on a regular basis in the way God has designed can resist every temptation, overcome any burden, and become free from any yoke.

Paul said, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

An omniscient Father in Heaven has provided “every needful thing” (D&C 88:119) so that His children can call upon Him with



confidence and feel His love. He provides tools to allow us to overcome the temptations that beset “the natural man” (Mosiah 3:19). One of the most powerful and often-neglected tools that God has given us is the law of the fast.

As we better understand and use this tool as Father in Heaven intended, it will change our lives. We will then be able to go to the Lord in confidence and call down the powers of heaven.

My desire is to help each of us understand and receive the blessings and power that

God intends to give us through the exercise of this powerful tool. A true fast, however, requires more than just going without food, as the following principles illustrate.

**Principle 1: A generous fast offering blesses others.**

When we bless others, God blesses us. Isaiah teaches the principle of fast offerings. He teaches us that to receive promised power and blessings, we must not only fast but also care for the poor and needy.

We qualify for God’s promised blessings

**I**saiah teaches us that to receive promised power and blessings, we must not only fast but also help care for the poor and needy by donating a generous fast offering.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JERRY GARNIS

will hear our prayers. We can approach Him with complete faith and confidence. Our hunger will be satisfied with the bread of life; our thirst will be quenched with the living water that never fails.

“Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the

finger, and speaking vanity; . . .

“And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not” (Isaiah 58:9, 11).

and power as we care for all of His children in accordance with the fast He has chosen. “Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?” (Isaiah 58:7).

Isaiah 58:10 teaches the same fast offering principle: “And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday.”

### **Principle 2: Fasting invites enlightenment and the companionship of the Holy Ghost.**

The Lord promises not only the power to overcome all of our sins but also light, health, and righteousness in our lives. And, just as with the children of Israel, He promises that His glory will surround and protect us.

“Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward” (Isaiah 58:8).

In the following verses we receive the promise that He

### **Principle 3: Fasting helps us subdue the natural man.**

Fasting requires discipline. Fasting helps us accomplish one of the vital purposes of life: developing self-mastery.

King Benjamin referred to this self-mastery as overcoming the natural man. He taught that the natural man is an enemy to God, always has been, and ever will be. If we don't overcome the natural man in this life and become “a saint through the atonement of Christ” (Mosiah 3:19), we will never live with our Father in Heaven again. Our physical bodies are created in such a way that we can have a spiritual victory over the natural man each time we properly fast.

“When a person starts a fast, biochemical adjustments begin in the bloodstream to compensate for the lack of food. A carbohydrate substance known as glycogen is released from storage areas in the liver and the muscles. The body uses glycogen as food to keep cells supplied with energy. After 24 hours this food source is used up, and another source of energy is needed.





## HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Invite your family to come to the dinner table. Before you eat, ask the following question: What is the difference between fasting and going hungry? Consider sharing Dr. Heyden's comments on physical changes that come after fasting for 24 hours.

2. During dinner review the five principles of fasting. Consider choosing one of the suggestions in "Principles of the Fast" and implementing it into your next fast.

3. Discuss with family members what can make fasting difficult and share ideas of how to make it a positive experience. Conclude by listing the blessings that come from fasting.

### Principles of the Fast.

How do we incorporate these principles into our fast? Consider the following suggestions, which could help us put off the natural man and claim the promised blessings and miracles from our Father in Heaven:

- As a fast day approaches, think about a purpose for your fast. That purpose could be as simple as expressing thanks.
- Begin your fast by praying. Talk with Heavenly Father and share with Him the purpose of

"Dr. Siegfried Heyden of Duke University's Department of Community and Family Medicine says when this happens, the body starts looking for other energy sources. 'The first thing happening after a 24-hour fast is the breakdown of fat cells. And these fat cells, when they break down, produce ketone bodies, as they are called. And these ketone bodies seem to have an effect on our psyche in that they make us no longer hungry.'"<sup>1</sup>

After 24 hours without food or drink, the body (the natural man) submits to the spirit (the spiritual man). When the spiritual man is victorious, we experience greater sensitivity to the influence of the Holy Ghost.

### Principle 4: Fasting intensifies prayer.

In the scriptures I have found at least 49 references to fasting—25 of those link fasting to prayer. Proper fasting magnifies our ability to pray, study, and teach.

### Principle 5: Fasting prepares us to bear testimony.

President Henry B. Eyring has taught:

"The fast also helps us to feel humble and meek so that the Holy Ghost may more easily be our companion. By our fast, we both keep our covenant to care for others and we prepare to keep our covenant to bear testimony.

"Those who have prepared carefully for the fast and testimony meeting won't need to be reminded how to bear testimony should they feel impressed to do it in the meeting. They won't give sermons nor exhortations nor travel reports nor try to entertain as they bear witness. Because they will have already expressed appreciation to people privately, they will have less need to do it publicly. Neither will they feel a need to use eloquent language or to go on at length."<sup>2</sup>

your fast (see D&C 59:14).

- Fast for two meals, or about 24 hours. (Those with medical concerns should follow doctors' orders). Whenever hunger pains come, use them as a reminder to pray again about the purpose of your fast.
- Give a generous fast offering.
- If you feel impressed to do so, bear your testimony in fast and testimony meeting.
- During the time you would have spent preparing food and eating, engage in worthy pursuits such as studying the scriptures, writing in your journal, or serving others.
- After Sunday meetings, end your fast by praying.
- Commit to being a better person, and make plans with God on how you will improve.

Fasting is a principle of power. It changes lives. I testify that God is mindful of the fasting and prayers of all of His children, young and old. He loves us. He wants us to return to His presence. He is our father, Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer, and His Atonement is real. They have provided "every needful thing" (D&C 88:119) to allow us to "break every yoke" (Isaiah 58.6) and return home. ■

### NOTES

1. In "Fasting," from *Times and Seasons*, cassette tape series (1991).
2. Henry B. Eyring, "Witnesses for God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 32.