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YOU TOO CAN FAST

Food is so important to most people that when they hear the word “fasting”, their first thought is, “Not me. I don’t think I can ever fast.”

I remember teaching a Bible college course on fasting and telling the students that since fasting is an integral discipline in Christian life, they must have the practical as well as the theory on fasting. A student will only be given a distinction if he completes a 3-day fast taking water only.

You should have seen the look on their faces. Immediately, they came up with all the excuses they could think of. I told them they could come and see me if they had any problems. Of course, quite a number of them did come.

One said, “I cannot fast because if I don’t eat, I feel very dizzy and might even faint.”

I told her, “Good. Then you should fast and get the spirits of dizziness and fainting out of your body.”

Another said, “I cannot fast because I have gastritis.”

I told him, “Then you must really fast because fasting will get all the toxins out of your stomach.”

To the one who said, “I’m too weak to fast”, I said, “Fasting will make your spirit strong so that you can be more sensitive to the Lord.”

The next person told me, “I’m so used to eating that I simply cannot go without food. I just love to eat.”

I replied, **“Learn to subdue your flesh. Don’t let it dictate to you. Cast out the spirit of gluttony and allow your spirit man to rise up. Be led of the Spirit, not your flesh. There’s nothing wrong with enjoying eating but to allow the flesh to control you is not healthy for your Christian life.”**

The students thought I was just being mean.

I said, “It’s okay with me if you don’t fast the three days. You won’t get your distinction, that’s all.” Because they wanted a distinction, most of them were compelled to fast. **Praise God, they went through the fast and made breakthroughs in their lives.**

Here are some comments from their reports:

“I thought you were so cruel but now I thank God that you gave us no choice. After fasting, I feel so much lighter. My mind is so much clearer and all my gastritis is gone.”

“I did not know I could survive without food for three whole days.”

“I thank God for the fast. I am delivered of giddiness.”

“For years, I suffered from backache/arthritis/migraine. Now it’s gone.”

The enemy will use all tactics and suggest all excuses to prevent you from fasting. He knows what fasting can do for you.

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? (Is 58:6)

It is not whether you can or cannot fast. It is whether you want to or not, a matter of choice. Will you still allow the flesh to dictate to you, or will you learn to subdue the flesh, allow your spirit man to rise and eventually, learn to live by the spirit?

No one can give any excuse.

As a cup bearer, Nehemiah's duty was to taste the king's wine. Yet he immediately began to fast and pray when he heard the terrible news about Jerusalem.

And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven. (Neh 1:4)

Nehemiah could have made a good excuse for not fasting. His job demanded that he taste the king's food and wine to test if they were poisoned. Moreover, he was expected to be always cheerful before the king. But Nehemiah was so overwhelmed by the distressing news that he forgot himself. **His people and his nation were more important to him.**

Nehemiah was that one man whom God was looking for. He took the burden of the Lord upon himself. He wept and mourned, fasted and prayed for many days, not for himself but for Jerusalem. If this displeased the king, Nehemiah could have lost his life. Yet Nehemiah stood in the gap. He repented before God for the sins of his people.

God intervened and moved the king's heart to favour Nehemiah. The king sovereignly released Nehemiah from his post as cup bearer and made him governor of Judah for 12 years (Neh 5:14).

Despite opposition, conspiracy and great difficulties, Nehemiah completed the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem within 52 days. (Please read the book of Nehemiah).

How did he do it? Through fasting and prayer, through humbling himself before his God.

Oh, people of God, if only we would put God's interest above ours. If only we know how powerful our God is. He is just waiting for us to be available for Him to move through us to fulfil His divine purpose. **If only we know how He longs to see the broken walls of our lives, the church and the nation rebuilt from the ruins caused by the enemy.** We would surely rise up to answer His heart's cry.

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. (Ezek 22:30)

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. (2 Chr 7:14)

Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. (Ps 2:8)

Some people are afraid to fast because they are afraid their bodies would be affected. Little do they realise that the body can actually go without food and water for three days. It can go for 40 days without food but not without water unless divinely led of the Holy Spirit. Moses neither ate nor drank for 40 days, twice. He was in the very presence of God, directly in the presence of life, for God is life. **We can do without food but we cannot do without God.**

Fasting appears difficult because eating is a natural habit. Some people eat to live but others live to eat. But fasting is actually a healthy discipline for the body. The body needs rest from food. It needs cleansing. Not eating

releases toxins from the body. Overeating has also caused death. Paul spoke of people whose belly had become their god (Phil 3:19).

In fact, **the first sin against God involved eating.** The first of the three temptations Satan hurled at Jesus was about food (Luke 4:3-4). **Esau lost his birthright because of eating.** The children of Israel, though delivered out of Egypt, grumbled and complained as they dreamt of food from the land in which they had been in bondage (Ex 16:2-3; Num 11:4-6).

How ungrateful and deceived they were. They were fed angels' food (Ps 78:25) from heaven yet they craved for food from Egypt rather than for God's divine supply.

Every Christian must learn how to discipline the body. What better way than through fasting? Of course, do not be too ambitious and fast 40 days straight away unless God divinely speaks to you. Start by fasting one meal, then two meals, then the whole day.

This will give you more time to spend with God. You can then **subdue your flesh and begin to feed your spirit man.** Read the Bible, pray and worship God. Listen to worship and sermon tapes. Begin to tune yourself to God.

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24, NKJV)

We are actually spirit, soul and body (1 Thess 5:23). That was God's original order. That's why Adam and Eve could have fellowship with God.

Before the fall, man was led by the Spirit. After the fall, the Spirit of God departed from man. The body took prominence. Man was governed by the five senses: see, touch, smell, taste and hear. He became a natural being instead of a spiritual being.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor 2:14)

Jesus redeemed us and made our spirit alive unto God. Man could once again resume relationship with God. **By the power of God, man is once again to live by the Spirit, filled, empowered and led by Him.**

Fasting sets us free from all our past bondage. It assists us to learn how to allow the spirit, not the flesh, take control again. Why? Because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:50).

Every man and woman who has moved the hand of God to touch nations has used this ultimate weapon against the enemy i.e., fasting and prayer. Hudson Taylor went as a missionary to China and founded the China Inland Mission. David Brainerd went as a missionary to the Native Americans. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, fasted twice a week, Wednesday and Friday.

The great reformer, Martin Luther, was a devoted Catholic priest who felt such guilt and condemnation. Through fasting and prayer, he received the revelation that “justification is by faith alone and not by works.” He boldly posted his 95 theses on the door of Wittenberg Castle, was forced to break away from the Catholic church and led a powerful Protestant movement.

7-Day Fasting and Prayer For The Nation

I believe with all my heart that the prayers of the saints, intensified by fasting, have kept our nation intact. **God had in many instances alerted us to fast and pray for the nation and when we did, He had sovereignly intervened to avert imminent danger.**

I remember many years ago when I was still a pastor in Full

Gospel Assembly, Kuala Lumpur that the Lord impressed upon my heart that we should proclaim seven days of fasting and prayer in the church. We were to disband all other meetings and call a solemn assembly, as in Joel.

Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. (Joel 2:12)

Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. (Joel 2:15)

I brought this matter up to the elders and, praise God, although some leaders were a bit apprehensive at first, they prayerfully gave the green light to proceed. **It was an awesome seven days.**

For the first time in the history of the church, we were proclaiming a 7-day 24-hour fast. People would be taking turns to pray throughout the seven days, non-stop. I really want to praise God for moving the hearts of the elders, pastors, leaders and in fact, the whole church to come together for this important event. All the respective congregations - the English, Bahasa, Chinese and Tamil, including the Youth, the Sunday School the Home Fellowships, etc.,- took part in this memorable event.

Before the fast, we prepared the hearts of the people so that they would be excited about the fast. For more than a month, all the Sunday messages were geared to prayer and fasting. **The people were taught how to fast and given their choice of fast.** Some attempted fasting one meal a day, some two meals and some fasted the whole day from morning till evening. **Some fasted several days at a stretch.** All were encouraged to fast all seven days if they could.

A chart was drawn up to schedule the people into eight prayer slots of three hours each, with intercessors backing up

every prayer slot. The schedule was as follows:

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|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. 12am – 3am | 5. 12noon – 3pm |
| 2. 3am – 6am | 6. 3pm – 6pm |
| 3. 6am – 9am | 7. 6pm – 9pm |
| 4. 9am – 12noon | 8. 9pm – 12am |

Corporate prayer meetings were held every night from 8.00pm till 12.00am. The fast began with great enthusiasm on a Sunday evening. All the congregations came together to fast and pray. We began with the elders, pastors, oversight members, heads of departments and home fellowship leaders humbling ourselves before the Lord with confession of sins, corporate repentance and prayer at the altar in the Sanctuary. We then adjourned upstairs to the chapel where the prayer shifts began.

I was so excited and encouraged at the cooperation and response of the elders, leaders and the whole church that I determined to park myself in the church all seven days and seven nights. Thirty other intercessors who also hungered for God and His presence joined me and we made the chapel our home for seven days. **The only time we took a break to go home was when we really had to take a shower.** When we needed to rest or sleep, we just lay down in the presence of God, sometimes prostrating ourselves, sometimes sleeping behind the projector screen. We fasted the first three days on water then, for the remaining four days, took glucose or even clear *ikan bilis* (anchovies) soup.

We ended corporately with high praise and worship, thanksgiving and taking the spoils from the enemy. While the high praise and worship continued in the sanctuary, 12 teams were sent out to take the city by faith for two hours. They went out in vans to pray around Kuala Lumpur and the Klang Valley.

Each team of eight was led by a pastor and included a driver, a worship leader and intercessors.

They came back rejoicing. Many testified that they had driven through the city many times before but this time, it was different. Why? Because they went round the city for God, with His purpose in mind. **The 7-days fasting and prayer gave them the opportunity to subdue their flesh so that their spirit became more sensitive to the spiritual things around them.**

We had powerful testimonies of people experiencing the reality of God in their lives, the joys of breaking through in fasting and being delivered from personal bondage. Many others were set free from their past hurts, restored in relationships and physically healed.

A very significant testimony

On their fasting and prayer drives around the city, the teams had blessed all the churches and prayed around the temples that the people would come to know the true and living God. One of the teams drove past a very big temple in Kuala Lumpur and saw a lot of people going there. I told the team leader that we should really pray for them, perhaps even be at the door to hand the people tracts. That was on Saturday night.

To our great delight, a Chinese full-time worker told me later that the next day, **a nun from the same temple had come to the church because she was concerned for her four adopted sons.** She wanted them to attend Sunday School and be taught how to be good children. She wanted to prevent them from mixing with gangsters and drug addicts, and was confident that from attending the Christian Chinese Sunday school, they would grow up to be better people.

When I heard the news, I was overjoyed and thanked the

Lord for His greatness. **We were wondering how to reach out to the people who frequent the temple and now, through fasting and prayer, God gave us a very big bonus. Even the nun herself had been touched by God.** Instead of our going out to reach her, she came and brought her adopted sons to the church. Hallelujah! All glory and honour be to the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. The Lord of Glory is He. What is impossible becomes possible when we intensify our prayers with fasting.

One of the sisters from our Saturday Intercessory group had taken seven days' leave to join the group who stayed in church during the fast. She desired to go full-time but did not dare tell her widowed mother who needed her support. She worked as a secretary. She was trying to reach out to her non-Christian family but had great difficulty.

Immediately after the fast, however, her brother-in-law brought her whole family to the healing and deliverance service. Many of them got saved. Her greatest joy was when her mother gave her the blessing to go full-time for the Lord. She is now married to a church elder whom she met while serving the Lord in a mission agency. The Lord has blessed them with a baby and they are currently serving God overseas. Praise the Lord.

At the time, several nations in Asia were facing great turmoil: earthquake, volcano eruption, landslides, water shortage, etc. **The Lord in His mercy was reminding us not to wait for disaster to happen before we start to fast and pray.** We must fast so that there will be protection and breakthrough into the spiritual realm for our nation. We must fast for churches to set aside their differences and come together to pray for revival, for people to turn to the Lord.

Praise the Lord that after the fast, we saw God raise a greater awareness of prayer. He opened the door for me to

be invited to serve as Prayer Secretary in the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF). **The church kindly seconded me there to do God's will.** By His grace, God gave me the opportunity to mobilise Christians throughout the nation to pray. **A prayer movement began in Malaysia.**

We suddenly realised that all around the world, the Lord by His Spirit was stirring His people to return to the basics, i.e., back to prayer. Thank God He opened the door for us to network with the United Prayer Track and AD 2000 & Beyond. At the same time, the Discipling A Whole Nation (DAWN) movement also started, for church planting undergirded by prayer.

Malaysia was never the same after that milestone 7-days fasting and prayer. A great awareness of the need for prayer suddenly arose. Many churches had a greater desire to move their people to pray. Many intercessors were raised up. **The church in Malaysia embarked on a national prayer movement which is still gathering momentum today.** For this, I have to really thank God.

I take this opportunity to thank all the elders, pastors, intercessors from different backgrounds, churches and denominations for their cooperation, encouragement and prayers; for taking time to host the prayer seminars and prayer meetings; for being a part of the great work that God has called us to together. (Some have even gone on to be with the Lord).

Indeed, this is not the work of one man or woman but the work of God. Without each other, we will not be able to fulfil what God wants us to do. Much is still to be done but I believe that with prayer and cooperation, God is able to see us through. **With much fasting and prayer, we will be able to win Malaysia for the Lord.**

On 25 June 1994, the "Day To Change The World" prayer

day, people from different countries linked up through praying together at the same time. That whole day was designated for prayer. Once again, God by His grace gave me the opportunity as Prayer Secretary of DAWN and NECF to mobilise the nation of Malaysia to pray, under the DAWN umbrella. I really thank God for the state, city and town prayer coordinators. They were such a blessing to the nation, and to me.

To involve as many churches and Christians as possible, we used creative ways of praying. Instead of congregating in church for prayer meetings, we did prayer journeys, prayer drives, prayer walks, concerts of prayer, overnight prayer, 3-day fasting and prayer, etc.

North, south, east and west, prayer groups travelled by train, by bus, by boat and other means to saturate Malaysia with prayer. In East Malaysia, we encouraged some brothers to scuba dive and others to climb Mount Kinabalu while praying and proclaiming the Lordship of Christ over our nation.

As for me, by God's grace I was able to take a team driving around Malaysia to pray. We took five days to cover the whole nation (represented by the peninsular) and came back exactly on the eve of the great "Day To Change The World". The church had also fasted three days, ending on the same day.

God gave me the privilege of flying over Kuala Lumpur and the Klang Valley to pray. Twenty-one pastors and some intercessors gathered at the airport to worship. Then we took turns by groups of three to fly and pray one round over the area in a 4-seater plane which a Christian pilot had helped us to charter. Meanwhile, the others stayed on base praying and worshipping. I was in the last group and we flew seven rounds over the area, just as Joshua and the children of Israel marched round Jericho seven times on the seventh day (Jos 6:15).

It was a real experience for me because I was in

intensive prayer warfare at the time. I was physically attacked by the enemy and nearly died but thanks be to God, **He causes us to triumph over every power of the enemy.**