

ABC OF FASTING AND PRAYER

*“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?” **Isaiah 58:6***

*“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.” **Matthew 17:21***

*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***

Introduction: While sickness management is the focus of medical practitioners, healing and miracles are solely God’s business. It takes action of faith, like fasting and prayer to supernaturally commit God to turn around our natural situations. And the good news is that with God, nothing shall be impossible!

Do not get me wrong, medical science and medical practitioners’ are great blessings to mankind. Doctors and Hospitals as a matter of fact started as a part of Church pastoral care. Doctor means a “teacher”, and has its root in the same place as “doctrine” which means “teaching”. “Hospital” has its root alongside “hospitality”, the practice of welcoming people in need. Clean white sheets, coats etc. now used by medical science practitioners originates from Church use of white as symbol of holiness. However, over the last generation or two, both doctors and hospitals have been professionalized and secularized that one can hardly trace their origin to Christianity again.

It is such a pity that many people ignorantly cease to trust power of God and simply put all their hopes on hospitals. It is a pity that such people hardly return to Church for prayer and healing. Such people forget that at its very best, that medical science is limited to human abilities and capacities. The supernatural power of God, in the contrary, is unlimited by human technology, civilization or wisdom. Regardless of your condition, situation and practical facts on the ground, the power of God is able to turn your situation around if only you can exercise your faith. Wise people will have no problem to enjoy the blessing of faith and medical science together since God is the source of both. Medical and spiritual healing should never be seen as a monopoly of medical profession or Church but as an act of God requiring sometimes the co-operation of man.

For those who have faith, healing is easily obtainable through fasting and prayer and the anointed prayers of Church elders. For those with less faith in Church institution and more trust in medical science, God can still release same healing through medical treatment. It is however very important to understand that God is the source of healing and that He works through both medical and theological knowledge to heal. He simply cannot be contained in one box. For believers, coming to the church, prayer is a vital step to receive divine intervention in our cases of weakness and sickness. Fasting and prayer is surely a faith process meant to secure divine intervention in any area of human needs when all our human efforts become limited and fruitless.

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1) TYPES OF FASTING

According to Wikipedia, "*Fasting is primarily the act of willingly abstaining from some or all food, drink, or both, for a period of time. An absolute fast is normally defined as abstinence from all food and liquid for a defined period, usually a single day (24 hours), or several days.* Otherwise, fasts may be only partially restrictive, limiting particular foods or substance. The fast may also be intermittent in nature. Fasting practices may preclude sexual intercourse and other activities as well as food."

- a. **Partial Fast:** Abstinence from food but with consumption of water, fruit or vegetables.
 - Many people doing hard job or having health problem practice this.
- b. **Normal or Absolute Fast:** Abstinence from food, water and drinks till up to 24 hours.
- c. **Dry Fast:** This is the absolute fast multiplied by some number of days.
 - Many people practice three days dry fast for deliverance purpose.

Watch-out: Depending on your body chemistry, individual lifestyle, health issues, goals, and body chemistry, different methods of fasting will be appropriate for different people.

2) TYPES OF PRAYER

What differentiates a believer's prayer from that of non-believer is the fact that it is offered in faith to the Lord. There are also many types of prayers – which we often mix together depending on the situation. Let's look at some of these prayers we daily offer in faith to the Lord.

a) PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. Ps 100:4

Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. Phil 4:6

b) PRAYER OF SUBMISSION

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Matt 6:10

Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. Luke 22:42

c) PRAYER OF AGREEMENT

Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. Matt 18:18-19

d) PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

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 Chron. 7:14

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. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD. Ezek. 22:30-31

e) SUPPLICATION AND PETITION

And now, O Lord GOD, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue forever before thee: for thou, O Lord GOD, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed forever. 2 Sam 7:28-29

And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. Dan 9:3

f) PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

And ye shall not go out of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation in seven days, until the days of your consecration be at an end: for seven days shall he consecrate you. Lev 8:33

3) PRACTISING ANOINTED PRAYER

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. James 5:14-15 (KJV)

The anointing and the laying of hands of the elders of the church can bring about supernatural healing. The earlier practice of early Churches is to seek healing of members through anointed prayer. Anointed prayer does what God can do. Why? Because it is God that does it.

- By anointing someone in the name of the Lord we are asking God to heal such person.
- The same way we receive salvation by faith through prayer are we to expect healing through anointed prayer. Psalm 103.1-5.
- Elijah's prayer exemplifies how powerful and effective a righteous person's prayers can be. James 5:17-18

4) ACCESSORIES TO FASTING & PRAYER

For maximum impact, we need to pray with:

- a) The Word of God
 - "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out...." Proverbs 26:20
- b) Faith in God
 - *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Heb 11:6*
- c) Praise and worship.
 - Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. Ps 100:4 (KJV)
- d) Holy Ghost.
 - *He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself... 1 Cor. 14:4 (1 Cor.14:14, 18; Jude 1:20)*
- e) Church and family fellowship
 - *After they had prayed, the meeting place shook. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and bravely spoke God's message. Acts 4: 31*
- f) Praying with love. Rom 8:35-37f
 - *Faith which worketh by love Gal. 5:6*

5) PURPOSE OF FASTING AND PRAYER

- a. Fasting is an expression of faith. We abstain from usual lifestyle of eating and drinking for spiritual purpose of permitting the spiritual man to connect with God easily. Where fasting is not used for praying, word study and other spiritual purpose, it has become starving or act of physical fitness.
- b. Fasting and prayer are means of spiritual discipline. Matt. 6: 5-8,16-18.
- c. Fasting and prayer is an avenue for spiritual relaxation and empowerment. Is 40:31
- d. Prayer is foremost a holy communion between God and His righteous creatures. James 5:16
- e. Prayer is a partnership tool utilised by a redeemed man to effect God's purpose. 2 Chron. 7:14
- f. Prayer is taking back the word of God to Him for confirmation. Jer.29:11-12
- g. Prayer is an earthly demand tool for heavenly supply. Matt. 7:7
- h. Prayer is a means of exercising our faith in the Lord. Mark 11:22-24
- i. Prayer is a means of exercising our authority in the Lord. Matt 18:18-20
- j. Prayer is a means of securing heavenly provision for our earthly needs John 14:13-14
- k. Prayer is God's mandate for a redeemed man to exercise dominion over the earth. Ps 82:6-8
- l. Prayer is believers' authority to destroy the oppression of the enemy. Job 22:28; Ps 18:44-45