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The 9 Fruits Of Holy Spirit

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Consecrated, Contemplative Prayer – The Fasted Life by James W. Goll

The Origins of Fasting

A. From the Old Testament

1. The Life of Moses

The first mention of the discipline of fasting in Scripture is the 40-day fast of Moses when God met with him on Sinai (see Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9). There he received directions about building the tabernacle and the Ten Commandments. Moses did a second 40-day fast (see Deuteronomy 9:18) during the time the tablets of stone were replaced.

2. Historical Development

The verb "fasting" comes from the Hebrew term tsum, which refers to self-denial. The noun, tsum, means voluntary abstinence from food. Most scholars believe fasting began as a loss of appetite during times of great distress and pressure.

- a. Hannah – She was greatly distressed due to her barrenness and "wept and did not eat" (I Samuel 1:7).*
- b. King Ahab – When he failed to purchase Naboth's*

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vineyard he "would eat no food" (I Kings 21:4).

c. David – David used fasting to express his grief at Abner's death (see II Samuel 3:35).

3. Day of Atonement – The Required Fast

The only required yearly fast was on the Day of Atonement when the High Priest would offer acts of sacrifice for the sins of the people (see Leviticus 16:11,15,21,29). Leviticus 16:29 states, "This shall be a permanent statute for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall humble your souls, and not do any work..." The people fasted for self-examination and to demonstrate remorse.

4. Expression of Grief and Desperation



Fasting became a natural expression of human grief and a custom to fend off the anger of God. Eventually, fasting became a way for making one's petition effective to God. (Photo courtesy: Marc Israel Sellem)

When fasting became a national call, it was used to seek divine favor, protection, or to circumvent the historical judgment of God. Therefore, it became a normal practice for a group of people to combine confession of sin, sorrow, and intercession with fasting.

B. From the New Testament

1. By the Pharisees

It is believed that the Pharisees fasted Tuesdays and Thursdays of each week. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men – extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke 18:11,12).

2. By Disciples of John the Baptist

John the Baptist was a Nazarite from birth (see Numbers 6:2-8; Luke 1:15-17) who came in the spirit of Elijah. A Nazarite was "a person of the vow." Fasting was a part of his lifestyle. Therefore, His disciples followed in His example of sacrificial living (see Matthew 9:14-15).

3. By Jesus Christ

Jesus began His public ministry with an extended fast. He also observed the Jewish yearly fast on the Day of Atonement as part of His heritage. But Jesus gave little specific recorded guidelines to His disciplines concerning fasting. He taught that their fasting should be different from that of the Pharisees in order to be seen by God and not to impress men (see Matthew 6:16-18).

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4. The Early Church

The Early Church practiced fasting, especially when ordaining elders or setting people apart to a special task or ministry (see Acts 13:2). Fasting was also practiced by Paul and other Christian leaders regularly (see I Corinthians 7:5; II Corinthians 6:5).

C. Accounts from Church History

1. Epiphanius – Bishop of Salamis born in 315 A.D.

Early in Church history, Christians began fasting twice a week, choosing Wednesdays and Fridays to prevent being confused with Pharisees, who fasted Tuesdays and Thursdays. Epiphanius stated, "Who does not know that the fast of the fourth and sixth days of the week are observed by Christians throughout the world?"

2. In Preparation of Special "Holy Days"

The practice of fasting for several days before Easter to prepare spiritually for the celebration of Jesus' resurrection was also practiced. Later, this was turned into a time of special seeking of God's face during the time of Lent – a 40-day period prior to Easter. Partial fasting was typically observed. Fasting was also encouraged in the second and third centuries of the Church as preparation for water baptism.

3. Fasting In Revival Movements

The discipline of fasting has long been associated with reforms and revivalistic movements throughout Church history. The founders of the monastic movements practiced fasting as a regular part of their lifestyle. Each of the 16th century reformers (and those earlier) also practiced fasting, as did the leaders of the evangelical great awakenings. John Wesley would not ordain a man to ministry unless he fasted two days every week. Jonathan Edwards was known to have fasted before God before he released his now famous message "Sinners in Hands of an Angry God."

*During the Layman's Prayer Revival in North America in 1859, Christians fasted during their lunch hours and attended prayer meetings. **This prayer revival broke out in the large industrial cities of the northeast part of the United States and spread across North America.***



If Charles Finney, noted revivalist, felt the Spirit's anointing lift off his life and preaching, he would retreat and fast till it (He) returned!

Nine Biblical Fasts

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The following material is inspired from the writings of Elmer L. Towns in his book "Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough."

A. The Disciples Fast

1. Purpose: *"To loose the bands of wickedness" (Isaiah 58:6 KJV) – freeing ourselves and others from addictions to sin.*
2. Key Verse: *Matthew 17:21 (KJV) – "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."*
3. Background: *Jesus cast out a demon from a boy whom the disciples had failed to help. Apparently they had not taken seriously enough the way satan had his claws set in the youth. The implication is that Jesus' disciples could have performed this exorcism had they been willing to undergo the discipline of fasting. Modern disciples also often make light of "besetting sins" that could be cast out if we were serious enough to take part in such a self-denying practice as fasting – hence the term "Disciple's Fast."*

B. The Ezra Fast

1. Purpose: *To "undo the heavy burdens" (Isaiah 58:6 KJV) – to*  *Undo the heavy burden solve problems, inviting the Holy Spirit's aid in lifting loads and overcoming barriers that keep ourselves and our loved ones from walking joyfully with the Lord.*
2. Key Verse: *Ezra 8:23 – "So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer."*
3. Background: *Ezra the priest was charged with restoring the Law after Babylonian captivity. Despite this permission, Israel's enemies opposed them. Burdened with embarrassment about having to ask the Persian King for an army to protect them, Ezra fasted and prayed for an answer.*

C. The Samuel Fast

1. Purpose: *"To let the oppressed (physically and spiritually) go free" (Isaiah 58:6) – for revival and soul-winning, to identify with people everywhere enslaved literally or by sin and to pray to be used of God to bring people out of the kingdom of darkness and into God's marvelous light.*
2. Key Verse: *I Samuel 7:6 – "So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and they fasted that day, and said there, 'We have sinned against the Lord...'"*

3. *Background: Samuel led God's people in a fast to celebrate the return of the Ark of the Covenant from its captivity by the Philistines, and to pray that Israel might be delivered from the sin that allowed the Ark to be captured in the first place.*

D. The Elijah Fast

1. *Purpose: To "break every yoke" (Isaiah 58:6) – conquering the mental and emotional problems that would control our lives, and returning the control to the Lord.*

2. *Key Verse: I Kings 19:4,8 – "He himself went a day's journey into the wilderness...he arose and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights..."*

3. *Background: Although Scripture does not call this a formal "fast," Elijah deliberately went without food when he fled from Queen Jezebel's threat to kill him. After this self-imposed deprivation, God sent an angel to minister to Elijah in the wilderness.*

E. The Widow's Fast

1. *Purpose: "To share [our] bread with the hungry" and to care for the poor (Isaiah 58:7) – to meet the humanitarian needs of others.*



2. *Key Verse: I Kings 17:16 (NIV) – "...the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah."*

3. *Background: God sent the prophet Elijah to a poor starving widow – ironically, so the widow could provide food for Elijah. Just as Elijah's presence resulted in food for the widow of Zarephath, so presenting ourselves before God in prayer and fasting can relieve hunger today.*

F. The Saint Paul Fast

1. *Purpose: To allow God's "light [to] break forth like the morning" (Isaiah 58:8), bringing clearer perspective and insight as we make crucial decisions.*

2. *Key Verse: Acts 9:9 – "And he (Saul, or Paul) was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank."*

3. *Background: Saul of Tarsus, who became known as Paul after his conversion to Christ, was struck blind by the Lord in his act of persecuting Christians. He not only was without literal sight, but he also had no clue about what direction his life was to take.*

After going without food and praying for three days, Paul was visited by the Christian Ananias, and both his eyesight and his vision for the future were restored.

G. The Daniel Fast

1. Purpose: So "thine health shall spring forth" (Isaiah 58:8 KJV) – to gain a healthier life or for healing.

2. Key Verse: Daniel 1:8 – "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank."

3. Background: Daniel and his three fellow Hebrew captives demonstrated in Babylonian captivity that keeping themselves from pagan foods God had guided them not to eat made them more healthy than others in the king's court.

H. The John the Baptist Fast

1. Purpose: That "your righteousness shall go before you" (Isaiah 58:8) – that our testimonies and influence for Jesus will be enhanced before others.

2. Key Verse: Luke 1:15 (KJV) – "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink."

3. Background: Because John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus, he took the "Nazarite" vow that required him to "fast" from or avoid wine and strong drink. This was part of John's purposefully adopted lifestyle that designated him as one set apart for a special mission.

I. The Esther Fast

1. Purpose: That the glory of the Lord will protect us from the evil one (see Isaiah 58:8).

2. Key Verses: Esther 4:16, 5:2 – "...fast for me...[and] My maids and I will fast...And so I will go to the king... (and) she found favor in his sight."

3. Background: Queen Esther, a Jewess in a pagan court, risked her life to save her people from threatened destruction by Ahasuerus (Xerxes), king of Persia. Prior to appearing before the king to petition him to save the Jews, Esther, her attendants, and her cousin Mordecai all fasted to appeal to God for His protection.

Fasting Accompanied By...

A. Biblical References

1. Prayer

Ezra 8:23 – So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.



Nehemiah 1:4 – So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of Heaven.

Psalm 35:13 – But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer would return to my own heart.

Daniel 9:3 – Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

Luke 5:33 – Then they said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?"

2. Worship

Nehemiah 9:1-3 – Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads. Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for one-fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshipped the Lord their God.

3. Confession of Sin

I Samuel 7:6 – So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured it out before the Lord. And they fasted that day, and said there, "We have sinned against the Lord." And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah.

Nehemiah 9:1-3 – Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads. Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for one-fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshipped the Lord their God.

4. Humiliation

Deuteronomy 9:18 – And I fell down before the Lord, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger.

Psalm 35:13 – But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer would return to my own heart.

Psalm 69:10 – When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that became my reproach.

I Kings 21:27 – So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning.

Nehemiah 9:1 – Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads.

5. Reading the Scriptures

Nehemiah 9:1-3 – Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month



the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads. Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for one-fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshipped the Lord their God.

Jeremiah 36:6 – You go, therefore, and read from the scroll which you have written at my instruction, the words of the Lord, in the hearing of the people in the Lord's house on the day of fasting. And you shall also read them in the hearing of all Judah who come from their cities.

Jeremiah 36:10 – Then Baruch read from the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the upper court at the entry of the New Gate of the Lord's house, in the hearing of all the people.

6. Mourning

II Samuel 1:12 – And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son, for the people of the Lord and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

I Kings 21:27 – So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning.

Esther 4:3 – And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

Nehemiah 1:4 – So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of Heaven.

Joel 2:12 – "Now, therefore," says the Lord, "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."

Ezra 10:6 – Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib; and when he came there, he ate no bread and drank no water, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity.

7. Weeping

II Samuel 1:12 – And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son, for the people of the Lord and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.



Nehemiah 1:4 – So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of Heaven.

Esther 4:3 – And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

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Joel 2:12 – "Now, therefore," says the Lord, "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."

8. Abstinence from Sexual Relationships

I Corinthians 7:5 – Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

B. Contemporary Issues to Consider

In the 21st Century, there are several additional issues that could be considered as a form of sacrifice, abstinence, or “fasting” before God. The following are not abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. But they are contemporary issues of today’s society that could be considered as a form of fasting for a period of time to seek God’s face.

1. *Entertainment – Movies, videos, television, radio, video games, secular dancing, etc.* (Photo courtesy: AP/Paul Sakuma) 
2. *Athletic Events – Professional sports, athletic events, other forms of recreation, etc.*
3. *Reading Material – Magazines, books, newspapers, other news media, even Christian fiction.*
4. *Computers – Internet activity, E-mail, games, etc.*
5. *Speech – Phone calls, amount of talking, limiting topics of conversation, a special vow of silence, etc.*
6. *Dress – Avoiding certain types and styles of clothing, or the wearing of specific types and styles of clothing, etc.*
7. *Foods and Drinks – Partial fasting – limiting intake of specific foods or drinks.*
8. *Sleep – Early morning prayer, all night prayer vigils, prayer watches at various hours, etc.*
9. *Social Functions – Limiting outside engagements, conferences, seminars and even normal church activities for short specific periods; times of purposeful isolation.*
10. *Work Schedule – Taking hours or days off from secular work or even ministry engagements to seek God’s face, etc.*

The Bridegroom Fast

A. In the Last Days

1. *Joel 2:28,29 – It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.*
2. *Desolation – Consecration – Restoration*
The book of Joel paints us a picture of the last days period in which seeking God’s face with fasting (see Joel 2:12)

precedes the great latter rain outpouring (see Joel 2:25) and a worldwide display of His glory (see Joel 2:30-32).

B. The Return of Christ

1. Acts 1:1 – The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach...

2. Second Coming

Neither, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, nor even the great restoration nor reformation of the Church is our primary goal. It is nothing less than the reappearance of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

C. A Love-Sick Heart

1. Matthew 9:15 – And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."

As Mike Bickle says – Jesus was saying that fasting is directly related to experiencing the presence of the Bridegroom. And that is, in essence, His highest purpose for this discipline: to develop in us a greater spiritual capacity for intimacy with our Bridegroom God.

Jesus assured those questioning Him that when He was taken away (through His death on the Cross) they would fast because of their grief. He knew that His disciples had grown so accustomed to enjoying His presence that after He was gone they would mourn the loss of it and begin to yearn for a sense of closeness to Him.

Yearning for the one you love is commonly called love sickness. Can you imagine whole-hearted lovers of Jesus today becoming so filled with holy lovesickness that they freely choose to live fasted lifestyles? This is what Jesus was prophetically speaking of.

You may be wondering what practical results you can expect from the Bridegroom Fast. Here are three of them:

a. You will receive more revelation of God while poring over His Word. Imagine receiving more revelation of the beauty of God that fascinates our hearts!

b. You will receive a greater measure of revelation in an accelerated way. When people tell me, "I just can't wait to receive more from God," I tell them to add fasting to their loving meditation on the Word. This type of fasting speeds up the process of receiving from God. It also speeds up

the process of getting rid of old mind sets, old strongholds and hard-heartedness.

c. The revelation we receive will touch us at a deeper level. A heart tenderized in love is the greatest gift the Holy Spirit can work in a worshipper. To live feeling loved by God and feeling a reciprocal, passionate love for Him is the most exhilarating form of existence.

If you want to experience more of Jesus in a deeper way, start fasting with a focus on Jesus as the Bridegroom. The Holy Spirit gives grace and revelation to His people who aren't afraid to cry out for it. And when you respond to His wooing and embrace a Bridegroom fast – God's feast for His Bride – you will mature and enter into intimacy with the Bridegroom. Then you will be able to assume your true identity as the Bride of Christ and be fully prepared for His return.



2. A New Order and Motivation

a. A New Day

A new day has dawned. The old rites and legal bondage of performing to earn entrance and acceptance before God no longer remain. We enter freely through the Blood of Jesus Christ. Though Jesus' disciples would fast again, they would never return as it was before. They would fast out of a new heart and a new motivation.

b. From Arthur Wallis – God's Chosen Fast:

"Before the Bridegroom left them, He promised that He would come again to receive them to Himself. The Church still awaits the midnight cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him' (Matthew 25:6). It is this age of the Church that is the period of the absent Bridegroom. It is this age of the Church to which our Master referred when He said 'then they will fast.' The time is now!

"These words of Jesus were prophetic. The first Christians fulfilled them, and so have many saintly men and women of succeeding generations. Where are those who fulfill them today? Alas, they are few and far between, the exception rather than the rule, to the great loss of the Church.

"A new generation, however, is arising. There is concern in the hearts of many for the recovery of apostolic power. But how can we recover apostolic power while neglecting apostolic practice? How can we expect the power to flow if we do not prepare

the channels? Fasting is a God-appointed means for the flowing of His grace and power that we can't afford to neglect any longer.

"The fast of this age is not merely an act of mourning for Christ's absence, but an act of preparation for His return. May those prophetic words, 'Then will they fast,' be fulfilled finally in this generation. It will be a fasting and praying Church that will hear the thrilling cry, 'Behold, the Bridegroom!' Tears shall then be wiped away, and the fast be followed by the feast at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

"The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.'... 'Yes, I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! Revelation 22:17, 20"

c. The Contemplative

The contemplative fasts out of a lovesick heart! Passion for His presence; longing for His return; brokenness as over a lover who has left waiting for His return, is now the new motivation of the Bridegroom fast!

Blessings!

Dr. James W. Goll

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Dr. James W. Goll is the President of Encounters Network, Director of Prayer Storm, and coordinates Encounters Alliance, a coalition of leaders. He is Director of God Encounters Training – an e-school of the heart, and is a member of the Harvest International Ministries apostolic team. He has shared Jesus in more than 50 nations worldwide teaching and imparting the power of intercession, prophetic ministry, and life in the Spirit. James is the prolific author of numerous books and has also produced multiple study guides and hundreds of audio and video messages. James was married to Michal Ann for 32 years before her graduation to Heaven in the fall of 2008. James has four adult children who all love Jesus, and continues to make his home in the rolling hills of Franklin, Tennessee.

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