

## Fasting Guidelines

Here are a few guidelines to assist you in successfully completing this fast:

1. Seek God for guidance. Pray and ask God what He would have you surrender for the next 40 days. By way of example, some have fasted from selfishness, junk food, fear, television, secular music, and/or envy.

2. Read the Pre-Fast Preparation section. Ideally these posts should be read one per day for at least 5 days prior to the start of your fast. However, they could be read two per day or all in one sitting. No matter your method of choice, be sure to meditate on each passage and journal what you sense God is saying to you.

3. Begin the 40-day fast. Start each day with prayer, the reading of the Word, and this devotional. There is a devotional for each weekday. Be sure to answer the Personal Reflection questions at the end of each post which are designed to further engage you in the process. Also, read scriptures that are related to your area of surrender. For example, if you are abstaining from negative talk, read scriptures relating to the tongue, complaining, gossiping, idle talk, etc. Lastly, use the weekend read whatever God lays on your heart and journal.

4. Ask a friend to fast with you. It helps to have another person or persons available for accountability and encouragement. Most people who have taken this fast have done so with at least one other person.

5. Enjoy the journey. Don't be too hard on yourself during the 40 days. A closer walk with God, not perfection is the goal. Therefore, seek Him with all your heart, surrender your will for His, and watch Him do the miraculous in your life.

## **Pre-Fast Preparation**

### **Let God Do a New Thing!**

You may be wondering, “What is Celeste up to now?” I’m not up to anything, it’s God. In the next few days

He will call you to do something you hadn’t considered and subsequently redirect the course of your life.

As some of you know, I have been home all year. At the close of 2009 God called me to leave all that I knew— private practice, speaking, writing, ministry duties—to go to a place He would disclose. I soon discovered that the undisclosed location was my house!

So at the top of 2010, I found myself home with two little ones and plenty of time to be with God. I must admit I questioned God’s plan at first, but as I look back over the last nine months I am thankful that He redirected the course of my life and changed me in ways quite unexpected. Now He wants to do the same for you.

God is calling you to do something different—to move out of your comfort zone. Don’t resist and don’t let fear keep you from what He has in store. Isaiah 43:18-19 reads:

Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness And rivers in the desert. Yes, God can and will do all that for you. What is the secret desire of your heart? He knows, but won’t move without your full cooperation and a complete surrender of your will. And that’s where this fast comes in. In the next week, because you are seeking change, you are going to surrender some habit or believe to God for 40 days. We will start the journey together this Monday. I have done two 40-day fasts since April. Each time with other people (i.e., corporate fasting) and we have been miraculously changed. This time God has called me to do it with you via blog. I will explain more tomorrow.

Les Brown says, "If you want to make this your decade, you've got to decide to be bold, to take life on." Don't leave the year the same way you came in. The former things have passed; God wants to do a new thing in you.

## **Personal Reflections**

1. How is the Spirit speaking to you? Reflect on Isaiah 43:18-19 and journal your insights.
2. What "new thing" does God want to do in and for you?
3. Like Dr. Celeste, do you sense that God is asking you to give up some tasks or jobs that are important to you? Will you comply?
4. What role, if any, will fear play in hindering you from allowing God to do the new thing in your life?

## **Pre-Fast Preparation**

### **What is a Surrender Fast?**

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, to surrender is to give oneself up into the power of another, especially as a prisoner. Likewise, when one is arrested what's the first thing that he does? He raises his hands in an act of surrender and submits to the authority of a higher power. That type of surrender—releasing your will and plan in favor of God's—is what this fast is all about.

I am near completion of a book that I believe will change the way this generation approaches success. It outlines the steps that every person must take to fulfill his/her destiny. The fifth step on this journey is "Isolation" and the proper conclusion to this stage is a fast. Jesus during His time of isolation in the wilderness, fasted for 40 days and nights from food and drink (Matthew 4:1-11). As a reward for his complete surrender to God's plan, He was ushered into His destiny. I formulated this fast, and subsequently named it The 40-Day Surrender Fast, based on Jesus' time of fasting in the wilderness.

My first experience with the Surrender Fast was in April of 2010. While attending a women's fellowship at the First Baptist Church of Glenarden, Pastor John K. Jenkins Sr. taught on the disciplines of a godly woman. I was instantly convicted about my lack of discipline in the area of diet. For many years God had been dealing with me about my eating habits. Even as a 3-year survivor of breast cancer I was content to eat what I liked, despite my knowledge of the link between diet and disease. I was so controlled by food that I was willing to hinder my physical and spiritual health for the momentary thrill of a box of Hot Tamales! I knew that God wasn't pleased and I was desperate for a change.

So on that Saturday morning in April I cried. And when my crying had ended, I decided to do what God had been instructing me to do for years. I surrendered my will for His in this area.

I chose to do the Daniel Fast. During my time of fasting I shared my testimony with other women and a few of them joined me. Each of us fasted from something different, one from TV, another sugar, but our hearts were in concert together as we collectively surrendered our wills. Initially, the fast was difficult for me, but somewhere around day 31, and much to my surprise, I decided to become a vegetarian and I haven't looked back since.

So now it's your turn. If you are feeling stuck, frustrated, and/or bound decide that now is the time to do something new; have the courage to release your plan for His. The blessings that will stem from your obedience will be well worth the sacrifice (see Deuteronomy 28).

## **Personal Reflections**

1. How is the Spirit speaking to you? Reflect on Matthew 4:1-11 and journal your insights.
2. Dr. Celeste was introduced to fasting as a child and has continued the practice into adulthood. However, some new or even seasoned converts for that matter don't regard fasting as beneficial. What are your thoughts about fasting? Have you fasted in the past and did it produce the results you expected? What do you expect from this fast?
3. What area(s) of your life do you need to surrender to God? What will be most challenging about surrendering?
4. How might this surrender change your relationship with yourself, God, and others?

## **Pre-Fast Preparation**

### **Bold and Courageous**

Celeste, just as I instructed Joshua, 'Be bold and courageous' is what God has been urging all year. In an effort to make this command my truth, I have read and re-read the book of Joshua. It has changed me tremendously, but there is still more that God wants to do. That's the reason He has called me to this fast (and dragged you in with me); I need to be released. I can no longer allow the hurts of the past to dictate my actions and keep me from being bold and courageous. He needs me to be an ambassador of His word and if I am timid and shy I won't be an effective witness.

My lack of boldness came to a head the other day. I was helping a candidate solicit votes at a polling site. While there, I ran into a colleague who was campaigning for a different candidate. After a few pleasantries we got into a conversation about the other candidates that were running for office that term. She disagreed, quite vehemently, with my choices and sought to change my mind.

Suffice it to say, it worked. By the time she was done I had changed one of my votes. To make matters worse, I looked for her after I voted to let her know that I had been persuaded by her argument. Fortunately I couldn't get her approval; she had left the site. I realized immediately that that interaction had been a set up. God had my attention.

I relay this embarrassing story to highlight my need for God—especially in this area. Last night I prayed for insight into my behavior. God revealed to me that I lose myself when I am around aggressive/assertive people; I don't feel empowered to appropriately handle their type.

The root of the problem dates back to grade school. I desperately wanted to fit in, but didn't. I was continuously rejected by (at least in my mind) the aggressive, sometimes mean, yet overwhelmingly popular "it" girls.

At the same time, I was overly invested in pleasing my authority figures believing, in error, that their approval would make me good and acceptable. All lies. God's acceptance of me is all that matters.

I am learning day by day that He loves me just the way I am. As I grow closer to Him, I gain the courage to be just who I am. Before this year is out I will be firm in my identity, sure of my calling, and ready for any and every assignment that comes my way. Because of Christ and the work that He did for me on the cross, I am whole and complete in God.

I read this morning, "Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; Neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; For you will forget the shame of your youth," (Isaiah 54:4a). He was reminding me that I am not that scared little girl who had no voice and needed acceptance. I am a bold and courageous woman in Christ. I am also reminded that God will give us double for our trouble (see Isaiah 61:7) and make up for all of the hurts we have experienced.

We will boldly declare, this day, that we are healed from the pains and wounds of the past; we are new in Christ, and equipped to succeed in all that we put our hands to. So for the next 40 days, starting Monday, September 13, I am fasting from a timid and fearful attitude, especially as it relates to aggressive/assertive people. I will speak as the Spirit leads and I will not let fear shut me down. What will you surrender to God?

## **Personal Reflections**

1. How is the Spirit speaking to you? Reflect on Isaiah 54:3-6 and journal your insights.
2. Have you decided what you will surrender for the next 40 days? If yes, write it below. If not, don't worry. Just continue to seek God's direction and He will give you the answer. Like Dr. Celeste who was encouraged by the words God spoke to Joshua, how has God prepared your heart for such a fast? Celeste Owens, Ph.D. 18
3. The enemy wants you to be ashamed of your weaknesses and to hide them from others, but that philosophy only delays your healing. Therefore, identify a weakness and make arrangements to talk with at least one other person about it. Ask him/her to hold

you accountable (through the duration of the fast) as you allow God to change you in this area.

4. If you can't readily identify a person that can be part of this process with you, pray. God will reveal the right person to you. When He does go to that person, explain what you are doing, and ask them to be part of this journey with you. List the name of that person here.



## **Pre-Fast Preparation**

### **Why 40 Days?**

The number forty is significant for several reasons. One, it is universally accepted as a number of importance to God not only for the frequency of its occurrence in the Bible but also for its association with a period of trial and probation. For example:

- In Noah's day the rains fell for 40 days and nights (Genesis 7:4)
- The children of Israel wandered the wilderness for 40 years (Joshua 5:6)
- Goliath presented himself to Israel for 40 days (1 Samuel 17:16)
- David reigned over Israel for 40 years (2 Samuel 5:4; 1 Kings 2:11)
- Jesus fasted 40 days and 40 nights (Matthew 4:2)
- Jesus was tempted 40 days (Luke 4:2; Mark 1:14)

And just as an aside, women are pregnant for 40 weeks.

Secondly, the number 40 is significant because it appears to be, at least from my experiences, the right amount of time needed to break a stronghold. You may have read, and research indicates that it takes about 21 days to make or break a habit. This may be true, but a stronghold is something different; it's a habit gone wild. In the spiritual a stronghold is an incorrect pattern of thinking that influences how we live our lives. For that reason, 40 days appears to be the more accurate number for breaking a stronghold.

Strongholds can be evident in many areas of our lives, but one area where they can be especially detrimental is in our emotional life. After years of hurt, we naturally seek to protect our emotions. In a futile attempt to ward off further pain, we often adopt incorrect beliefs (e.g., people will always hurt me so I shouldn't let anyone get too close). These erroneous beliefs don't allow us to move as God instructs and keep us from taking the risks that are necessary for success.

In and of ourselves we are hopeless to change, but with God all things are possible. His healing virtue tears down the walls that have kept us confined and His grace propels us further than we ever thought we could go.

This is my third time doing this particular 40-day fast (the first time I fasted from certain types of foods and the second from the pride and selfishness). Each time I noticed a distinct pattern. The first 21 days were challenging, I couldn't see how God was going to change me. Right around day 21, I started sensing that change was on the way. About day 30, I started noticing consistent changes in my behavior. And by day 40, I was healed; a new me restored and renewed in mind, body, and spirit.

The scripture reminds us that some things only change through prayer and fasting (see Mark 9:29). Are you ready The 40-Day Surrender Fast 21 to be free and released from your stronghold? If so, this is your time of probation; your chance to prove to God and yourself that you are ready to accept the new thing that He has for you. Commit yourself to this fast and see God do a mighty work in your life.

## **Personal Reflections**

1. How is the Spirit speaking to you? Reflect on Mark 9:14-29 and journal your insights.
2. What behaviors or circumstances keep you bound and also act as a barrier to the life God has for you?
3. Do you believe that God can deliver you from any and every stronghold? Think of a behavior or habit that that you would like to eliminate. What have you tried in the past to rid yourself of this problem? Has the problem gotten better over time or remained the same? How will you know when God has healed you?
4. Are you willing to commit to this period of fasting for 40 days? What people or circumstances might negatively impact your ability to succeed at this fast?

## **Pre-Fast Preparation**

### **It's Complicated**

Within the “Info” section of a Facebook page participants are invited to respond to the prompt “relationship status.” The normal responses are single, married, divorced, etc. However, once in a while someone responds: it’s complicated. That leads me to believe that they are in a relationship but not really in a relationship—that is complicated.

The same can be true when it comes to healing from childhood emotional wounds: it’s complicated. The mere passing of time doesn’t make us whole. Simply saying the words “I’m over that” doesn’t make it so, nor does burying the pain deep in the recesses of our mind. Healing is a process and if most of us are honest we know that getting over our past is—well—complicated.

As a child I was sensitive; every harsh word and disapproving look wounded me. Because of my sensitive nature I quickly adopted the belief that I wasn’t good enough. That false belief, which shaped my worldview for many years, became the foundation for my identity and produced fruit. This is how that belief influenced my thought life and behavior:

The false belief:

#### **I AM NOT GOOD ENOUGH.**

The fruit of that belief:

1. A poor self image that led to the following beliefs: a. If my peers accept me (especially the popular ones) that makes me good. b. If I associate with those who others perceive as good I, by association, will be good too. c. If I am pleasing to those who are in authority, they will like me and infer goodness upon me.
2. A propensity for perfectionism: a. If I become perfect in every way (i.e., style of dress, talk, education, hair, makeup, etc.) no one will ever learn my secret shame—that I am not good enough.

If you can't follow that it's okay because it's complicated; lies always are. There are some of you who are fighting with God. He is telling you to fast from a certain belief or behavior that you believe you are "over" and you are refusing to re-visit that old issue. Well, if God is leading you to do so, He knows that there is some rotten fruit that still needs picking.

Today, I know I am good enough but the fruit of pleasing (especially authority) still lingers (see blog post [Bold The 40-Day Surrender Fast 25 and Courageous](#)). But I declare at the end of these 40 days that fruit will be no more. God finds me pleasing and that is all that matters.

The scripture tells us that we must bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 10:5). The only way to challenge every rebellious thought is to study and meditate on God's word; let His truth become your truth.

Here's His truth. You don't need anyone to approve of or accept you because God loves you just the way you are (see I John 4:19). If you meditate on His word day and night, do all that it says, you will make your way prosperous and have good success (see Joshua 1:8). Now that's the truth and the truth is never complicated.

## **Personal Reflections**

1. How is the Spirit speaking to you? Reflect on 2 Corinthians 10:5 and I John 4:19 and journal your insights.
2. What lies, if any, from childhood have you accepted as truth? In what ways do they continue to influence your thoughts and behavior?
3. Do these lies also affect your current relationships? If yes, with whom and in what way?
4. How would you like for God to change you over the next 40 days?