

TEACH US
TO FAST AND PRAY

“For Such a Time As This”

KIM JOHNSON

Teach Us to Fast and Pray: For Such a Time as This

by Kim Johnson

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Chapter One

WHAT IS FASTING?

The verb *fast* in the Hebrew is *tsuwm*. It literally means “to cover the mouth.” The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines the verb *fast* as “to abstain from food; to eat very little or abstain from certain foods, especially as a religious discipline.” The noun *fast* is defined as “the act or practice of abstaining from or eating very little food. A period of such abstention or self-denial.” Biblical fasting is more than covering the mouth and abstaining from all or certain foods to achieve personal gain. Biblical fasting is always accompanied with a burden, i.e., a desperate desire and purpose that necessitates drawing close to God. Fasting without a burden and a purpose just weakens the flesh. A burden is the key to successful fasting in the kingdom of God. Love for God and love for one’s neighbor is what produces a burden. It is the underlying purpose and motive that drives one to fast. It is a burden for the lost that will compel one to fast for them. It is a burden to see deliverance and healing in someone’s life that will cause one

to fast for that person's deliverance and healing. It is a burden to subdue the kingdom of darkness and to usher in the kingdom of heaven that will cause one to fast. It is a burden to know Jesus and to conquer the flesh that will drive one to fast. A burden coupled with desire and fasting coupled with repentant prayer move the heart of God to favor us. *Fasting simply out of religious duty will never change the heart of God in our situation.*

Jesus is looking for those who are willing to humble their hearts and to bring themselves under the yoke of His cross, so that He can impart His burden for the lost to them. We can draw a comparison between Simon of Cyrene being commanded to carry the Lord's cross to Calvary, i.e., to carry the Lord's burden, and our bearing the Lord's burden for sinners for whom He died. Jesus knew that after His ascension He would be able to impart His burden to millions through the outpouring of His Spirit (Acts 1:8). Therefore, let us prepare ourselves through fasting to take up His burden and to follow Him.

It is my prayer that the eyes of our understanding will always be opened to see the blessings and benefits of fasting unto the Lord. May fasting no longer be a drudgery or duty but an avenue by which we come to see the power of God manifested in our lives, homes, jobs, and cities.

Chapter Two

ISAIAH 58: GOD'S CHOSEN FAST

In Isaiah 58, God reveals His chosen fast. He grants us understanding concerning His plan, His purpose, and His rewards for fasting. Let us look at God's call for Israel to fast.

Isaiah 58:1

Isaiah 58 begins with a commandment from God to the prophet Isaiah: "*Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.*" This statement reveals the urgency with which God wanted to speak to His people. He foresaw the coming destruction and annihilation of his people because of their sins and transgressions, and He no longer could remain silent.

Why was Isaiah to lift up his voice like a trumpet? The trumpet (Hebrew, *shofar*) is an instrument that produces a very strong, clear sound that can be heard from afar. In Bible days, it was used to awaken the people and to get their