

## **FASTING SERIES**

### **CORPORATE FAST**

We are going to talk about corporate fasting. We will take an illustration from the book of Jonah. Jonah was a prophet and he had an important message to give the Gentiles. The bible tells us that he was called by God to go to the Gentiles but he disobeyed God and went in the opposite direction. Now he is eaten by a big fish and in the fish he repented and he says, "God I will now obey You. I will do what You ask me to. I will go to Nineveh and tell them Your words what You have spoken onto me." He was supposed to deliver the Word to the Assyrians. But the Assyrians were the enemies of the Jews. And he was not willing to carry that message. Sometimes God gives you a message that you are not willing to carry. You have to answer to God on the call on your life. You have to answer to God for the Word of God that He gives to you to give to others. Most times we ask the question, "Why me? Why not somebody else?" It is in God's dispensation He chose you. And He chooses different people to give some Word. And sometimes He will choose the most unlikely ones to deliver His words. Here we see God chose a Jew to bring a message to the Assyrians who were their archenemy. The Jews hated the Assyrians in Jonah's time as much as the Jews today hates the Nazis. God chose Jonah to give the word of the Lord.

Jonah 1: 1 and 2 *Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amitai, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me. It was a very wicked city. The wickedness was so great that God has to warn them about impending judgment coming to them. It seems as if that the wickedness there was in the same category of Sodom and Gomorrah where the bible says its cry has gone up to the heaven.*

Jonah ran away from God. We read the story how God brought him to repentance and sent him back. Jonah 3:1-3 *The word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time. God speaks again when we are ready to listen. He speaks to us the second time, the third time, if our heart is right. This time he was willing to obey the Lord. God gave him the fresh word, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you," So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, a three-day journey in extent. That is how great and big that city was. It was one of the largest cities in those days. And here Jonah comes with a message, not a cheerful message but a fearful message.*

Verse 4 *And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. It takes 3 days to walk from one end of the city to the other end. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be over-thrown." So Jonah was walking up and down the city - he did not seek the king, he did not seek anyone. He was just crying as a prophet of God, in forty days this city will be destroyed. In forty days Nineveh shall be over-thrown. And the message got around. Everybody heard the message that Jonah carried. And the king started responding to that message.*

Verse 5 *So the people of Nineveh believe God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of the. The people called a corporate fast. Now God has already told of judgment coming. God said the city would be over-thrown. He did not even promise that if they turn to Him He would hear them. It was not promised to them. They were not God's covenant people. To God's covenant people God said, "If they would return to Me and seek my face I will hear from heaven and heal the land." These were not God's covenant people. These were strangers and aliens to the covenant of God. Here they started repenting. In spite of their wickedness, here they are turning back to God. And they did not turn just alone. From the greatest to the least, from the king with all his glorious robes to the lowest pauper in the city - every one of them fasted and turned away from their wickedness. The king proclaimed a fast.*

And not only had they proclaim a fast from the greatest to the least it says in verse 6 *Then word came to the king of Nineveh, and he arose from the throne and laid aside his*

*robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes.* The king humbled himself in fasting and praying. Verse 7 *And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink water.* It was a complete fast, a total fast. They neither eat nor drink. And look at it very carefully everyone fasted the king, his nobles and all the people in Nineveh, the animals also fasted. It tells here they didn't allow the animals to drink either. Either they proclaim a total fast or they are going to die completely.

Not only did they fast they put on sackcloth in verse 8 *But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth.* The whole land was filled with people wearing sackcloth and fasted. If you had gone for a tour to that city at that time, you would see some of those cows wearing sackcloth. As you walk in the street you may see some stray cats, the stray cats will also be wearing sackcloth. Every one of them fasted from the greatest to the least, a total fast. They were desperate before God.

Verse 9 *Who can tell if God will turn and relent and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?* They were hoping that their fast would avert judgment upon their lives that God has proclaimed. Verse 10 *Then God saw their works that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.* A corporate fast moves God. In one day, God could completely eliminate the judgment that is coming onto them. Why, because they fasted together. There is power when we fast alone. There is power when we fast together. Corporate fasting taps on a powerful force. Just as a believer's anointing is one and the anointing upon is another, the corporate anointing is the most powerful anointing there is. In the same way there is personal fasting, then there is corporate fasting where the whole body of Christ came together and fasted. It unleashed powerful forces in the whole world. It unleashed the mercies of God upon our lives where before we were not in the position to receive those blessings and mercies. If God could do this for the people of Nineveh who were not a covenant people, how more can He do it for those who are in the covenant of God?

There is something about human beings coming together in unity that can unleash a powerful force if they would come in agreement together. In fact, when He looked down and saw the men building the tower of Babel out of their pride, there was a

positive statement that God made. God said if they continue in their way that they were going nothing could stop them. There is a tremendous power unleashed when people could unite together corporately.

Lets look at the book of Genesis and have the exact statement that God made. *Gen. 11:1 Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they asphalt for mortar. And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city. In verse 6 And the Lord said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.*

**It is an irrevocable law that if God get human beings to unite together in an objective they could achieve that which they individually cannot do. In the natural, it is working because it is law that is set by God. To send one man to the moon they need to bring into harmony the knowledge of many men and women working together. Hundreds and thousands of people are involved in sending one man to the moon. That is in the natural.**

**Now there is a law in the natural and the law in the spiritual. When we could get people united together in one heart and one mind it will begin to release a spiritual force that is reserved only for the corporate body that the singular body cannot**

receive. That a single member of the body of Christ alone by themselves cannot receive. It takes the coming together of the body of Christ to bring forth this powerful blessing that God has in store. In Psalms 133, it tells us that it is good for brethren to dwell together in unity. The bible say for them the Lord commands a blessing. See there is a certain presence that you reach. A certain level of anointing and power is reached when you are united together. When are all alone individually we can bring petition, intercession to God. We can pray our needs onto God. We can pray petitions and supplications before God. We are asking from God. We are seeking the blessings from God. This is a scriptural thing to do. Ask and it shall be given unto to you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. All of us have to seek, all of us have to knock and all of us have to ask from God individually. But the bible tells us that if God could find a group of people who will be one together. They did not ask a blessing He says in Psalms 133 I will command the blessing. God Himself will look down, command a special blessing upon their lives that they could not reach and receive if they had worked alone. And that is the place where God is bringing the body of Christ together. There is power when we come together in one unity.

In fact, all the preparation in the five-fold in Ephesians chapter 4 is for this. You thought that we have seen great ministries today and there are. God will continue to raise up great ministries. But the purpose of all these ministries that God has prepared is to release the greatest ever anointing and power that He has reserved for the church when the church come together

in one. Eph. 4:11 *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.* Now all of us know how powerful the anointing upon can be. When one stands in the fullness of the anointing upon there is a certain power that God has gifted onto individuals. Verse 12, *for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* Don't read chapter 4:11 and leave out verse 13, *till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to be a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.* Today people are taken up by individual ministries. God will continue to raise up ministries. God has raised evangelists, prophets, apostles, pastors and teachers and He continues to raise them. There are some who say there are no more super-stars. No, there will always be people who stand head and shoulder above the others. But let us not forget the larger purpose of all these ministries that God has raised up, both great and small – it is not to promote the individuals per se but that these individuals should build up and perfect the body of Christ.

The body of Christ always needs leadership but what should be said is that there is a special power that our Father in heaven right now is waiting to release upon the church. There is a special blessing that the whole history of the church from beginning to the end has not seen. We have seen pockets of it. We have seen a little bit here and there of what God can do when the unity of the body of Christ come together. And we have seen some examples in the book of Acts how when they all came together the emphasis is one accord, in one accord, in

unity, in one mind. When they were in one accord God could release upon them what He had prophesied by Joel, by all the other prophets that they had prophesied of the day coming of the day of Pentecost of the day coming when the Spirit of God will be released. Old Testament prophets and kings, some of them under the anointing of God has said that there is as time coming when the anointing of God will not be just on the kings, priests and the prophets but it will pour out upon all flesh.

None lived to see that day but God has to prepare His people to receive the powerful blessing the God has reserved for the day of Pentecost. They were striving together with one another when Jesus was going to the cross. For 40 days, Jesus spent time with them. Jesus taught them a lot of things. Some of them were broken because they have been through difficulties. Peter had denied Jesus. He was a broken man by that time. And all of them knew that they had failed Jesus. All of them knew that they have failed God in some way. All of them were scattered and ran away from Jesus. But now every one of them was coming together. Every one of them was coming together in their failures, in their needs. None of them now say, "I am greater than you." None of them say, "I am more important than you." None of them say, "I want to be at the right hand when You come into Your kingdom. I want to have that position." None of them was selfish any more. None of them was thinking of themselves or their ministry any more. All of them were broken.

Finally, God could bring them into that one bond and accord and they waited in that unity together. They moved in one accord. When something wanted to be done like the replacement of Judas Iscariot they all moved in one accord and chose Matthias. Nobody grumbled; everybody was with that love and unity. And when that happened in the early church, God could pour down upon them such power that He has reserved in heaven. That is the early church. Today right at the end of history God has prophesied, God has spoken of a time coming when He is going to pour out His Spirit upon His church. We are going to see everyone healed who comes to the meeting. We are going to see the glory of God manifests greater than in the book of Acts. God prophesied but before this come the Spirit of God is going to break His people down, break the pride down, break the selfishness down and cause the people to be in one accord. And at the point when they are in one accord God says now they are ready. All the flood gates that are reserved for these last days He will stretch forth His feet and lift it up and it will pour forth upon us in such a measure that the world have never seen before. And all the glory that pour forth will exceed what one apostle can do, one prophet can do, what one evangelist can do. It will exceed what an individual ministry can do. It's going to be so powerful.

Look at Eph. 4:11-13 is to prepare the church for the equipping the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith. Why are we in the ministry? What was the purpose for Paul to be in the ministry? What is the purpose for being in the ministry? It is

that we are like laborers, like John the Baptist, preparing and bringing the church to the position, and giving information, giving truth and pushing them a little bit, picking them up on the way, and some of them give them a little scolding, but bringing the church altogether to that unity. Why does God want to bring the church to the unity? Because there is a special grace and blessing and anointing that has never been seen on this planet earth that He has reserved only for the church in these last days. We are waiting for God but God is waiting for us. He is waiting for all these ministries to do their part to bring the church together. Sad to say sometimes in the ministry through this 20<sup>th</sup> century church history you see that sometimes ministry fight against one another. They forget that the purpose of all the five-fold is to bring the church to unity. So if a five-fold fail to bring the church to unity they have failed in their calling and purpose. The very fact of the existence of the five-fold is to bring them to this unity. When they are in this unity together, man can be perfected to the measure of the stature of the fullness of God and to demonstrate the perfection of the bride of Christ. God is going to release the power that is reserved for these last days.

In Jesus' prayer you will have an idea of all these things in Jn. 17: 20 *I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word that they all may be one.* If at the tower of Babel God could say that if natural men could get united together, they can do what they alone cannot do, how much more when spiritual people get together they can do far above what they have done before. *That they all may be one, as*

*You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. The world had not believed today. Not all the world has believed that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. Verse 22 says And (notice the conjunction it is after the unity comes) and the glory which You gave Me I have given them, (you must understand Jesus always speaks faith. He always speaks what has not come to pass,) that they may be one just as We are one. I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me.*

How come Jesus connects the world knowing Him and us being one? Because when we are one there is going to be an anointing that comes upon the church that the world could tangibly see the manifestation of God's power. Now the oneness that He speaks about in verse 20 and 21 is this. He says in verse 21 *that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You.* Do you know that Jesus is praying and saying that the way that you and I are one with each other must be the same oneness that Jesus have with the Father. When you think about that and you compare the churches oneness today you would say compared to Him we are all in disunity.

The oneness that we are to have with one another must be such that it is like the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit moving together. And this is the amazing thing when you study the Trinity. Everything that the Father wants to do the Son has a part and the Holy Spirit has a part. Everything that the Son does

He depends on the Father He depends on the Spirit. Everything that the Spirit does He always go in line with the will of the Father and what Jesus wants to do. Never one time from Genesis to Revelation you find the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in disagreement. They have been in agreement for ancient of ages. For eternity, They have never moved apart from each other. They have always work separately but in unity. They are separate Persons of the Godhead and They work their special work. The Holy Spirit has come to reveal Christ to us. Christ came to fulfill the will of the Father. There is not one time when one of Them work separately. Every time you see the work of God at first it seems as if only one of Them involved. You study carefully and you see cross-references you find that all three of Them are together. Do you know that not one thing is done by God without all three - the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit - getting involved? You cannot find one incident. Even Jesus going to the cross for us He was sent by the Father. And He gave Himself to the Holy Spirit to fulfill that task. He cried on the cross Thy will be done and not Mine. There is not one time when They work separately. They are in such harmony together. And Jesus said, "I pray that the church, all who believe in Me and all who believe in My Name will be one with each other as I, Father, am one with You and You with Me."

Compare to His oneness I think we have a long way to go before achieving perfect unity. Now you know why the power of God could not demonstrate the way that God wants. In the realm, that God wants His church to come into because the oneness that we much have with each other must be equal in

quality and in essence. So the question is how can we be one? What must we do to be one? Lets look at some considerations in the book of Acts chapter 1 and 2. How shall we all come together? What will help us to be one together?

*Acts 1:13-14 And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying. Peter, James, John and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.* Notice here it says with one accord in prayer. Do you know there is only one place the church can be one together in prayer? When we are all praying and crying out to our same Father the church here was one in prayer. We must gather together to pray together. You could say to one another, "I pray in my house and you pray in your house." But it says that they were one in prayer in the same place. It's very important for the church to gather in one place to pray together. For us that may take scheduling our time, that may take separating and consecrating our time, that may take re-adjusting our activities. But the church must come together in one accord in prayer. Praying and working by yourself alone will never perfect you.

There is a special blessing that God reserves when the church comes with one accord in one place. See in Acts 2:1 *When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, there were all with one accord*

*in one place.* We need to gather together in one accord in one heart in praying together. Are we prepared to put aside our priorities? Are we prepared to put aside lives and our plans and our own schedules to come into one place and pray together? We must come together in that one accord and one prayer together. It starts in prayer. It doesn't start at the fellowship table over the food. Sometimes right at the local cafeteria we start discussing something and we end up with disunity. Sometimes you thought that it should start at the fellowship feast. But at the fellowship feast, sometimes conversation takes an unwanted direction. When somebody brings something that hurt the other, there you have it eating at the same table but eyeing each other. We all must get into the prayer room together. How can you and I quarrel when or Father is standing watching over us? As we all pray together onto the Lord in one accord, our Father will be watching.

Do you know that when husbands and wives have disagreement that they could come to the Father together and pray themselves into unity? They could disagree over something but if they could both enter into the closet with God and pray, their unity can be restored. When you enter into the prayer, don't scold each other with the prayer. The husband would come and say, "O God what a wife you have given me. O Lord you know she is this way and you know what she had done etc." And the wife say, "O dear Lord this guy is a lion who roars at me all the time." There they are scolding each other in prayer. We are not talking about that kind of prayer.

But when we come before God, there must be a humbling of oneself. See certain types of coming together and praying together do not work because people are not willing to humble themselves. The husband should come and say, "I am sorry Father I have sinned." Then the wife comes and says, "I am sorry Father I have sinned." And then they both look at each other. Both have sinned so we are all in the same boat. And all of us must come together on the ground of humility and that takes fasting. When we fast together in a corporate fast, there must be a corporate humbling of ourselves before God. It is where we all humbly ourselves and say God we all need Your mercy, not just my neighbor but me, all of us need Your mercy, all of us come by Your mercy. I find no better way than for people to come in fasting and prayer. Fasting has to do with humbling it goes together in one.

Some of the most difficult people were spared God's judgment because they fasted. King Ahab is one striking example. When he took over Naboth's vineyard illegally and treacherously, Elijah came to him in I Kg. 21 and told him that God's judgment is coming on him because of this thing that he had done and God is displeased. The bible tells us that king Ahab fasted and prayed. And when he fasted and prayed most of us would have prayed, "O God don't answer him. Give it to him since he is such a wicked king." But do you know what God did? God said, "I have seen how he humbled himself."

I don't care how you think about yourself or what your situation

is. We all need to seek God in fasting individually and we need a corporate fast to come before God into His throne. We need a corporate fast. If you want revival to sweep this land and if we are not faithful to do what God tells us to do we may not have the revival. God looks for the people to pay the price to bring the answer to all the prophecies of the past. We have a part in obeying God. There are many people all over in every nation and they prophesy about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and the coming revival. They have been talking about for the past 20, 30, 40 years. Let us not just talk about it - let us bring it. And that last revival has something to do with the unity of the church together. It's going to be a price that we all have to pay. We have to take the time to come together for corporate fast and prayer.

Every one of us can say we are busy but let us remember the hundred and twenty disciples of them who found the time to come together. It is not mentioned here but I believe they were fasting at that time. I believe they remain fasted in unity seeking God with all their hearts. There were 120 of them. Do you know there were more of them whom Jesus told to wait? Look at I Cor. 15:5 *He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.* There were five hundred over people who had seen Jesus after His resurrection. Why do you think Jesus appeared to the five hundred over disciples? It is because He tells the five hundred over disciples to wait for Him in Jerusalem. He prepared the 500. He talked to the 500. He told them what they

must do. But only 120 of them were showed up and gathered together. You would have about 390 people who were too busy. Three hundred and ninety people had other programs in their lives that they considered more important than obey Jesus Christ to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father. Three hundred and ninety of them who says, "I have bought me a cow, I have married a wife." We must realize that if we love God, we must put priority on our lives to move into what God has for us. We cannot run away from it. God's Spirit is calling the church worldwide together in prayer. We are praying individually but God is calling for the church to get together in one accord and pray. Will you be among the 390 or will you be among the 120? Choose you this day.

We have to get together in prayer in one place. And we have to gather together in Acts chapter one with one purpose of heart. Acts 1:14 *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.* What was their objective in coming together to pray? They had one objective. Their objective is to come before God and pray for what Jesus promised. Jesus told them in Lk. 24:49 *Tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.* Three hundred and ninety of them could not tarry. About 120 of them tarried and waited. Some of them may have started on the first day but gave up halfway. Bu there were 120 of them who carried on till the 10<sup>th</sup> day. They had one objective to be clothed with power from on high and to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The church knew the secret of one accord prayer.

*In Acts 2:2 Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.* They were waiting with one accord for that which was prophesied by Joel. This sort of thing will not happen individually. There were apostles in their midst. It doesn't mean that if you are an apostle or evangelist you can separate yourself from the body of Christ. We are part of the body of Christ. To be waiting on God in one accord.

Do you know why in East Malaysia the native Christians there have such wonderful manifestations of the Holy Spirit? Every morning the church gets up early and pray together. They would ring the village bell and the people would gather together to pray. And deep in the jungles, they would gather for hours in homes to pray together. No wonder God gave them special signs and wonders. It takes that kind of unity and one accord to bring that special power and blessing of God. We must have an objective. What is our objective today? We all receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit better. We can pray better, we can pray more in tongues. Our objective is to pray for the perfection of the body of Christ. Our objective is to pray for the revival that has been prophesied of the glory that is reserved for these last days. The only time the church gets into disunity is when they forget about their vision and their objective and start looking at one another. But when we keep our eyes on the field and the harvest and on the Lord there is no time to get into disunity - we will fall into ranks and march like a mighty army.

**Zechariah 10:1** *Ask the Lord for rain. In the time of the latter rain. The Lord will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain. Grass in the field for everyone.* It says in the time of the latter rain ask. Ask corporately; come together in fasting, in prayer before God. Seek Him with all our hearts, minds and souls. Praying in one accord. **Acts 4:24** *So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said; "Lord You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them. They were in one accord, one unity together. And that kind of unity they have is expressed in Acts 2:44* *Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common. In other words, they did not count one above the other. They all were in common unity.*

Now **Acts 4:32** this is the unity that they have. *Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.* I know whose heart that was. All of them have the same heart the Father's heart, a heart of love. They were with one heart and one soul. Their minds agree together. They submit one onto another. We all know that our souls are our individual personality. But they moved as one personality. They moved as one soul together. That was the kind of unity they have. And God is calling the church back to this level of unity. God is calling us to forgiveness. God is calling us to come in the blood. Lay aside your grievances. Pull out every root of bitterness in your life and come to His throne by His blood. Forget about those past hurts and bad times that you have had with each other in the

whole body of Christ at large but come together because the time is urgent. The hour is late and we want to see and be a part of that revival. The enemy is unleashing right now extra forces. Remember the bible tells us the devil knows his time is coming up and he is working like he had never done before. We would have to come together in one heart in one soul and in a sense, one physically because it says none of them say of the thing he possess is his own they had all things in common. Now with that kind of unity look at verse 33 *With great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.* God is calling the church today to seek Him in fasting and in prayer.