

Focus: The Journey to Easter

Lesson 4



Fasting for Spiritual Break Through

The Problem of "Besetting Sins"

St. James Baptist Church

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THE DISCIPLE'S FAST

The Problem of "Besetting Sins"

A significant reason to fast is that it releases people from the bondage of sin. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bans of wickedness' (**Isaiah 58:6, KJV**)

Many Christians are helpless victims to "besetting sins" (**see Hebrew 12:1, KJV**). Besetting sins are not common sins of neglect or momentary lapse. Nor are they sins of rebellion, in which God says, "Thou shalt not," and the person says "I will" in His face. Besetting sins are habitual sinful behaviors or attitudes that victimize and enslave people.

The apostles tried unsuccessfully to deal with such a sin involving a demonized boy. Jesus said the problem was so severe that it couldn't be treated by ordinary means. "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting," He said (**Matt. 17:21, KJV**).

Yet some Christians are in bondage to alcohol, drug, sex and tobacco addictions. Others struggle with compulsive eating, extramarital affairs and lying. Any sin that can't be broken with ordinary "willpower" can be termed a besetting sin. What is your besetting sin?

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Scripture promises, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man” (**I Cor. 10:13**).

Yet Scripture promises “a way out” (**see I Cor. 10:13**). The Disciple’s Fast can be that very way of escape for you, as a disciple.

Why Are We in Bondage?

Besetting sins beset us because we believe Satan’s lie. “He is a liar,” Jesus said (**John 8:44**). Satan lies to us about sin and we believe him instead of God. In besetting sins, Satan get us to believe on of the following three lies (otherwise called “compulsions”):

1. I tried before, and can’t break it.
2. I don’t want to do this, but can’t help it.
3. I need an answer, but can’t find it.

Paul testified for our encouragement, “For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice: (**Rom. 7:19**).

When Satan controls our thoughts, he controls our lives. When he lies to us about our lives, we are in bondage.

*When you take control of your physical appetite,
you develop strength to take control of your emotional appetite.*

THE POWER OF THE DISCIPLE'S FAST

The demon-possessed boy's father did not understand his son's problem. But Jesus knew that a demon had entered into the boy and had taken control of his life.

Some people are unable to quit smoking or break their homosexual relationships. Although they weep, pray sincerely and seek deliverance, they remain in bondage. The Disciple's Fast deals with these kinds of bondages.

You are wrestling for control of your life when you enter the Disciple's Fast. Look at what happens in this fast.

You make a life-freeing choice to be delivered. One who came to Jesus asking for healing was confronted with the Lord's question, "Do you want to be made well?" (**John 5:6**). Jesus wanted the man to *desire* the power that he could give him.

He wants us to look within, so we make the decisions to follow Him.

You recognize that an external power is responsible for your bondage. The boy's father in Matthew 17 did not recognize that a demon held his son in bondage. Apparently the disciples did not recognize the cause of the problem either. Yet Jesus immediately "rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy" (**v. 18, NIV**).

One of the first steps in the Disciple's Fast is to recognize the external power of our bondages. This does not necessarily mean we have demons, but it does mean we are controlled externally, not internally. **Recognizing that an external power has made us weak is the first step in recovering control of ourselves.**

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You confess your previous lack of faith. Before you can be strong, you have to confess your weakness.

You specifically state your besetting sin. When you are fasting to break bondage, you must write out the specific bondage you want to break.

- You strengthen your will by stating what you want.
- You focus your energies on the problem.
- You build up anticipation to break the problem.
- You build up your faith in God to expect an answer.

You fast repeatedly until you get a breakthrough. When Jesus said, “This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (V. 21, KJV), the verb action in the original language is continuous. Jesus meant we should continuously fast to get power over besetting sins.

PRESCRIPTION FOR DELIVERANCE

Step 1. Renounce Counterfeit Control

The first step in breaking spiritual bondage involves *discerning reality from that which is counterfeit*. This requires recognizing and renouncing any control over your mind that is not from Christ. **(2 Cor. 11:3, KJV)**

Pray audibly, “I renounce **(insert here those counterfeit influences that are holding you in spiritual bondage).**”

Step 2: Acknowledge Self-Deception

The second step on the road to Christian liberty involves *discerning truth from that which is deceptive*. David wrote, “You desire truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom (Ps. 51:6).

First, we deceive ourselves when we hear and fail to apply the Word of God in our lives (see Jas. 1:22). Second, if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (I John 1:8). Also, “If anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself” (Gal. 6:3).

As long as we continue to deceive ourselves, we will remain in spiritual bondage.

Pray audibly, “I acknowledge (*insert here those areas where you have deceived yourself*).”

When you are honest with God and yourself, you allow God’s truth to free you from deception.

Step 3: Forgive to Overcome Bitterness

The third step on the path to liberty involves *forgiving others so you can overcome bitterness and gain freedom*. If you refuse to forgive anyone, you place yourself in spiritual bondage to them and to sin. (2 Cor. 2:10, 11, NIV).

As you work through your bondage to sin and others, you should list the names of those you need to forgive. Continually bringing up past sins is evidence that you have not forgiven them.

Forgiveness is a choice.

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Forgiveness is not merely a conflict between yourself and the offender, but a matter between you and God. You choose whether to live in the freedom of forgiveness or in the bitterness of bondage.

Pray audibly, "I forgive (*insert here the names of those who have wronged you in some way*).

As you forgive others, you experience God's forgiveness in your life.

Step 4: Submit to God's Authority

The fourth step involves *overcoming rebellion in our life by submitting to the authority of God and those He has placed over you.*

God has placed all of us "under authority." We are called to submit to the authority of (1) civil government (see **Rom. 13:1-7**); (2) church leadership (see **Heb. 13:17**); (3) parents (see **Eph. 6:1-3**); (4) husbands (see **1 Pet. 3:1-4**); (5) employers (see **1 Pet. 2:13-23**; and (6) God (see **Dan. 9:5, 9**). Each of these authorities has a sphere of influence in our lives.

"I submit to (*insert here the specific authority in your life*)."

Submitting to the authorities God has placed in your life is an important element in the Disciple's Fast because it is evidence of our submission to God Himself.

Step 5: Take Personal Responsibility

The key to experiencing full freedom in Christ is to take responsibility for your actions. When you confess your sins, God promises both cleansing and forgiveness (see **1 John 1:9**).

The cure for confessionitis is found in the way we confess our sins. We should not just say, "I'm sorry for (*insert specific sin here*)."

You are responsible for the sin that has habitual control over your body (see **Rom. 6:13**). To pray, "I'm sorry" doesn't mean you take responsibility for it.

Step 6: Disown Sinful Influences

The final step to spiritual freedom involves *disowning sinful influences that come from friends and acquaintances*.

To gain spiritual liberty over the bondage associated with these influences, we must disown the sins of others and their influence on our lives (see **Exod. 20:4,5; Gal. 5:24**).

First, recognize that you have been crucified, buried and raised with Jesus Christ and you now sit in the heavenlies (see **2 Cor. 4:14**). Second, publicly state you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ (see **Gal. 5:24**). Then verbally claim the blood of Jesus over the evil one (**1 Cor. 6:20; 1 John 1:7**).

These six steps can help you break the influence of things that might otherwise keep you and your family in bondage for generations to come. To summarize:

Six Steps to Freedom

1. I renounce...
2. I acknowledge...
3. I forgive...
4. I submit...
5. I take responsibility...
6. I disown...