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A few years ago, I was one of those ‘believing in fasting but never actually fasting myself’ Christians that never fasted. It just never seemed like something I needed to include in my life.

In 2004, I joined Joshua Generation Church and as I joined the church started a three-day corporate fast. For me, it felt like a good time to do my first fast, having just landed in Cape Town and needing serious direction for some big decisions. In fact, at that stage, I thought that’s all fasting was for—taking time to seek God for direction or unanswered prayers.

Since then, my understanding about fasting has grown to the place where it’s no longer just for those moments I desperately need to hear God on something, but it has become an important spiritual discipline. I realised it’s a discipline that I cannot do without and it’s a powerful tool for this journey I’m on as an alien in this very dark world.

Fasting is one of my chosen weapons against the forces of this world that would satisfy me in anything but God. It sharpens my appetite for the spiritual life I’m called to live.

Fasting means voluntarily going without food (or other pleasures) for a certain amount of time. Living in a culture that focuses on pleasure, comfort, and consumerism makes fasting incredibly counter-cultural. I knew that was a powerful key for a deeper hunger for God and His Kingdom. This is not because I think delicious food, coffee, comfort, friends, travel, shopping, Internet, and other things that could make us happy are evil and that I should run in the opposite direction to a dark room without food. No, it’s because I know these things are gifts from God, but become too important to me at times. These amazing but temporary, physical things numbed me to the eternal spiritual reality I’m supposed to live in and enjoy. They have unfortunately become an easy substitute for God. Fasting is one of my chosen weapons against the forces of this world that would satisfy me in anything but God. It sharpens my appetite for the spiritual life I’m called to live.

Fasting is not reserved for the super spiritual monk. No! Fasting is for everyone who struggles against sin and weakness inside. Fasting is for every Christian.

For me, the key Scripture in the Bible regarding fasting is Mark 2:20. When Jesus was questioned about why his disciples were not fasting he said: “The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.”

We’re in that day without our bridegroom. We’re stuck in the temporary, longing for the eternal. Our spirits are willing, but our flesh is weak. Fasting is part of this lovesickness, this wrestling of our eyes

to remain transfixed on our groom standing way down the isle waiting for us.

I've made fasting a spiritual discipline that I do continually in different ways. As a family we sometimes fast together and there is freedom for each one to decide how he wants to do it. It ranges from complete food fasts to treats, DVDs, and other things, depending on what each one's health and capacity can handle. We do it in faith, knowing that not one of us are more spiritual because of the specific way we're fasting, but that we can rest in what we've got faith for, knowing that we're actively turning out to the world and into God, and that's what counts.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lelani is an Afrikaans born, former Pretoria girl. A mother of 4 young precious children and the happy wife to her amazing husband, Ryan. Together they've been in full time ministry since 2006.

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