

THE DISCIPLE'S FAST

Sometimes it seems like everyone we meet has an addiction. Support groups exist for people addicted to both legal and illegal drugs, gambling, sex, food and even religion. While there are differences in each case and each kind of addiction, all addictions have at least one thing in common: Involvement in the addictive behavior develops to the point where the activity has a stranglehold on the addict.

Addictions may be as common among Christians as non-Christians. You may find yourself struggling with an addiction in your own life. While others think you have it together, there is something in your life that seems to be in control. One of God's chosen fasts, the Disciple's Fast, is designed to help break addictions.

THE PROBLEM OF "BESETTING SINS"

READ PAGES 29-31

The writer of Hebrews identifies the problem of besetting sins that many of us struggle with (see Hebrews 12:1). How are besetting sin? defined (see pages 29-30)?

Does this describe some behavior or attitude with which you are struggling? In what ways?

What is the effect of a besetting sin in anyone's life?

How does Satan use these sins to keep us in spiritual bondage?

How can you break free from bondage and regain control of your life?

THE POWER OF THE DISCIPLE'S FAST

READ PAGES 31-34

The Disciple's Fast begins with making a life-freeing choice to be delivered. Why does fasting strengthen our desire for deliverance from besetting sin?

Why must we recognize the external power responsible for our bondage?

How does fasting strengthen our faith?

Why is it important to identify in writing the bondage you want to break?

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What about the person who fasted once and didn't experience freedom in Christ? Why didn't the Disciple's Fast work for him or her?

THE PRESCRIPTION FOR DELIVERANCE
READ PAGES 34-39

There are six steps in the process of breaking free from bondage as part of the Disciple's Fast. Let's look at these steps more closely.

Step 1: Renounce Counterfeit Control

How can you discern reality from that which is counterfeit?

Step 2: Acknowledge Self-Deception

How is it possible for us to deceive ourselves?

Step 3: Forgive to Overcome Bitterness

What is the best way to overcome personal bitterness?

Step 4: Submit to God's Authority

In what areas of your life do you struggle with authority?

Step 5: Take Personal Responsibility

How does pride continue to enslave you to sin?

Step 6: Disown Sinful Influences

How have you been predisposed to sinful behavior?

How can you overcome these influences in your life?

PRACTICING THE DISCIPLE'S FAST
READ PAGES 40-41

What specific problem are you hoping to address in the Disciple's Fast? Be as specific as possible in expressing your purpose in fasting.

As you begin fasting, what will be the character of this fast? From what foods are you abstaining? When will you begin and end this fast?

How often do you intend to repeat this fast?

Review the six steps in the previous section. As you fast, complete the following statements:

1. Renounce counterfeit control: I renounce...
2. Acknowledge self-deception: I acknowledge...
3. Forgive to overcome bitterness: I forgive...
4. Submit to God's authority: I submit to...
5. Take personal responsibility: I am responsible for...
6. Disown sinful influences: I disown...

Sin needs to be confessed only as publicly as it has been practiced. How public do you need to be in confessing your besetting sin?

A WORD OF PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I find myself struggling with _____ and am unable to overcome this problem on my own. My personal efforts to break free of this bondage have only resulted in frustration. Still, I believe You are able to accomplish far more than I could dream, even in this area of my life. Lord, as I follow your leading in my life and observe the Disciple's Fast, guide me through the process you intend to use to enable me to experience liberty in Christ. Grant me the grace to be receptive to Your Word and submit to the principles you reveal there. In Jesus' name, I pray. **Amen.**

LOOKING AHEAD

Problems are one of the realities of the Christian life. In the next chapter, we will learn how to use the Ezra Fast for solving problems. Prepare for your study by asking God to help you take inventory of the problems you face in which the Ezra Fast could be part of your problem-solving strategy.