

THE EZRA FAST

The only problem with the abundant Christian life is the problems. Sometimes we are tempted to think that our lives would be so much better without all the difficulties that come our way. When we try to blame all our troubles on our ultimate problem of sin, we recognize Adam and Eve faced their own unique challenges before the fall. Problems are a part of life and learning how to resolve problems is part of the process of spiritual growth. In this chapter, we will examine the role of the Ezra Fast in helping resolve problems.

THE PROBLEM WITH PROBLEMS READ PAGES 43-46

According to natural laws, everything that is made will break (see page 43). What are some of the things in your life subject to this law?

This part of the chapter describes three wrong attitudes toward problems:

- You are unusual
- You are unspiritual
- God has forsaken you.

When you face a significant problem in your life, with which of these attitudes do you struggle most? Resolving problems begins with the right attitude. List the three problem-solving attitudes that will galvanize our thinking as we begin the problem-solving process.

1.

2.

3.

What was the problem facing Ezra that resulted in the Ezra Fast?

Is there a particular problem you are currently facing that the Ezra Fast might help you solve?

**THE PRESCRIPTION FOR THE EZRA FAST
READ PAGES 46-50**

There are six steps in the process of solving problems through use of the Ezra Fast. As you work through these steps, begin by identifying a specific problem that will be the focus of your Ezra Fast.

Step 1: Choose Those to Be Involved

Are there others directly affected by this problem? Who should be enlisted to fast with you?

Why should others be interested in joining you on this fast?

Step 2: Share the Problem

How would you express the need in a way that might motivate other to fast?

Step 3: Fast Seriously

How serious are you about this problem?

How is this problem affecting you emotionally?

Do you share responsibility for this problem? Have you confessed any personal sin contributing to this problem? Are you actively praying for others involved in this problem?

Step 4: Fast before Attempting a Solution

Is the timing right to fast? How do you know the timing is right?

What is the spiritual aspect of this problem that fasting can address?

Have you attempted to solve the problem without fasting? Is the problem likely to solve itself whether you fast or not?

Page 3

Step 5: Fast On-Site with Insight

Is there a particular place that has special significance in relation to this problem? Would it be appropriate to visit that place to pray during the fast?

Step 6: Fast for Step-by-Step Guidance

Are you willing to spend significant time considering possible solutions to the problem during the fast? Are there people you should meet with on the fast day to discuss the problem together?

A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PROBLEMS

Read Pages 50 – 56

Sometimes, the way we approach our problems tends to magnify them rather than help solve them. The problem-solving Ezra Fast is not an attempt to escape problems, but to enlist the Holy Spirit's aid in tackling them. Use the following questions to gain a more complete perspective on the problem you are currently facing.

What is the apparent cause of the problem you are currently facing?

How big is this problem?

What are the basic issues to be addressed?

How can the problem be broken down into smaller difficulties to be solved one at a time?

Who is involved in this problem?

Is this a problem to be addressed or ignored?

What does the larger group think about this problem?

What good can come out of solving this problem?

Which people may be helpful in resolving this problem?

Page 4

What do you need to know before beginning to solve this problem?

In what way can this problem help you to grow in your dependence on God?

How TO SOLVE PROBLEMS

READ PACES 56-59

This section describes a five-step problem-solving strategy that needs to be a part of the Ezra Fast. Use the following questions to walk you through that strategy as it applies to the problem about which you are most concerned.

Step 1: Get the Facts

Describe the problem in two or three sentences.

Is there anything missing from your understanding of this problem? What is it?

Step 2: Establish Biblical Principles

What biblical principles apply directly to this situation?

Are there additional principles which may apply indirectly?

Step 3: Evaluate the Facts

How has your view of the problem changed during your fast?

Step 4: Determine the Various Solutions to the Problem

List several possible solutions to this problem.

Step 5: Choose the Best Solution

Which solution is best in this situation at this time?

What steps should be taken to implement this solution?

PRACTICING THE EZRA FAST

READ PAGES 59-60

As you prepare for the Ezra Fast, what specific problem are you hoping to resolve? Be as specific as possible in expressing your purpose in 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?

Who, if anyone, will be fasting with you in this matter?

Will you be meeting together during the fast or fasting individually? How will you be holding one another accountable?

How will you respond if you do not have a solution at the end of your fast? Is there a commitment to continue the process of trying to resolve this problem through repeated fasts?

A WORD OF PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

The problem of _____ has become an increasing source of concern to me. I am not certain how to best resolve this problem. But I know you have the insight I need in this matter and are willing to share that insight with me as I wait on you. Lord, as I follow Your leading in my life and observe the Ezra Fast, guide me through the process of problem solving to come up with a creative solution to this baffling situation. Give me the courage to carry out Your desires regarding the solution to this problem. Begin working in the lives of others so that a good solution may be implemented in a way in which You will be most honored. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

LOOKING AHEAD

One of the greatest needs facing the Church today is that of spiritual renewal and power to accomplish the purposes God intended for the Church, Historically, times of prayer and fasting have played a significant role as the Church prepared for times of revival and spiritual awakening. You may sense a need for personal revival in your own life, hi the next chapter, we will consider the Samuel Fast for revival. Prepare for your study by asking God to create a desire in your own life "so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).