

THE SAMUEL FAST

Not many took notice when Jeremiah Lanphier began advertising a noon prayer meeting in the North Dutch Reformed Church in Manhattan for September 23, 1857. Only six people attended. A week later, that number grew to fourteen. Within a month, people decided to meet for prayer every day. By February 1858, every church and public building in downtown New York was filled at noon as businesspeople gathered together to pray. A spiritual awakening had begun that would eventually reach around the world.

Matthew Henry once wrote, "When God intends great mercy for His people, He first of all sets them praying." Times of fasting and prayer have always preceded great revival. As we study the Samuel Fast together in this chapter, we will take a closer look at the unique relationship between fasting and revival.

FASTING AND REVIVAL

What were the three distinguishing marks of the great revival of 1859?

Atmospheric Revival is described as "corporate revival...when people feel the presence of God" (page 62). How would your life be different if the feeling of God's presence were more common in your Christian experience?

How does the expression "that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" describe revival?

What role did the Samuel Fast have in the national revival in Israel?

PREPARING TO FAST FOR REVIVAL

READ PAGES 63-66

Before revival comes, we must recognize the source of our bondage to sin that hinders revival. Why do you sense a need for revival in your life?

What do you see in your church and community that suggests the need for revival?

How would a sense of God's presence in your church and community make things different?

Page 2

Who shares your sense of a need for revival in your community?

When is the best time you could meet with this group to pray?

Are you willing to assume leadership in praying for revival in your community? Is there another leader in your community for whom you should be more faithfully praying?

**CONDUCTING THE SAMUEL FAST
READ PAGES 66-74**

The six steps involved in conducting the Samuel Fast are common to any type of revival whether for your family, church or community. As you fast for a spiritual awakening in your personal sphere of influence, use the questions to guide you through these steps.

Step 1: Call the Body Together

Whom should you invite to join you in fasting and prayer for revival?

Step 2: Demonstrate True Repentance

What sins do you need to deal with in your life to demonstrate your sincerity in praying for revival?

Step 3: Separate from Secret Sin

What hidden sins has God revealed to you during your fast?

Step 4: Have Corporate Confession of Sin

What corporate sins need to be confessed by your prayer group?

Step 5: Acknowledge the Power of the Word

During your fast, read the scriptural accounts of great revivals listed on pages 70-72. What is God saying to you through these revival experiences recorded in Scripture?

Step 6: Get in Touch with the Symbolic

Are you using the Samuel Fast as a legalistic tool to force God to send revival, or as an expression of your personal brokenness before God?

**AFTER THE SAMUEL FAST
READ PAGES 74-77**

How is Satan likely to respond to your involvement in the Samuel Fast?

How are relationships involved in fasting for revival?

What actions would God have you take in response to insights gained during the Samuel Fast?

What signs are there that God has begun to work in a unique way in your life, family, church and community?

What special answers to prayer have you experienced through this fast that will encourage you to remain faithful in prayer in the days to come?

**PRACTICING THE SAMUEL FAST
READ PAGES 77-79**

Why do you think the time has come to fast for revival?

Describe the conditions in your own life that motivate you to fast the Samuel Fast.

What concerns in your church cause you to think revival is needed?

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?

The Samuel Fast sometimes dictates that you not pray for revival, but for God's *instrument* of revival—a godly leader through whom God can work (page 77), Who are the godly leaders God can use to bring revival in your community?

Page 4

In addition to prayer, what other actions is God leading you to take to insure the coming of revival to your community?

There are many groups whose desire for revival is expressed in urging others to become involved in a significant fast for revival. The most credible of these groups are quick to urge Christians to begin with shorter fasts before engaging in a longer fast. Look over your fasting plans. Are you attempting too much? Would you be better off engaging in a series of short fasts than in one long fast? Have you asked God to guide you as to the nature and duration of your fast for revival?

A WORD OF PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

In my own life, I sense a deep hunger and thirst for a deeper relationship with You. I am personally frustrated with my own spiritual impotence, and I long to see You work in a significant way in my life, my church and my community. I believe You want to revive Your people so that a significant harvest of souls might be gathered in these days. Lord, as I follow Your leading in my life and observe the Samuel Fast, reveal things in my life which hinder my relationship with You and prevent You from working in and through my life. Grant me the grace to be receptive to Your Word and submit to Your will for me as You make it known. In Jesus' name, I pray. **Amen.**

LOOKING AHEAD

People are creatures of habit. Some of our habits are good and commendable. Other habits are ongoing sources of embarrassment and frustration. Our inability to break bad habits causes us a great deal of irritation. In the next chapter, we will consider the Elijah Fast as a means for breaking negative mental and emotional habits. Prepare for your study by asking God to help you identify a specific habit in your life that the time has come for you to break.