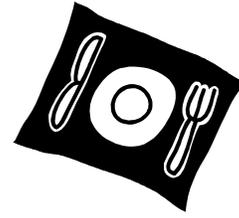


# Fasting Brings Blessings



## *What is the purpose of our monthly fast day?*

"Most of us fast in conjunction with our membership in the Church and its law of the fast. Generally speaking, there are three purposes for such a fast. First is to increase humility and spirituality of the individual fasting. Second is to provide assistance to the needy by contributing fast offerings equivalent to the value of the food which has not been consumed. Third, physical benefits may be derived personally." (Russell M. Nelson, "I Have a Question," *Ensign*, Apr. 1976, p. 32)

## *What is considered an appropriate fast offering?*

"The generous offering to the bishop is understood to represent the financial equivalent of at least two meals. A liberal donation so reserved and dedicated to the poor is ennobling to the soul and helps one develop charity, one of the greatest attributes of a noble human character. (See 1 Cor. 13.). (Russell M. Nelson, "I Have a Question," p. 33)

President Spencer W. Kimball had this to say about the amount we contribute for a fast offering:

"I think we should be very generous and give, instead of the amount we saved by our two meals of fasting, perhaps much, much more—ten times more where we are in a position to do it." (in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, p. 184)

## *What other principle is always associated with fasting?*

A proper fast begins and ends with prayer. Fasting without prayer is simply going without food.

## *When, other than on the regularly designated fast day, should a person fast?*

We can fast when we need extra help and strength to complete a task, solve a problem, or gain a special blessing. Fasting and prayer can help us develop greater humility and faith.

## *What are the benefits we receive from fasting?*

"Fasting, with prayer, its companion, is designed to increase spirituality, to foster a spirit of devotion and a love of God, to increase faith in the hearts of men, thus assuring divine favor; to encourage humility and contrition of soul; to aid in the acquirement of righteousness; and to teach man his nothingness and dependence upon God; and to hasten along the path of salvation those who properly comply with this law of fasting."

(Thorpe B. Isaacson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1962, p. 67; or *Improvement Era*, June 1962, p. 438)

## Fasting Is a Source of Power

*Elder Hugh B. Brown had been leaving missionary tracts at some homes in Cambridge, England. His lack of success caused him to return to his apartment feeling tired, discouraged, and sorry for himself. A short time later, a man came to his door asking to see him. The man said:*

" 'Last Sunday there were 17 of us heads of families left the Church of England. We went to my home where I have a rather large room. Each of us has a large family, and we filled the large room with men, women and children. We decided that we would pray all through the week that the Lord would send us a new pastor. When I came home tonight I was discouraged, I thought our prayer had not been answered. But when I found this tract under my door, I knew the Lord had answered our prayer. Will you come tomorrow night and be our new pastor?' "

Now, I hadn't been in the mission field three days. I didn't know anything about missionary work, and he wanted me to be their pastor. But I was reckless enough to say, 'Yes, I'll come.' And I repented from then till the time of the meeting.

"He left, and took my appetite with him! I called in the lady of the house and told her I didn't want any [food]. I went up to my room and prepared for bed. I knelt at my bed. My young brothers and sisters, for the first time in my life I talked with God. I told Him of my predicament. I pleaded for His help. I asked Him to guide me. I pleaded that He would take it off my hands. I got up and went to bed and couldn't sleep and got out and prayed again, and kept that up all night—but I really talked with God.

"The next morning I told the landlady I didn't want any breakfast and I went up on the campus in Cambridge and walked all morning. I came in at noon and told her I didn't want any lunch. Then I walked all afternoon. I had a short-circuited mind—all that I could think of was that I have got to go down there tonight and be a pastor.

"I came back to my room at 6:00 and I sat there meditating, worrying, wondering. ... Finally it came to the point where the clock said 6:45. I got up and put on my long Prince Albert coat, my stiff hat which I had acquired in Norwich, took my walking cane (which we always carried in those days), my kid gloves, put a Bible under my arm, and dragged myself down to that building, literally. I just made one track all the way.

"Just as I got to the gate the man came out, the man I had seen the night before. He bowed very politely and said, 'Come in, Reverend, sir.' I had never been called that before. I went in and saw the room filled with people, and they all stood up to honor their new pastor, and that scared me to death.

"Then I had to come to the point where I began to think what I had to do, and I realized I had to say something about singing. I suggested that we sing 'O My Father.' I was met with a blank stare. We sang it—it was a terrible cowboy solo. Then I thought, if I could get these people to turn around and kneel by their chairs, they wouldn't be looking at me while I prayed. I asked them if they would and they responded readily. They all knelt down and I knelt down, and for the second time in my life I talked with God. All fear left me. I didn't worry any more. I was turning it over to Him.

"I said to Him, among other things, 'Father in Heaven, these folks have left the Church of England. They have come here tonight to hear the truth. You know that I am not prepared to give them what they want, but Thou art, O God, the one that can; and if I can be an instrument through whom You speak, very well, but please take over.'

"When we arose most of them were weeping, as was I. Wisely I dispensed with the second hymn, and I started to talk. I talked 45 minutes. I don't know what I said. I didn't talk—God spoke through me, as subsequent events proved. And He spoke so powerfully to that group that at the close of that meeting they came and put their arms around me, held my hands. They said, 'This is what we have been waiting for. Thank God you came.'

"I told you I dragged myself down to that meeting. On my way back home that night I only touched ground once, I was so elated that God had taken off my hands an insuperable task for man.

"Within three months every man, woman and child in that audience was baptized a member of the Church. I didn't baptize them because I was transferred. But they all joined the Church and most of them came to Utah and Idaho. I have seen some of them in recent years. They are elderly people now, but they say they never have attended such a meeting, a meeting where God spoke to them." (Hugh B. Brown, *Father, Are You There?* [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1967], pp. 13-15)

*Elder Matthew Cowley, a former member of the Council of the Twelve, tells the story of how a humble bishop blessed a young boy:*

"Of course there are times when you don't have time to fast much; you don't have time to pray much, emergencies, you have to rush. But on the other hand I think if we have a little time, and we intend to go and bless someone, it doesn't do any harm to do a little fasting. I think God accepts of that fasting.

"We have a mutual friend in Honolulu, ... a man who is a young bishop down there, very wealthy, and yet a young man with a lot of humility. He was called one day from the Queen's Hospital to come and bless a boy who had polio. A native sister had called him. He was her bishop, and she said, 'Bishop, come up here, my boy is stricken with polio, and I want you to come up here and administer to him and bless him.' All day she waited for him, and the bishop never showed up. All night he never showed up, the next morning he never showed up, but early in the afternoon here he came. She turned loose on him. She called him everything she could think of. 'You, my bishop, I call you and tell you my boy is here stricken with polio. And you your own boss, you have your cars; you have a beautiful yacht; you have everything you want; and your time is your own; and you don't show up. You just come now after a whole day.' After she had finished and couldn't think of anything more to call him, he smiled and said, 'Well, after I hung up the receiver yesterday, I started to fast, and I've been fasting and praying for twenty-four hours. I'm ready now to bless your boy.' At five o'clock that evening the boy was released from the hospital entirely cured of his polio. '... this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.'

"Now I doubt very much if he had gone up there the day before that would have happened. I think that prayer and that fasting were needed." (Matthew Cowley, *Matthew Cowley Speaks* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954], pp. 149-50)