

## ***Seeking the Lord for Encounter and Breakthrough: 21 Days of Fasting***

### **INTRODUCTION**

As you can see from the title of the handout, we're calling a twenty-one-day season of fasting and prayer as a spiritual family. Father, I ask You just to bless the speaking and the hearing of Your word. And I ask You for impartation. I ask You for revelation of Your heart and Your purpose for this season that lies ahead. We thank You in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Our leadership in the last two to three months has been talking about having a time of corporate fasting and prayer together, because it's clear from the Scriptures and even from history that when people fast and pray, more happens. We haven't had a corporate season of fasting as a spiritual family for a couple of years, and so in the last two or three months we've been talking about it quite a bit. And it was on Monday that Allen Hood said, "You know what? It's time."

And that was kind of like the catalytic word, and a number of our leaders at the time agreed to that. And so I met with several other leaders throughout the week, and I wanted a firm commitment to what we're going to do together, and for what reason and for what purpose. And I want to share a little of that this morning.

Now Lou Engle was at the table as well, and he wanted to do a forty-day fast! And Allen and Misty and others were shaking their heads. I said, "Whoa, whoa! Slow down!" So you can praise the Lord for me; I was there! We're doing twenty-one days.

Now, having said that (and I'm being playful!), Lou and a company of people in Kansas City and abroad have committed to a forty-day fast, and we're beginning the same day. We're going for the first twenty-one days with him, and then those who have strength and grace will be in the position to go all the way if you want. Because what's on Lou's heart is the Detroit call, the meeting in the big football stadium in Detroit on November 11—11/11/11 is the date—where we're going to call out to the Lord to build the Lord's house right in the heart of Islam. Detroit is the heart of Islam in our nation. And Islam is growing very, very fast. But the Lord is raising up a house that will contend with every other house. And His church is a house of prayer, and there's no other house of prayer that will prevail over His house.

### **THIS NATION AND THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD ARE BEING SHAKEN**

Well, why are we calling this fast? When we look around at our nation today, it's obvious that things in our nation are shaking. And that shaking is increasing clearly in a very rapid way in the area of the economy. There's moral chaos: the family unit is under assault throughout our nation. The church is wavering and compromising, and we need a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a great awakening. So as a nation, there's a lot of shaking.

And the answer to the shaking really is calling God into the situation. Islam is increasing in its power and influence. Israel right now is in the balance, so to speak. A very significant vote is being held in the next few days about having two states in the nation of Israel—the Palestinian state and the nation of Israel. And most of the nations of the world are weighing in in favor of that. And that is going to cause conflict all around the Middle East.

And it's really going to affect, not only our nation, but our neighborhoods. That's really important! There are family members in each of our families that need breakthrough, and they need the Lord's visit. And so we want to pray for family members. But as a spiritual family together, we're in need of a fresh encounter, a strengthening of our spirit together. So from the national shaking that's happening, the rise of Islam, and the trouble in Israel, there's a need in our own spirit and in our own natural families as well for a spiritual strengthening. We put those together. And I agree with Allen: it's really time. It's time to do it now.

### **THE BALANCE OF THE BATTLE IS IN THE HANDS OF THE PRAYING CHURCH**

And let's just start on September 29, and it's twenty-one days. And again, for those who have strength and grace, who want to continue the additional nineteen days, Lou has given forth the call to many around the nation who are eagerly jumping in.

Because when there's no human remedy, God has a remedy. God has a solution. In every one of these problems, there's a solution. That's good news. There really is a solution, but the balance of the battle, the conflict that is waging war in our nation, the conflict in the realm of the spirit, the great conflict between light and dark, is clashing like no other time in recent days. It's coming into great collision. The balance of the battle is in the hands of the praying church.

The Lord said, "If My people would humble themselves and pray. . ." (2 Chron. 7:14, paraphrased). He didn't say, "If the government of the nation will pray." He said, "If *My people* will do it." The answer to America doesn't lie in Washington, D.C.; it lies in the praying church. It lies in the prayer rooms of this nation, because that will change the spiritual atmosphere, which will affect the governmental centers of the earth.

And that's what we will look at in a moment. We'll look at Daniel 10, where Daniel went into a time of fasting and prayer in a time of shaking. And then again in Daniel 9, we find another account. We find two different accounts of Daniel going into fasting and prayer in a time of conflict, and the Lord having an answer, and the Lord speaking His heart.

So we'll look at Daniel 10, if you want to turn to that. We'll consider what Daniel observed, what he experienced, as a model for us. We'll look first at what happened to Daniel and what he saw. Then we'll take a shorter look at Daniel 9. These are two different accounts in the Bible of a prophet waging warfare in prayer and fasting and encounter, having angelic encounters that reveal what's going on. And that gives us strength so we know and have perspective of what's really happening.

Well first, I want to talk about fasting for a moment. It's just a fact of Scripture and a fact of history that when people gather to fast and pray, more happens. It's a fact. More happens when we do it, more Holy Spirit activity. Our spirit becomes tenderized. There's an acceleration of Holy Spirit activity inside of us as well as in the spiritual atmosphere, in the conflict of demons and angels. And that manifests itself in society, in government. It has many different manifestations in the spheres of society in a nation. When we add fasting to our prayer, the prayer is intensified. That's just how it works. And fasting is a gift, and God gives us as a people, the Body of Christ worldwide, the grace of fasting. Fasting is a grace. And I encourage you to ask the Lord for help and strength in this season if the Lord calls you to be a part of this.

Now we don't earn anything from fasting. It's not like because we fast, we're proving how sincere we are. And because we're so sincere, now God is obligated to move. That's not what's happening. But rather, fasting

positions us before God to be tenderized. It puts a bull's eye on our heart in the good sense, and the Spirit touches us. And we receive more and we receive it faster when we're in a place of fasting, because our spirit is so much more tenderized. It's a mysterious combination between spiritual hunger—we must have more!—and physical hunger when we abstain from food as an expression of our spiritual hunger. The two of them work together in a strange, mysterious way.

### **DANIEL PURSUED FASTING AND PRAYER WITH STEADFASTNESS HIS ENTIRE LIFE**

Well, let's look at the story Daniel tells us of his own encounter in Daniel 10. Now, just to get the context, Daniel is in his eighties. In Daniel 10, he's about eighty-four years old. In Daniel 9, which we'll look at next, he's about eighty-two years old. The experiences are about two years apart. So he's an elderly man. He's been single for the Lord his whole life, in our language. He gave himself to the Lord in the most intense way, and so putting it in our terms, he was single. He worked in politics. He had a very high political position in Babylon and then in Persia, which today would be Iraq and Iran, respectively.

So he had a very high position in the government, but he had this life of fasting and prayer. It says in Daniel 6:10 that from his early days he would pray three times daily—through his twenties, thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, and seventies. In his eighties, he's maintaining this lifestyle of engaging with God while having a full-time job. He's quite a remarkable man! The thing that so impresses me about Daniel is that at the end of his life, he was just as on-fire for the Lord, if not *more* on-fire for the Lord, than he was in his youth. And he was really on-fire for the Lord in his youth. He didn't wear out; he didn't kind of drift away. He wasn't looking to retire; he was looking to re-fire. And I believe it's good to retire from an occupation, but not to retire spiritually. We want to engage until the last days of our life, and to be fully involved with what God is doing.

I mean, here's a man in his eighties; he ends so well. Could you imagine being in your eighties, and instead of drawing back and saying, "You know I've labored hard for fifty, sixty, seventy years, and I deserve time off," trying to change the nation in your eighties? He's engaging with God in his entire nation, in the whole international scene, in his eighties. I mean, what a remarkable man of vision! I want to be like him. I want to get more on-fire for the Lord as the years unfold.

Again, go ahead and retire from your occupation, your secular job; but don't ever retire spiritually. Don't ever draw back and say, "Well, I put some good years in; I think I'll coast for a while!" No. Press in until the end.

### **DANIEL MOURNED FOR THREE WEEKS OVER THE TROUBLE IN JERUSALEM**

Well, let's look at Daniel's story. This is his story in his own words. Now in my handout here I'm just giving the abbreviated version; but you can follow along and get the long version if you just want to read in your own bible.

Verse 2. Again, he's about eighty-four years old. He's been mourning for three weeks. So this is a three-week fast; and that's where we get the idea, from Daniel 10.

Now he's mourning, I believe, over the trouble in Jerusalem. And you can read about that trouble in Ezra 4. I didn't put that in the notes. There's great conflict in Jerusalem. He's far away from Jerusalem. He's in Babylon, which is now under Persian control. And he's mourning. He says, "I want to see; I want to see more happen."

Because he understood God had more. There was more God wanted to do in Jerusalem, and it wasn't being done. And he was in pain over it. So he began to cry out, to fast and pray, "God, break in!" And in the context of praying for the national conflict that is happening around the city of Jerusalem and the international conflict with the nations surrounding it, he ends up having an angelic visitation, and he gets insight into God's plan for Israel and the nations, far beyond his own generation.

So two things were happening. He was praying for his own situation and his own time, but he also gained insight into the glory and purpose of God, and the trouble and victory that are coming for generations still to come.

**"I ATE NO PLEASANT FOOD . . . TILL THREE WHOLE WEEKS WERE FULFILLED"**

Verse 2. He was mourning for twenty-one days. "I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled" (Dan. 10:3).

Now look at verse 11. If you read the whole story, this is a mighty angel who suddenly appears to Daniel and his team, because Daniel's team is with him. Daniel sees this angel whose eyes were like torches of fire. And it says his face was like lightning, and his words were like the sound of a multitude. I mean, this is way beyond Charlton Heston as Moses in *The Ten Commandments*. This was intense! He has the voice of a multitude. This isn't the Lord appearing; it's a mighty angel.

Daniel is absolutely overwhelmed. And his friends, his team, don't actually see the angel, but the intense manifestation of the presence of God was so terrifying that they fled and hid. And they didn't even see the angel because the atmosphere was so charged with the majesty and the dread of the Lord.

Well, this glorious, majestic, terrifying, high-ranking angel, says this: "O Daniel, man greatly beloved" (Dan. 10:11). I mean, Daniel is trembling. And the angel says, "God really loves you specifically, Daniel." What a great message! What an opening statement.

**PRAYERS THAT ARE OFFERED IN WEAKNESS ASCEND IN POWER**

Verse 12. Now we understand what's happening when we fast and pray. Verses 12 and 13 are so important, because they pull back the veil and let us see how God is responding, and what's happening with angels and demons when we're engaged in fasting and prayer. Now the reason it's important to see this is because, when we're fasting and praying, we're weak. Because fasting is far more about weakness than it is about hunger.

Now people who haven't fasted much think, "No, fasting is about hunger."

And it is for a couple days, but far more troublesome than the hunger is the weakness. Your brain is fuzzy. You're lethargic. You have all kinds of emotional weakness. You think, "Oh, Lord!" At least that's how I get. And I'm sure you understand that if you've been on any kind of extended fast. And so the prayers aren't so awesome. I mean, we say, "Lord, would You move? Break in. Now. Break in, Lord." I mean, they're pretty weak. But here's the glory: they're offered in weakness but they ascend in power. So, having been on a few extended fasts in my day, I understand how he feels. He's praying; he's in his eighties; he has a full-time job. He's on this extended fast. Twenty-one days later, his prayers aren't eloquent and dynamic in the human sense. I believe he's struggling.

But in verses 12 and 13, he pulls back the veil. I mean, the angel appears and describes how God feels when we're offering such weak prayers. God was moved. God dispatched angels to Daniel's aid in order to break into the situation to make a difference.

And then we see the conflict between angels and demons. It's the most helpful passage to tell us what happens on the other side in the spiritual realm. Let's read verse 12. Remember, this mighty, terrifying angel with a face like lightning has just said, "God really loves you, Daniel." But then he goes on to say, "From the very first day you set your heart to understand, from the very first day you humbled yourself before God, here's the good news: your words were heard" (Dan. 10:12, paraphrased). From the very first day—this is twenty-one days later. "God heard your words," which means He approved.

Of course Daniel could say, "Well, if He approved on day one, why have I been starving for the last twenty days?"

The angel says, "As a matter-of-fact, not only has God heard you with approval, I've actually come because of your words."

What an incredible sentence! Imagine: the angels come because we pray and we fast.

### **GOD WILL SEND BREAKTHROUGH IN RESPONSE TO OUR CRIES**

Now some people have a wrong view of the sovereignty of God. And in their view, they say, "If God wants to send me an angel, He will send me an angel."

There's certainly truth to that. But Daniel's experience was this: that God in His sovereignty said, "I'll send an angelic breakthrough, but it will be in response to your earnestness in crying out for Me."

And Daniel could have said, "Well, skip the earnestness part; skip the fasting and prayer. If You want me to be visited by an angel, send the angel."

But the Lord in His sovereignty said, "I'll send the angel, but I'll send him in response to you seeing Me in earnestness."

And the angel's appearance isn't just so that things would be a little exciting and terrifying; the angel's appearance was a token of the breakthrough that was represented by the angel's message. So let's read verse 12 again: "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words" (Dan. 10:12). There's a direct cause-and-effect that's taking place. When we fast and pray, God hears with approval, and if we're praying in His will, the angelic realm is more active. It doesn't mean we're going to see the angel. We might, but the angels are far more active when the people of God on the earth are fasting and praying.

### **UNDERSTANDING INCREASES IN HEIGHTENED SEASONS OF FASTING AND PRAYER**

Now Daniel set his heart to understand. We don't just need human commentary on the dilemma; we need divine understanding. If you get your discernment from the news commentators, they will identify the wrong problem and the wrong solution. The commentators will identify a problem that seems the most obvious. And the Lord's

perspective is always different. He says, “That’s not the real problem. That’s just a by-product of the real problem that no one is even identifying. And the real solution is this; it’s not what they say.”

So Daniel wanted God’s perspective on the real problem, not just the symptoms of the problem. And Daniel wanted God’s perspective on the real solution, not just the band-aid that would address the symptoms. So he came and he set his heart. “Lord, I want understanding.” And as a spiritual family, we want understanding as to what’s happening in our nation with respect to the increase of Islam, and what’s going to happen right now, both here in Israel, and what our role is to effect change, and what God thinks about His spiritual family being touched and strengthened. We need understanding for what God thinks about our nation and the nations of the world. We need understanding for what God thinks about our family members. Understanding increases in these heightened seasons of fasting and prayer.

### **GOD’S WILL WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN DANIEL’S LEGITIMATE NEEDS**

So the angel said, “You set your heart to understand. That was good. That’s what you want to do. And you humbled yourself before God.”

Now, the reason this is humbling, the reason God considers fasting and prayer to be humble, is because Daniel was laying aside his legitimate human needs. I mean, eating is legitimate. It’s God-ordained. He was laying aside a legitimate comfort and a legitimate need for a short season of time to give himself in a heightened way to the purpose of God.

Now he was always given to God’s purpose. He always cared about God’s purpose. But he said, “I care about Your purpose so much that for a short season in a very heightened way, I will put aside legitimate things that are necessary that are in the will of God, to make Your purpose even more pronounced in my life and in my thinking.”

And God calls that *humility*. He says, “You humbled yourself. My will is more important to you than your legitimate needs and comforts in this season.” And the Lord says, “It moves Me that you’re so moved by what is on My heart.”

So that is why the angel said, “God calls that *humility*.”

It’s humility when you fast and pray. It takes humility. Because if you think you have the answer and you’re not that troubled by the problem, you’re won’t fast and pray. But when we don’t have the answer, the problem troubles us and we need divine intervention. And we care so much that Your will is done.

And the Lord says, “It moves My heart that My will and My ways move your heart.”

Now I’m sure Daniel didn’t feel heard. I mean, here he is on day twenty-one: “O Lord, help.” I’m just guessing he didn’t feel much.

But behind the scenes there’s this whole angelic realm of activity and God is moved and God calls him *beloved*. And God says, “You’re humble. I will answer you.”

And again, the breakthrough of the angel, the appearing of the angel was a token, a down payment of a larger answer that would unfold in its time. Now he has God's perspective that he's humble, that he's loved. The angel came because of his words. God approved of his words.

Now verse 13 is a really interesting verse, because Daniel gets a glimpse into the spiritual realm and the conflict between angels and demons. Now verse 13 is an often-referred to verse related to spiritual warfare. Now I don't have that verse written on the notes—Ephesians 6:12. Paul describes part of the demonic hierarchy that is over cities of the earth. Did you know—and most of you do—there's a demonic hierarchy over all the cities and governments of the earth? And what I mean is this: there's a chain of command with high-ranking demons called principalities. And there are powers and world forces of wickedness, and Paul lists five different levels, different ranks of demons that are afflicting the cities and the leaders and the people of the earth.

Now those demons move in the invisible realm. And Paul says they're in the mid-heavens. They're in the invisible realm, but they're deeply involved in all the national governments of the earth. These demons want to influence the leaders of the nations of the earth, to enrage them with cruel and insane ideas, and to stir up their pride and to get them to act in selfishness and cruelty, and to treat people wrongly in oppression, and to make these policies. And these kings get touched by these demons, and they get these crazy ideas of oppression and cruelty. And they're emboldened in their pride and they're enraged in their bitterness. And they're in exactly the right position to create chaos for their nation. But if that demon is driven back and isn't influencing that king, that king is going to be far more of sound mind.

You know, even an unbelieving king won't do nearly as much wickedness without demonic influence. So these kings get in these crazy moods, with cruelty and bitterness and anger, but emboldened in their pride: "We will do this. We will do that! And I don't care." Those are demons breathing like hot fire on their spirit and they don't even know it. They think it's their idea. It's not; it's a demon moving on them. And Daniel found out that when the demons moved out of the way, out of the place of influence, the kings make very different decisions, and craft very different policies.

And so therefore, the biggest issue is what is happening in the spirit realm of our nation, not what's happening in the board rooms or the court rooms or the Oval Office. Those are byproducts of spiritual conflicts and influence, good and evil, on the leaders at every level of society from the top of the government all the way down.

#### **"THE PRINCE OF THE KINGDOM OF PERSIA WITHSTOOD ME TWENTY-ONE DAYS"**

Well, in verse 13, Daniel describes this for us. I so appreciate him putting this in his testimony. He said, "The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days" (Dan. 10:13). This is the high-ranking angel talking, this terrifying angel that terrified Daniel and his friends because of his majesty and his power, the glory of God that was in his being. He says, "The prince of Persia withstood me for twenty-one days, ever since you've been fasting and praying. I came, but this high-level demon wouldn't let me get to you. He wouldn't let me influence the situation."

"But behold"—I love that! "Behold, Michael the archangel" (Dan. 10:13b, paraphrased). He's called a chief prince, meaning one of the high-ranking angels. Jude calls him an archangel, which is a high-ranking angel (Jude 9). Michael came to help him. I mean, how interesting is this? Angels helping angels to withstand

demons, so that the guy on the earth gets his prayer answered and history changes. Now that's a drama! It's all right there in verse 13.

### **BE SILENT WHERE THE BIBLE IS SILENT, AND WHISPER WHERE IT WHISPERS**

Now, as we know, ancient Persia is modern-day Iran; ancient Babylon is modern-day Iraq. And these demonic powers were stirring Babylon and Persia, Iran and Iraq against Israel. It's the same problem happening today. Why? It's the same demons with the same personalities. The prince of Persia, the demonic power, is stirred up again. And that's why the government in Iran has these really wicked ideas about Israel, because they're being motivated by a demonic power. But the praying church could cry out in the name of Jesus, and the angels would break through, and even other ranks of angels would join in to help. I think that's how it works; we don't know all the details.

And it really makes a difference. Our prayers really do affect America, because we change the spiritual atmosphere, and it changes the environment of how leaders make decisions, the spiritual environment around them. And they don't even know that it changed. They don't know. They just think they're in a good mood. You know: "I've been in a funk for the last three months, but I'm in a good mood now. I think I will make good policies."

"Why do you think you were in a funk the last three months?"

"I don't know. I just woke up in a bad mood. I haven't had much sleep."

"There was a demon harassing you."

"Oh I don't believe in demons."

"You don't have to believe in them. They'll still harass you. You don't have to believe in them; they surely believe in you. They know you're there." Wow. What an amazing story.

Now I don't want to give too much detail about how the angels work, because I don't know the details. That's the reason I'm not going into it. I want to be silent where the Bible is silent, and I want to whisper where the Bible whispers. And the Bible only whispers about the angelic activity, enough for us to know a little of the broad strokes of what happens, but some people are fascinated by angels and they want to go way out into understanding all the mysteries. I don't want to understand the mysteries; I want to know what the Bible says. So we know the broad strokes, and that's good enough for now.

Now some would say, "Boy, I would love for the veil to be lifted. We could see what Daniel saw." And I think that that happens occasionally; the Lord shows prophets and prophetesses here and there, according to His will. But we don't need the veil to lift in order to see; we have the biblical record. Daniel didn't have a Bible verse to look at. He wrote it. *We* have the Bible verse. So I don't need an angel to appear and say, "God heard you. God loves you. And the demons are moving and the angels are more active." I've already got the record of it. And so we have confidence in that record. And so that is the point of reading it today.

OK, verse 14. The angel says, "I will make you understand what is going to happen to Israel in the last days. I will give you God's perspective. I want to show you the real problem, not just the symptoms of the problem.

And I will show you the real solution, not just the band-aids. This is what God thinks” (Dan. 10:14, paraphrased).

Beloved, we need understanding. And he says, “I will show you what is going to happen to your people”—the nation of Israel. Daniel is a Jewish prophet.

Now look at verse 20. This is so interesting. He finishes his conversation and says, “I have to go! I have to go. I’m in such a hurry.” I’m adding a little of my own dialogue here. “I have to return and fight the principality, the demonic principality over Persia, because the demonic principality of Greece is getting stirred up. I mean, it’s really intense out there. We’re really going for it! Gotta go, Daniel! I’ll see you the next time God sends me your way, but keep fasting, because if I don’t come immediately, that means I’m being withheld. But I kept coming and Michael was sent because you kept fasting and praying.”

If Daniel hadn’t fasted and prayed, he wouldn’t have had this breakthrough. So it’s an amazing encouragement for us.

### **A NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CRISIS OVER THE CITY OF JERUSALEM**

Roman numeral II. Let’s look at the other account of Daniel’s fasting and praying. These two accounts are so valuable to us as believers today, to understand how God feels, how God responds, and what angels and demons are doing.

Now what’s happening in this account is that he’s going to get prophetic understanding that Israel, again, or Jerusalem specifically, is in the midst of a crisis. So there’s a national and international crisis centered around the city of Jerusalem. In both of these chapters, chapters 9 and 10, there’s a crisis over Jerusalem, so it’s a national crisis for Israel. And then there’s an international, adversarial activity; there’s a shift in nations. All of these things are happening in both of these prayer and fasting times.

Let’s look at verse 3. Now he’s about eighty-two; he’s two years younger in this one. Again, he’s an elderly man who’s giving himself to this. He sets his face towards the Lord with prayer and supplication (Dan. 9:3)—a word which is almost synonymous with *prayer*. There’s a bit of nuance involved.

“. . . with fasting” (Dan. 9:3b). Again, fasting intensifies the prayer. Because when we fast, our spirit gets tenderized. When our spirit is tenderized, we’re far more in agreement with God. We’re far more responsive to God. We have greater faith. We have greater clarity and boldness. When our spirit is tenderized, we respond in a very different way to God and God responds to our response. So fasting doesn’t earn us anything, but fasting changes us so that we respond in a deeper and a quicker way and in greater agreement with God’s heart, which is called *faith*.

Verse 21. I skipped the prayer itself from verses 4-20. So we fast forward to verse 21, to where we see the angelic interaction. This time Gabriel is involved—Gabriel the archangel and Michael the archangel. Daniel is praying. And we don’t know how long the prayer in Daniel 9 is. It could have gone a few weeks. We just don’t know. We know the prayer in Daniel 10 is twenty-one days. Here we’re not really given the length, but I’m assuming it went on for a few weeks. That’s just an assumption.

And so I assume Daniel is tired. And I assume he isn't feeling that much. And he's shocked when Gabriel appears. Because I tell you, beloved, there's so much happening on the other side in the spiritual realm that we don't see or feel. But it's happening; we have the testimony of Scripture.

**“I HAVE NOW COME FORTH TO GIVE YOU SKILL TO UNDERSTAND”**

“While I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel talked to me, and said, ‘O Daniel, I have come forth to give you skill to understand’” (Dan. 9:21-22, paraphrased). Now he's called “the man Gabriel” because in Daniel's generation, the doctrine of angels hasn't been developed much. As a matter of fact, Daniel contributes more on the subject of angels, their names, and their activity related to demonic powers than any other one person in the whole Old Testament. So Daniel doesn't have a fully-developed doctrine of angels.

By the way, I didn't include the whole story, but if you read it, the angel is flying towards him from heaven, and he's flying fast. Daniel says, “He flew swiftly towards me” (Dan. 9:21, paraphrased). So he knows he isn't a man.

But he has the form of a man. “It's this man coming from the sky, flying—whoa!”

“Daniel, that's an angel.”

“OK, I'll get all that clear.”

As a matter of fact, we know it's an angel because Daniel recorded the story. Then Gabriel appears a few times in the New Testament, so we have more of an idea of who Gabriel is and what he's about. But in that day, this was new to Daniel. So that's why he calls him a man. So don't be thrown off by that.

Gabriel says, “I come to give you skill to understand. I want you to have biblical understanding.” I mean, not *biblical*; God's perspective is what I mean, which is biblical, too. “I want you to have God's perspective, so that you know the real problems and the real solutions; so that you can pray in agreement with God.”

Look at verse 23; it's the same testimony. “At the beginning of your supplications the command went out” (Dan. 9:23)—or at the beginning of his prayer. When he first started praying, God heard. Gabriel says, “On the day you started praying God commanded me to come.”

Then, two years later, in the account we just read in Daniel 10, the mighty angel says the same thing: “On day one, God heard with approval and sent me” (Dan. 10:12, paraphrased).

Well, beloved, day one He's hearing us. Someone says, “Well, why do we need to go to day two if He heard us already?” Because there's conflict with real demonic powers. And so we set aside twenty-one days.

You say, “Well, why don't we all join Lou and do forty days? I mean if twenty-one is good, forty is better.”

Well, verse 23. OK, that's a good argument. Lou said, “Forty days! Let's do forty days!”

I said, “Lou, we're just mortal men! This is hard to do!”

You know, the thing about Lou that I so appreciate is that he's a mighty man in his spirit. He's so aware of his weakness, but he's mighty in the spirit. He's the only one in this world who doesn't get that he's mighty. It's the best-kept secret, and everyone knows it but him. I guess that's called *humility*. But he doesn't understand it.

I said, "Lou, I'm sure God will touch some others with grace to go the distance with you on that forty-day fast."

But I mean, Lou will be calling another forty-day fast in January or February. That's not a prophecy; it's just a maybe.

### **WE HAVE THE WITNESS OF ONE WHO IS GREATER THAN AN ARCHANGEL**

OK, verse 23. "At the beginning of your prayer, the command went forward, and I have come to tell you" (Dan. 10:23, paraphrased). Look, he says it again. He says, "You're greatly beloved. You're greatly beloved. Therefore, understand the vision." I mean, it's the most remarkable thing that in both of these experiences, the angel tells Daniel, "God loves you!"

Now you think, "Wow. I would love to have an angel appear to me and say, 'God loves you. You're beloved!'" Let me offer this perspective: we have a greater witness than an angel. We have the witness who is fully God, who became Man, who came to the earth and declared, "I love you like the Father loves Me" (Jn. 15:9, paraphrased). Beloved, that is a far stronger witness, and it was placed in the Word of God for all believers who would follow to draw from. I tell you, we have the witness of One who is greater than an archangel. He loves us.

I still wouldn't mind an archangel visiting me—just for the record.

### **SOME PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF THE UPCOMING FAST**

Let's look at Roman numeral III. I'm going to go really quickly through the practical details of this. And then page two is just an outline you'll read on your own, of the things I've been saying all week. You'll have a chance to review it over the next few weeks.

OK, when? September 29. We'll begin that Thursday at midnight, at 12:01am on Thursday morning, and we'll go until 6:00pm on October 19. That's the official time that we'll break it.

Who? We're inviting everyone to be involved. There are about fifty leaders who are fully committing themselves to this. And so they're committed in a way where it's solemn to us. But we want this to be purely voluntary for everyone else. We want you to join us to the degree that you have grace and you want to do it. And when we mean everyone, we're talking about anyone from any place around the world. We have so many that are connecting with us via webstream. And as a matter of fact, different people from other nations have emailed me and said, "We're in! We're in the fast with you."

And they're in other ministries and other parts of the Body of Christ, but they feel a part of this spiritual family, because they can be in several spiritual families. You don't have to pick one. And so this is for anyone at any level of involvement that they want to be involved in. We will pray.

### **FASTING PUTS THE BULL'S EYE ON OUR HEARTS IN THE REALM OF THE SPIRIT**

Why? As I said before, for personal encounter. We want to touch the Lord.

We want more power to touch our ministry, to touch our nation, to touch Israel, to be released into the whole issue of Islam, the national crisis that is emerging. We want a spirit of revelation. We want to take time to sit at the feet of Jesus. We want to set aside hours a day to sit at the feet of Jesus.

There are about fifty leaders that have made a firm commitment that they will spend a minimum of six hours a day in the prayer room. This is more than they normally do. And I'm not saying, "Aren't they hotshots and aren't they awesome?" I do think they're awesome; but that's not my point. The point is, they will have less time for this twenty-one days for other matters related to the department or the ministries, and they will have less strength. Give them grace. They will have less time. They'll be in there for six and eight hours, some of them longer than that.

I certainly plan to spend more than the six hours a day. I've planned to spend a bit more than that. And I'm not saying that as a way of saying, "Wow, aren't I devoted?" That's not the point. My point is, it's pragmatic. In other words, if I'm fasting, I'm putting the bull's eye on my heart in the good sense, and putting myself in the position to receive as much as I can. I mean, if I'm going through the rigors of fasting, I'm not just going to be having meetings all day, talking to people, wearing myself out, missing the connection with God.

So I plan to be in the prayer room much more than that, and I won't always be down there on the floor; I'll be up. It's cheating a little, but I'm up in my little prayer station behind that little glass thing. And I've got my coffee up there and all that stuff. And so I know it's not fair. That's where I'm at. But my real point isn't to do as little as you; fast, pray, talk, and open your Bible. Our goal isn't to get everyone on the microphone just praying for revival, though we will have plenty of that. We want to connect at the heart level. Because if our heart becomes tenderized, many other issues in our life get settled. Because when our heart is tenderized, we respond more deeply and more quickly to Jesus. We have greater clarity in our response and many other dominoes go down when we're responding to the Lord in that way; many other things happen in the chain reaction of that.

I want to encourage you to give the leaders grace, but join in to the degree that you have grace to do it. Some of you may do it a few hours a week, some of you may do a few hours a day; take this twenty-one days and give a most extreme attentiveness to it. We're setting aside God-ordained, legitimate needs and comforts and issues. We're laying them aside in a heightened way for a short season to give yourself to this. Read your Bible. Read the gospel of John, read the book of Acts, read the Psalms; just read, read, read. And even if you don't feel anything, put yourself in front of that bonfire of God's presence, and I tell you it will tenderize you.

### **DON'T GIVE UP IF THE GOING IS INITIALLY ROUGH**

And you may not even feel that much during it. I've had a number of extended fasts over the last thirty years, and I don't feel that much in the fast. I really feel a lot more after the fast. It's amazing. Here I am, a few days in, and the first couple of times I did it, I said, "I don't think it's working." Because I couldn't feel anything! I felt worse; I felt oppressed. Here I was on day ten or twenty, and I was thinking, "I thought this was supposed to feel different."

And someone could say, "Who said that?"

"I don't know. Doesn't someone say that somewhere?"

“You think you’re supposed to feel better?”

And I thought, “Isn’t that a Bible verse?” I didn’t know where it was; I just assumed.

And it’s not, but the surprise is that when it was over, for the next few weeks or even months, I had a tender spirit. Initially I was thrown off, because I felt like I was going spiritually backwards rather than forwards. I couldn’t focus so well. I was grouchier. I was in a worse mood. And I said, “This is supposed to be my breakthrough. Like, *whatever!*” And later I looked back and said, “Whoa. I mean, really, it’s amazing how this works.”

And having done a few of those over the years, I have a history built up where I have confidence now. So don’t measure what’s happening during it. Give it some time and look back, and I believe that we will have satisfied customers. People will say, “Yeah, that was really helpful.”

### **FRIDAY AND SATURDAY NIGHTS WILL BE THE RALLYING POINT FOR THE FASTERS**

OK, corporate times. Paragraph C. The Friday and Saturday night here. On Friday night I teach a class, and on Saturday night we have our FCF service. We’re going to put those on hold, and Friday and Saturday night during those three weeks will showcase leaders sharing with the people. It’s a rallying point about the fast. So we won’t give the Sunday sermon on Saturday night. We’re throwing that out. And then on Friday we won’t do the class that I’m doing. But rather we will hear the Lord together. Our leaders are just going to give just some insights as to what is happening. It’s a rallying point; it’s a point of encouragement; it’s a point of unity where we can come together.

And for the people who can’t make it on Friday and Saturday, what I’ll do is summarize what we talked about on Friday and Saturday on Sunday morning. And so you’ll get kind of the best of Friday and Saturday night on Sunday morning. So if you’re thinking, “Well, Friday and Saturday night doesn’t work,” you’ll still get the main things that we’re sharing on those other nights. It won’t be exactly the same because there will be different ones sharing and dreams and different ideas and perspectives. And I’ll share some of our prophetic history on Friday and Saturday nights for those three weeks. I don’t know how much time I’ll spend on that, but some. And so Friday and Saturday is our key rallying point.

And we’re considering the Friday and Saturday nights, those meetings, as part of our six-hour commitment, our six-hour minimum, because again, I’m encouraging our leaders to go beyond the six hours because this is a special season. Get all you can get.

Now having talked about our leaders, a number of them won’t be able to do this. And it’s a small percentage, but there are several different reasons they can’t. I don’t want to go into that right now. But we give them total grace. We say, “Grace. Grace. Just do the will of God in this season. Just do what you have to do when no one is looking and judging and evaluating you. Just have grace and respond in the way you have grace to respond in your leadership role at IHOP-KC.”

### **EVERY SINGLE DAY OF THE FAST, ASK FOR STRENGTH AND GRACE**

Paragraph D. OK, I talked about the six hours a day. Paragraph E. How? How are we going to fast? Any way the Lord leads you. And I encourage you to ask for grace day after day. Some people just gird themselves and press in. Ask for grace, even on a simple weekly fast. For example, if I’m fasting on Tuesday, on Monday I start

asking the Lord. On Monday night I say, “Lord, I ask for You to strengthen me tomorrow.” I mean, it’s a one-day fast. And then on Tuesday morning I come in at 6:00am and I start asking for grace. I’m not hungry at all and I’m not weak. I mean, I need a cup of coffee; I’m still tired from the night before, but I start asking for grace.

So my point is this: every single day of the fast, ask for strength and grace. I really urge you to do that. As a matter of fact, I’m asking for it now a couple of weeks in advance.

### **FEEBLE FASTING HAS SIGNIFICANT RESULTS**

Now there’s a funny phrase I speak about myself, but I want to encourage you in it. I call it “feeble fasting.” Feeble fasting has significant results. Daniel ate no pleasant food (Dan. 10:3). In other words, he ate nuts and grains and vegetables with no seasoning, no flavoring. He ate the lowest amount possible with no pleasure involved, because food is supposed to bring pleasure. Part of God’s gifting to humanity is pleasurable food. And so Daniel says, “I don’t want to enjoy food. I want food to give me some strength. I’m in my eighties and I have a full-time job.”

### **IT IS NO SMALL THING TO UNDERGO A FEEBLE FAST**

Well, in my early days, in my twenties, I had a healthy amount of pride. I still do, but I would look at that verse and roll my eyes and say, “Bah, humbug!” People would talk about a Daniel fast, which means they ate throughout the day and called it a fast. And I water fasted, and I didn’t do that Daniel fast stuff. And so I looked down on it, and I said, “Real men do water fasts... with coffee!” Every time I talk about a water fast, I have to add, “I’m going on a water fast... *and coffee!*”

So I watched these different people eating everything they could fit in the blender: cheeseburgers, chili dogs... their coffee was super-double caramel triple mocha, double-dipped and spilling over. And twenty-one days later, they gained four pounds. But they were on a Daniel fast. Anyway, I used to roll my eyes and say, “No, I’m not doing a feeble fast!”

Well, I was in my twenties, I had more pride and more strength. Now I’m in my fifties, and I’m way more tired. So I go to my wife and say, “Diane, I think I’m going to do—don’t tell anyone!—*a feeble fast!*” Because that’s all I have strength for. I’m thinking, “Daniel, you were really onto something.” I’ve changed my attitude entirely.

And so I actually say that as encouragement. Here’s why: because some of you don’t have strength or health for a water fast, which is the typical type of fasting. When the Bible talks about fasting, typically it’s talking about water—*and coffee!* That’s typically what it’s talking about. But I kind of looked down on it, and didn’t even consider it a possibility. And I repented of that. And I tell you that Daniel went on this “no pleasant food” fast—again, the rice, the grains, the vegetables, no seasoning, no flavor; and a mighty angel visited one time, and Gabriel visited the next time. I’ve never had angels or Gabriel or Michael visit me. So maybe Daniel was on to something.

So my point is, don’t despise it. That’s the real point. And I use the phrase “feeble fast” as a joke between me and me. I say it to myself and Diane, because it really matters.

## **DON'T ALLOW FASTING TO FUEL UNHEALTHY RELATIONAL DYNAMICS**

Now in terms of fasting, we have a rule here: “Don’t ask, don’t tell.” And we had that terminology long before other people were using it in our government, by the way. We established this rule many years ago, that I urged everyone—don’t ask anyone how they’re fasting and don’t tell anyone how you’re fasting.

So imagine someone comes and says, “Hey, how are you fasting?”

Say, “You know, it’s not a big deal; that guy on Sunday morning told us not to tell, so I’m not going to tell.” So you can blame it on me. And here’s the reason I don’t want to talk about it: because I’ve been involved in a good number of corporate fasts in the last thirty years. I’ve seen a lot of human dynamics. And the human dynamics so often eclipse the reason for the fast, which is to talk to Jesus.

And so the guy says, “Well, how are you fasting?”

“Well, I’m fasting this way.”

So now there’s the comparison. “Oh, you’re doing that way? Did you know that he’s only doing that?” Then there’s judgment. Then there’s exaggeration and then there’s lying. There are all these dimensions going on. The guy says, “I fast more than you fast. And she isn’t really committed and he’s awesome. But he’s lying because I was with him and he isn’t really!”

Everyone stop all of that. It’s the wrong conversation. The conversation is with Jesus, not about who is and who isn’t, and who’s lying and who’s exaggerating, and who’s walking around all tired when they’re not even tired. Forget all of that. I just want that conversation somewhere else, not on our base.

It started years ago when we were on a twenty-one day fast way back in 1983, that well-known fast that I’ve mentioned over the years in May of 1983. And a guy came walking in around day ten or fifteen—I can’t remember. He was all chipper. And I thought, “Well, you look awful happy.”

He said, “Yeah, I’ve just got a lot of grace, a lot of grace...”

And I said, “Well, good for you! Bless your skinny little heart that you have so much grace.” And I looked closer, and right at the corner of his mouth he had *chocolate* right there! He had just been to Dairy Queen! So he didn’t know that he didn’t clean up well. And so I reached over there, wiped the chocolate off, and licked it. I said, “Oh, I’ve got grace, too! I get how grace works!”

That’s a funny story, but the point is this: the comparing, the judging, the exaggerating, the posturing; forget all those human dynamics. Don’t ask, don’t tell. And again, we had that rule a long time before other guys used that rule. And another thing: if you blow it, if you set your heart to fast in a certain way, don’t confess it to people. It’s not some scandalous sin, where I said I would only eat vegetables or I would only drink water or juice, and I went beyond that. I want to confess it. There are a few over the years who have done that.

I say, “No, no, no; that’s not even the point.” It’s not like we’re all scandalized and now they have to be honest and tell everyone and confess it publicly. Stop it. It’s the wrong conversation. The conversation is about you and Jesus. He wants to talk to you. If you don’t do what you set your heart to do, confess it to the Lord. Re-sign

back up. Push delete. Don't bring it up again; just start your fast again. Go hard. Just jump in it, and if you stumble out of it, jump back in it right away.

And don't make a big point of it. You walk in the room and you think, "Oh no, everyone is staring at me! They all know! I know they know." No one knows. No one cares. Get focused on Jesus and stay there; that's the point.

### **MINORS ARE ENCOURAGED NOT TO FAST FROM FOOD**

Now we're strongly encouraging minors not to fast any kind of food. Maybe they can fast from sweets or media or some kind of activity. They want to participate, and so there are types of foods they can fast without fasting food in an entire way. So make sure that we're responsible about our children having good diets, because that's really important.

Because in our zeal some people say, "I want my kids to surpass John the Baptist! And I will show the great!" No just forget all that. Just let your kid be a kid. And if he shows up as John the Baptist when he's twenty-five, then let him just surprise you. But don't force him into that mode when he's eight. And I think some of our kids will be like John the Baptist, but let them and the Lord sort it out. Don't put that on them and make them fast.

And if you have an eating disorder, I urge you not to fast food. There are other ways of fasting. You've already proven that if that is important to you, that you can go without eating. You've done it for years and it's hurting you. The issue is not going without eating; the issue is that you're in a recovery. We don't want a relapse. We want for you and the Lord to connect, not for you to stumble backwards. So don't fast the food; I urge you not to. We have a bit on our website about that.

OK, let's look at page two. I'm not going through it, but I want to make one point, and the rest is just for you to look at and review what I've said.

### **THERE'S A SETTING OF THE HEART THAT FUELS FASTING**

Paragraph A. Daniel set his heart. There's a setting of the heart. In other words, it's not casual; it's intentional.

In other words, people say, "I think I'll fast! I'll do one day, if I feel it. If I'm really into it, I'll do two or three. I'll see how it goes!" The "see how it goes" approach never works; set your heart. I mean in your soul: don't tell others, but set your heart. Daniel set himself. He wasn't a "see how it goes" kind of guy. And it says that he set his heart towards the Lord.

### **FASTING WITHOUT PRAYER IS DIETING**

Talk to God. Read your Bible. Be in the prayer room or at home in prayer, wherever you want to be, so long as you're praying. Because fasting without prayer is dieting; and dieting is OK, but this is more than dieting. Set your heart. Say, "No, I'm not just going to see how it goes; I'm going to do it! If I have physical issues or health issues, I'll do it in a measured way. I'll do it in a limited way, but I'll do it."

Set your soul in the next few weeks and then talk to God in the full strength that you have. And I'll make one more point since I'm here. Paragraph B. Daniel confessed his sin. Here's the point. This is a season of three weeks. Settle some issues. Most people have those one or two issues where the Lord is saying, "I want a greater response."

They're praying, "I will, Lord—one of these days. I really am saying yes to You. I just haven't got around to it."

Use this three weeks to say yes and settle those one or two issues that you've already agreed you will obey in, but you're not quite there. Settle them in these three weeks.

Amen. Let's stand.

### **MINISTRY TIME**

Lord, we say yes to You. Lord, in this next two or three weeks I ask that You would lead individuals.

I want to pray for just sixty seconds. And everyone just close your eyes for a moment. Say, "Lord, show me specifically in the next couple of weeks. I don't have to know today. At what level should I engage in this? What level?" Some of you a little, some of you a lot, some of you not at all.

And then ask the Lord, "Give me help. Help me to do what You show me to do." And you may not know until right before you start. But ask the Lord in the next couple of weeks, "What level?" And then, "Lord, give me strength to do it. Visit me. Lord, strengthen me with power and then visit my family, visit this nation, visit this community here."

Now this is for anyone who's saying, "You know, I'm just kind of nervous about this." You may be more nervous than excited. But you would like prayer today, because you just feel so unsettled. You would like prayer on that right now, or you would like prayer for any other issue in your life, for physical healing or for a family member or for a financial situation. I want to invite you to come on up and stand on these lines right now as Matt and the worship team leads us for a few moments here. So go ahead and come on up. Just go ahead and come on up now.

And the rest of you, this is our new policy. But I want everyone possible to come and pray for two people, for ninety seconds a piece. Take three minutes and just come and pray for two people before you leave, so that we're all involved in praying together.

Now those of you who are receiving prayer, if you have a specific request, rather than just praying for grace in a general sense, stop the person praying and say, "I have a pain in my back. I want prayer for that!" Or, "My son needs to know the Lord." If you've got something specific, just go ahead and tell the person praying for you.

Amen. Go ahead.