

**ANSWERS TO PRAYER**

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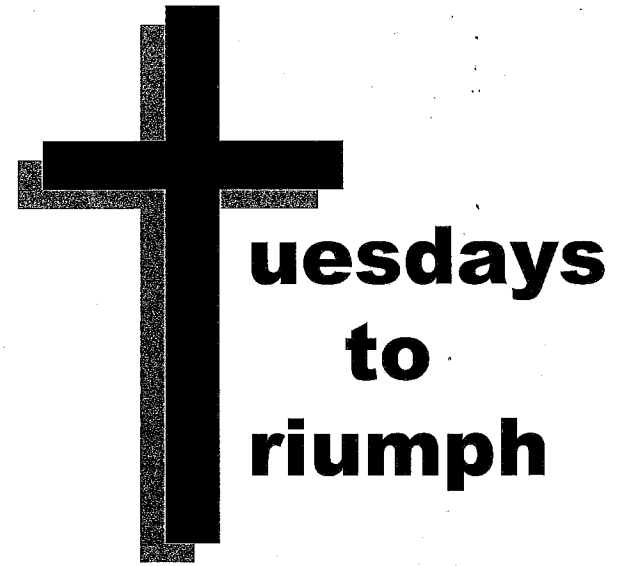
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**A Program of Prayer and Fasting**



*International Women's Ministries*

## FORWARD

In what seems to be a sovereign stirring of the Holy Spirit, a mighty movement of intercessory prayer accompanied by fasting is sweeping into the lives of people both individually and corporately. God is calling His church to the thoughtful, disciplined ministry of intercession. There is no higher call, yet far too often the call is neglected. Now is the time to shake ourselves and respond to the God who seeks out those who will “stand in the gap” on behalf of our families, our churches, our schools and our country (Ezekiel 22:30). The key to spiritual awakening in all these areas is focused and unyielding prayer interspersed with the consistent discipline of fasting.

International Women’s Ministries is committed to give support and assistance to those who desire to answer the call of the Spirit to go into the presence of God and intercede on behalf of others. It is hoped that this booklet will be used as a tool . . . a catalyst to bring about a fresh passion to partner with God in what He is doing in the world. God wants us to experience wondrous changes and triumphant living.

We are indebted to Eleanor Sheeks for her excellent work in compiling the materials in *Tuesdays to Triumph*. Along with many helpful tips, she gives insight on the value of prayer and fasting as well as practical information on involving women in this powerful ministry. It is her prayer and ours that you read this booklet and then by God’s grace—just do it!

Carmelita Walker

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## INTRODUCTION

*"Our ladies are gaining a real hunger for God. We are realizing that it is impossible to do Kingdom work in the power of the flesh."*

*"Eight ladies are joining me in prayer and fasting, and some say they won't watch TV on Tuesdays."*

*"Tuesdays to Triumph has provided a discipline I had longed for in my life. I am experiencing a humbling of my spirit and rising of His Spirit in my walk."*

These are representative comments Eleanor Sheeks received about this program.

Eleanor prepared and introduced *Tuesdays to Triumph* during her tenure as state Women's Ministries president of Western North Carolina.

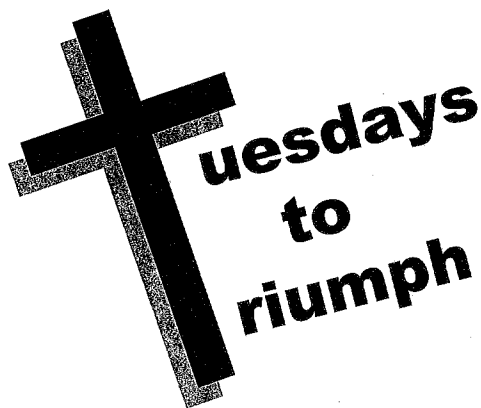
In her words, "*Tuesdays to Triumph* is simply a call to lay ourselves before God—empty vessels that He can mend, fill and use. It is expressing our openness and availability to God. It is simply a structure for uniting Church of God women in prayer and fasting for our homes, churches, nation and world."

Leaders in women's ministries are key players in the revival God wants us to have. Therefore, it is important to know what it is that God wants to do in and for us. As you are inspired by the Holy Spirit, allow God to help you lead others in your sphere of influence into a lifestyle of prayer and triumph.

## Because . . .

- Our homes, families and schools are under the attack of Satan;
- Our social and political systems continue their rapid departure from God's righteousness;
- Satan wants to defeat individuals and churches;
- God wants us to triumph over our enemies;
- Jesus said some victories are achieved only by prayer and fasting . . .

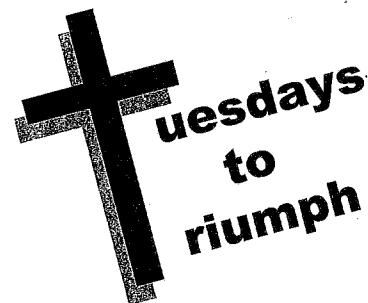
Become one of the women who are uniting in  
*Prayer and Fasting* on



"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice . . . to set the oppressed free, and break every yoke?" —God

## FASTING: A WEAPON FOR TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN

*Prepared especially for*



### I. INTRODUCTION

- BATTLE** – The Christian woman is involved in an intense battle on personal, social and political fronts. (Name some current issues.)
- ACTION** – These battles call for action; to be passive is to sin and to be overcome.
- POWER** – These battles are beyond a woman's strength and wisdom.
- WEAPON** – Weapons that have "divine power to demolish strongholds" are available (2 Corinthians 10:3 and 4).
- STRATEGY** – The strategies and schemes of the devil can be withstood (Ephesians 6:11).
- MODELS** – Several Biblical models and the example and teaching of Jesus establish that fasting is one of the powerful spiritual weapons women can use for triumphant living.

II. EZRA PROVIDES A MODEL FOR FASTING (EZRA 8:21-23)

- A. Ezra's fast had purpose.
  - 1. He called the fast to produce humility.
  - 2. He called the fast to petition God about common concerns—journey (life), children, possessions.
- B. Ezra's fast was coupled with prayer.
- C. Ezra's fast was productive.

III. ANNA PROVIDES A MODEL FOR FASTING (LUKE 2:36-38)

- A. Anna's fasting was based in consistent worship.
- B. Anna's fasting was a lifestyle.
- C. Anna's fasting was coupled with prayer.
- D. Anna's worshiping and fasting placed her in the right place at the right time to see Jesus.
- E. Anna's years of fasting were rewarded.

IV. ESTHER PROVIDES A MODEL FOR FASTING (ESTHER 4 AND 5)

- A. Esther's fast grew out of a knowledge that she could not be passive in this situation; she was there "for such a time as this."
- B. Esther's fast was rooted in obedience and discipline.
  - 1. She was obedient to Mordecai.
  - 2. She had submitted to a time of discipline and preparation before being presented to the king.

- C. Esther's fast acknowledged her inadequacy and dependency on God.
- D. Esther's fast expressed her trust in God to direct her decisions and steps: "When this is done, I will go . . . And if I perish, I perish."
- E. Esther's fast resulted in personal favor, family blessing and national victory: the Jews were spared.

V. THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH PROVIDES A MODEL FOR FASTING (ACTS 13:1-5)

- A. The church's fasting was coupled with worship.
- B. The church's fasting and worship provided a setting in which they heard the Holy Spirit speak specific direction for the church's ministry.
- C. The church's fasting was coupled with prayer.
- D. The church's fasting resulted in the beginning of the first Christian missionary network.

VI. JESUS PROVIDES BOTH A MODEL AND SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR FASTING

- A. Jesus provides a model for fasting (Matthew 4:1-11).
  - 1. Jesus' fast related to a wilderness experience.
  - 2. Jesus' experience here indicates that fasting gets Satan's attention and can be followed by a time of testing by Satan.
  - 3. Jesus' fast was coupled with a mind and speech fixed on the Word of God.

4. Jesus' fast ended with victory: the devil left, angels ministered to Him, and He launched His public ministry.
5. Jesus' need to fast suggests that everyone needs to fast.

B. Jesus gave specific teaching regarding fasting.

1. Jesus gives instructions on how to fast (Matthew 6:16-18).
  - a. This passage suggests that Jesus regards fasting as one of three great Christian disciplines; here He gives instructions on how to love, how to give and how to fast, and He appears to give them equal treatment.
  - b. Jesus warns against being ostentatious in fasting.
  - c. Jesus emphasizes that fasting is a relational act between the person who is fasting and God the Father.
  - d. Jesus assures that the Father sees and rewards fasting.
2. Jesus addresses the urgency of fasting (Matthew 17:20 and 21; Mark 9:17-29).
  - a. This passage indicates that fasting is a catalyst to faith and prayer; fasting develops faith and prayer to their full power.
  - b. This incident shows that unbelief is a major obstacle to power and victory and that fasting breaks the power of unbelief.
  - c. Jesus says that the nature of some cases is such that only prayer with fasting brings the victory.

VII. CONCLUSION

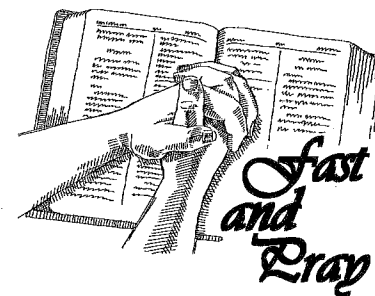
- A. Today's Christian woman is not left powerless to meet her challenges: fasting and prayer will make her triumphant.
- B. A life of fasting and prayer identifies her with the self-denial and self-sacrifice of her Savior.
- C. Fasting is a powerful resource and force!

Dake details the profound benefits of fasting: "Fasting humbles the soul before God (Psalm 35:13); chastens the soul (Psalm 69:10); and crucifies the appetites and denies them so as to give time to prayer (2 Samuel 12:16-23; Matthew 4:1-11).

It manifests earnestness before God to the exclusion of all else (1 Corinthians 7:5); shows obedience, gives the digestive system a rest (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:15; Luke 5:33); demonstrates the mastery of man over appetites, aids in temptation, helps to attain power over demons, develops faith, crucifies unbelief and aids in prayer" (Matthew 4:1-11; 17:14-21).

- D. Liberation can come through fasting: God associates fasting with His desire "to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke" (Isaiah 58:6).

Excerpted from "Fasting and Prayer" *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible*, page 629. Used by permission.



## PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR FASTING

### I. WHAT IS FASTING?

- A. Fasting is the voluntary abstaining from food and drink (except water) for a limited period of time for moral or religious reasons.
- B. Fasting is not starving. It is not a hunger strike. You are fasting as long as your body is running on your supply of fat and waste. After several weeks without food your body will begin to digest healthy tissue (or begin eating itself)—that process is starvation; however, that process does not begin until all the fats are used up. Fasting is a means of “cleansing” your body. It has often been encouraged just for health purposes. There is often complete healing of body organs.

### II. WHY FAST?

- A. Fasting is the oldest and safest method of healing known to man.
- B. Fasting is the most proven way to break any bad habit. (Smoking, drinking, drugs, bad temper, compulsive spending and gluttony.)
- C. Fasting brings the believer’s body under subjection.
- D. Fasting clears the way for the release of God’s power and the realization of God’s provision in your life.
- E. Fasting occurred in Biblical times because of war, sickness, mourning, repentance, impending danger, drought, commemoration of calamities, Day of Atonement and spiritual strength.
- F. References: Esther 4; 2 Chronicles 20; Ezra 8:21; Joel 2:15-17.

### III. GUIDELINES FOR FASTING:

- A. Enter into fasting with positive faith (the right motive).
- B. Stay in a spirit of prayer during the fast.
- C. Stay in the Word while fasting (“faith cometh by hearing”).
- D. Write down specific needs that you hope will be accomplished in your life.
- E. Don’t wait for an emergency to fast. Fasting prepares you for the time of emergency!
- F. If you are not accustomed to fasting, begin with a short fast (one or two meals) then proceed to longer periods.
- G. Come off your fast gradually. A heavy meal after a fast can make you sick. (See Bright’s book, *The Coming Revival*.)
- H. Use wisdom. If you are on medication or have a disease such as diabetes, seek medical advice before a prolonged fast.
- I. It is advisable to drink water during the fast. Some people drink 64 ounces or more per day.
- J. Fast regularly. It may be more beneficial to practice fasting weekly than one long period of time.



Adapted by Reverend Bobby Gilley from pages 31-33 of *Your First Steps* by Ernest L. Quinley. Used by permission of the General Department of Evangelism and Home Missions.

## FEASTING THROUGH FASTING

In an article by that title published in the July 23, 1984 *Evangel*, Dr. Laud O. Vaught emphasizes the importance of separating fasting from a "show of will" and asserts that "spiritual fasting brings spiritual feasting." He says that fasting is "doing without natural food that our soul may be satisfied with that which is spiritual."

This excerpt from that article may be useful in a devotion or as you otherwise encourage women toward *Tuesdays to Triumph*.

If fasting is to become a spiritual feast, what can one expect to see on the banquet table? Surely such a feast would include the following:

- A greater realization of the presence of God in our life.
- The living Word becoming more personal.
- An increased quality of prayer life.
- A rejoicing in the present cleansing by the personal Christ.
- An increased awe and reverence before the face of the living God.
- A lifting of the soul in true worship and adoration.
- An enlargement of the heart in love, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.
- A greater awareness of the needs of others.
- A greater awareness of God in others.
- A larger concept or "world view" as we are enabled to see from God's perspective.
- A restoration of balance in the natural and spiritual aspects of life.
- A greater sense of our needs.

"Feasting Through Fasting," by Dr. Laud O. Vaught. *Church of God Evangel*. July 23, 1984. Used by permission.

## HELPING WOMEN TO BE INVOLVED

*Tuesdays to Triumph* is Church of God women uniting in fasting and prayer on Tuesdays (or other times as individual schedules require).

Many women have never experienced the discipline and benefits of fasting with their prayer life. This is perhaps because they have not understood its purpose or value. We often assume Christians know what it is, what the Scripture teaches about it and how to practice it. In many cases, this is too much to assume.

Because we want to help you lead the women in your church to be involved in *Tuesdays to Triumph* and because we want them to be prepared to reap the optimum benefits from the experience, we have prepared some study material on fasting. This material can be adapted to serve the unique needs of your group. Exercise whatever liberties you wish—just use it!

Some suggestions for using it follow:

1. Distribute copies of this booklet and refer each woman to "Practical Guidelines for Fasting" (pages 12 and 13) for personal study and use.
2. Use these practical guidelines as the basis for group study and discussion.
3. Use "Fasting: A Weapon For Today's Christian Woman" (pages 7-11) for a lecture, lesson, or one-night crash course.
4. Use "Fasting: A Weapon For Today's Christian Woman" (Pages 7-11) for a five-night Bible study, using Sections II, III, IV, V and VI for one night's study each.
5. Have a five-member panel of speakers with a moderator. The moderator/speaker can do the introduction and conclusion. Assign the study of Ezra, Anna, Esther, Antioch and Jesus each to one of the five panelists. Encourage discussion and interaction following.



6. Use the material with testimonies of victories achieved through fasting and prayer.
7. Someone has said, "The man who prays with fasting is giving heaven notice that he is truly in earnest; that he will not give up or let God go without the blessing." Following the presentation of the studies, have the ladies write on slips of paper situations (personal, political, social, etc.) which are beyond their own wisdom or power . . . situations which might qualify as the "only by prayer and fasting" kind . . . situations in which they want to triumph . . . situations about which they want to give heaven notice of their earnestness. Make the writing of these slips an exercise in prayer since the women are by this act expressing to God the deep longings/desires/cries of their hearts. Follow this by reading several carefully selected faith-building scriptures related to God's response to our needs/desires/cries. Then read Philippians 4:6 and 7. (The *NIV* says "present your requests to God.") You might (1) have a prayer in which each woman presents her request to God and makes a commitment to Him to show her earnestness by fasting; or (2) have the ladies enter into a symbolic act of faith in what God will do as a result of their fasting and prayer. Have them deposit their slips of paper in a fireproof container and then burn them; or (3) ask each woman to keep what she has written and to "present her request" on each Tuesday in her prayer/fasting time.
8. Plan a program in which an emcee interviews two or three people who have experienced miracles and triumphs. Prayerful selection of those persons and careful planning of the questions are critical. Frame the questions to focus on the effects of prayer and fasting and on God's power and desire to meet His children's needs.
9. If you have women who are creative and into drama, you might have five of them do dramatic monologues with Esther, Anna, Ezra, an Antioch Christian, and Jesus (in 1st century dress!) relating their experience and views of prayer/fasting. A narrator could cover the introduction and conclusion material. Follow with study/discussion.
10. And you just might want to . . . share the goals of *Tuesdays to Triumph* and the study material with the pastor. It may be that he might be able to use it or make references to it as he seeks to reinforce and encourage fasting/prayer in the congregation.

## SOME NUGGETS FOR TUESDAYS

In *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Dallas Willard discusses disciplines which have "had a wide and profitable use among disciples of Christ" through the ages. He divides them as follows:

### *Disciplines of Abstinence*

- |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| – Solitude  | – Chastity  |
| – Silence   | – Secrecy   |
| – Fasting   | – Sacrifice |
| – Frugality |             |

### *Disciplines of Engagement*

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| – Study       | – Prayer     |
| – Worship     | – Fellowship |
| – Celebration | – Confession |
| – Service     | – Submission |

If we feel that any habit or pursuit, harmless in itself, is keeping us from God and sinking us deeper in the things of earth; if we find that things which others can do with impunity are for us the occasion of falling, then abstinence is our only course. Abstinence alone can recover for us the real value of what should have been for our help but which has been an occasion of falling. . . . It is necessary that we should steadily resolve to give up anything that comes between ourselves and God. (W. R. Inge, *Goodness and Truth*, pages 76 and 77.)

Fasting teaches temperance or self control and therefore teaches moderation and restraint with regard to *all* our fundamental drives. Since food has the pervasive place it does in our lives, the effects of fasting will be diffused throughout our personality. In the midst of all our needs and wants, we experience the contentment of the child that has been weaned from its mother's breast (Psalm 131:2). And "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6). (Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, pages 167 and 168.)



Quote from *The Spirit Of The Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* by Dallas Willard. Copyright ©1988 by Dallas Willard. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

## HINDRANCES TO PRAYER

(Notes taken by Eleanor Sheeks on Pastor Bobby Ross's sermon on 1/31/95, Isaiah 1:15-20; 1 Peter 3:7-12, *TLB*).

1. Family dissension
2. Lack of love/unity
3. Selfishness/stubbornness
4. Arrogance and pride
5. Unforgiveness
6. Unconfessed sin/sin in heart
7. Giving God second-place; idolatry
8. Wrong motives
9. Unrighted wrongs; unpaid debts
10. Lack of generosity; covetousness; appetite for things
11. Disinclination or indifference to the Word
12. Unbelief

This provides an excellent Women's Ministries Bible study outline. The sermon was filled with Scripture. You may want to secure the tape and use for your Women's Ministries. Call Margaret with ECBC Alumni (704/394-6333).

## THINGS TO PRAY FOR

- ✓ Revival in our homes
- ✓ Revival in our churches
- ✓ Healthy, happy marriages
- ✓ Families—husbands, wives, children, parents
- ✓ The lost
- ✓ Wisdom
- ✓ Spiritual gifts
- ✓ Brotherly/Sisterly kindness
- ✓ Missionaries
- ✓ Pastors
- ✓ Pastors' wives
- ✓ Spiritual leaders
- ✓ Government leaders
- ✓ Community leaders
- ✓ Laborers for the harvest
- ✓ Your neighborhood
- ✓ Your schools

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## PRAYER REQUESTS

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