

# *Daniel Fast*

THE 21 DAYS OF  
BLOGS FROM 2021



The complete collection  
of Blogs from our 21 Day  
Daniel Fast

PASTOR JASON RAMDIAL



JASON MATTHIAS

Blogs 21 Day Daniel Fast 2021

Copyright © 2021 by Jason Matthias

*All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise without written permission from the publisher. It is illegal to copy this book, post it to a website, or distribute it by any other means without permission.*

*First edition*

*This book was professionally typeset on Reedsy.*

*Find out more at [reedsy.com](https://reedsy.com)*

*To all of you who faithfully read these blogs, I say thank you. You were an enormous encouragement to me. I pray that the LORD bless your sacrifice and that you continue to walk in the spiritual clarity that the LORD afforded you during your time of fasting and praying.*

*Regards*

*Pastor J*



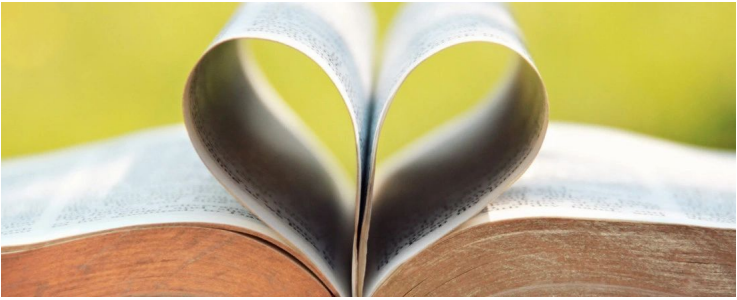
# Contents

Day 1- Love and hate	1
Day 2- Bar-B-Que... snake	4
Day 3- The Fat Kid	6
Day 4- Open it!... It's yours	9
DAY 5- Let's Draw Sonic	12
DAY 6-Scavenging for Butts	15
DAY 7 - Overkill—Over-NOT-kill.	18
DAY 8- Glorious Red Relief	21
DAY 9-Drink up	24
DAY 10-Bittersweet?	27
DAY 11 - A Bad hair day	30
DAY 12 - The Devil's dumpster?	33
DAY 13- Cockles and Mussels	36
DAY 14- The secret Kung Fu technique	39
DAY 15 -The little puppy who wasn't	42
DAY 16 -The Construction Cowboy	45
Day 17- Mister Limp	48
DAY 18 - Last Place	51
DAY 19- Sparkles	54
DAY 20- The Afterward	57
DAY 21- Buckle up	60





## Day 1- Love and hate



**H**ave you ever heard of the story of the certain band of Jews who bound themselves under a peculiar curse? They vowed that they would not eat or drink anything until they killed the apostle Paul. Poor guys, whatever possessed them to make such a silly vow? Why would they curse themselves? *Acts 23:12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.* They made this unfortunate decision to afflict themselves because of their hatred for the Apostle Paul. They never succeeded with their diabolical scheme and probably had to endure a curse for the rest of their lives. Imagine those dudes having to suck it up and

eat some bread and drink a coke, knowing that they couldn't kill the apostle. That must have been embarrassing, especially since they went around announcing their ridiculous vow. Hatred and spite are terrible reasons to make a vow like that.

So, you're embarking on this 21 Day fast. There must be a reason why you're doing it. Just be sure that your reason is a good one. Don't fast because you hate the extra weight around your midsection. Don't do this because you have a point to prove to someone; this includes yourself. When you do anything out of spite or hate, then your endeavor is doomed to failure. Some people fast just to show others how spiritual or disciplined they are... again—bad idea. This fast is a thing between you and the LORD.

If you want your fast to accomplish something significant, do what you do out of love. *Song of Songs 8:6-7 Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. 7 Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.* Love is as strong as death—this sounds like a pretty good driving force behind a vow like fasting.

Let your love for the LORD be the motivating force behind your sacrifice for him. I know that there are many things in your life you desperately desire to see the back end of... you know...small habits, those annoying little idiosyncrasies. Don't let your desire to rid yourself of them be the reason why you afflict yourselves. Instead, let the love you have for the LORD lead you into your spiritual sacrifices. It is the strongest emotion that one can possess. Our LORD loved you so much that he abandoned his throne in heaven to come to this earth to save you. He did not

come here merely because he hated sin. He knew that to let hate be the motive behind his actions would only end in failure.

I encourage you today, let LOVE be the reason why you make this little sacrifice. Many waters cannot quench love. The waves of temptations and testing will certainly crash in. Love is stronger than them all. I assure you these 21 Days will fly by just as 2020 flew by. Before you know it, this fast will be over. Some days will be tough, others, not so much. Take my advice, if you want to make it through, love G-d more than you love food. Love him more than you dislike your sin, and this sacrifice would be manageable. I know fasting is NOT easy; if it were easy, then it wouldn't be a sacrifice, would it? I love you.

Happy Fasting

Pastor J

## Day 2- Bar-B-Que... snake

### BAR-B-QUE SNAKE

*DAY 2- Confirming your sacrifice*



**M**ark Twain once said.... “Adam was but human—this explains it all. He did not want the apple for the apple’s sake, he wanted it only because it was forbidden. The mistake was in not forbidding the serpent; then he would have eaten the serpent.”

Indeed, if he had eaten the snake, we would have saved ourselves a lot of trouble. Then again, we might have made it worse. I’m not sure. One thing I know is the appeal of the fruit increases exponentially once it becomes forbidden. Once you started this fast, deciding to abstain from certain pleasant foods, everything automatically became desirable. If that didn’t start yet, it’s coming. Think about it, when was the last time you had a daydream about corn beef sandwiches. Then again, I know a couple of people who do that on ordinary days.

Remember that you're not abstaining from food in order to send yourself crazy. Tormenting yourself isn't part of the plan. Consider this fast, like a reset of some sort. Over the past year, you may have allowed yourself to lose sight of spiritual things; now, you're making a conscious decision to refocus by putting some carnal desires aside. If those desires become the focal point of your fast, then you're defeating the purpose. I'm not saying that you should NOT be tempted to eat or indulge in that from which you are abstaining. Temptations will come—but it's about what you do with those temptations. In other words, eat the snake. I know...Bar-B-Q snake sounds delightful to some of you right now.

Please, let me explain myself. When the tempter comes, don't demote yourself to wrestling with that which he presents. See his devices for what it is. Feed off of his desire to see you fall. In other words, allow the temptation of the enemy to confirm that your sacrifice is being heeded. I assure you, if Satan is noticing you, G-d is as well. The attacks of the enemy should serve as a substantiation of your selfless sacrifice. The harder the temptations, the greater your impetus to continue should be... because that dumb old serpent is just confirming that your fasting is gaining traction in heaven. So, whatever the Devil serves up, let that be just what you need to keep on fasting. Don't eat his temptations... ensure that his attacks accomplish the exact opposite of what he was intending. Put him to the flames. BBQ serpent sounds yummy right now.

## Day 3- The Fat Kid



### *Your State of Mind*

**M**y Dad tells the story of when he was a child, he grew up very poor. I guess his school had a school feeding program. The way he described it, the teachers would choose the poorest children to give the milk, cookies, and whatever nourishing food items they had available. As the teachers contemplated who to give the food to, the kids would all stretch their hands up in the air as high as possible—begging to be chosen. Everyone wanted to be selected. If I recall correctly, even the teachers kept some of the stuff back for themselves. My Daddy was poor, but they never chose him. He was probably one of the more impoverished kids, but he was never selected

because...wait for it...he was a fat kid.

How could he be impoverished and fat? Whenever he told that story, I often asked the same question. No, he wasn't like one of those children in Ethiopia with a swollen stomach because of starvation. He was simply a chubby kid. My grandfather, Ajah, always tried to ensure that his thirteen children had food to eat at least once a day. With thirteen children, I could understand how you could fall into poverty. From the retelling of my Dad's harrowing story, I realize that sometimes there is a difference between one's state of mind and one's state of being.

If you asked my Dad, he was the poorest and thinnest child in the class...in reality... he was probably neither. You see, your state of mind may be quite different from actual fact. My Dad probably felt as if he was starving, but the truth was perhaps quite different from what he felt. So to, in this fast, your state of mind may be quite different from your state of being.

Your desire for food may be quite different from your actual need for it. Chances are, that feeling like you're going to die without some meat is just a mental thing and not actually a physical thing. The unfortunate thing is, your body begins to follow suit when your mind goes off the hinges. You begin to hear those weird stomach noises, and you wrestle with hunger pains. The mind is a powerful thing.

Your fast is a perfect opportunity to align your body, mind, soul, and spirit. As the various parts of you begin to react to the reality of your sacrifice, it is up to you, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring every thought and every imagination under subjection. In doing so, your body will eventually follow suit. There will be an eventual communion, a harmonious conjunction of your being, when you submit to the authority of the Spirit of G-d. That's actually what fasting is all about. Don't

allow the enemy to coax you into taking this spiritual sacrifice into a solely physical/ carnal arena. *2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)* *Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*

So today, I encourage you to know the nature of your sacrifice and the G-d-given reality and truth of your situation. Anything that Satan brings to distract you is a lie—he's the Father of lies. Let there be a holy communion within you that welcomes everything the Holy Spirit purposes to accomplish in you. Don't let the enemy convince you that you're a starving, impoverished child when you're a wonderfully chubby, fat kid (in the Spirit, of course).



## Day 4- Open it!... It's yours



### The Glorious Possibilities

**C**hristmas has come and gone. For many, the celebrations were dampened by the whole Pandemic scenario. I was determined to celebrate the Birth of our LORD as fervently as possible. So, we had our Sunday School treat. Some may have advised against it, but I was motivated by an incident that happened just a few short years ago. It was our first Sunday School treat at HopeFLA Church. We did not have many children attend, but we tried to make it as wonderful as possible for those who did come. It was awesome. I am accustomed to having hundreds of Children attend our treat back in Trinidad, so just having a handful here in Florida was entirely new.

So, after that first treat, we were cleaning up the church,

picking up all the pieces of wrapping paper that littered the sanctuary. Everything was over; almost everyone had gone home. Then, a gentleman brought over a mother and her four children from a nearby homeless shelter. They were four lovely children. The little five-year-old girl, in particular, was as pretty as a button with her pretty dress and her large blue eyes. I loved that the Mom had the children well dressed and presentable.

Denise and I immediately went to the box of toys to find the right things to give the three boys and the little girl. We gave them the treat bags and the toys that were suitable for their ages. Denise handed the little girl a gift neatly wrapped—the gift was almost as big as her. Her bright blue eyes were as big as the moon as she saw the present. The boys were excited as well. The Mom was almost in tears. Denise and I waited for the little girl to open her gift like most of the other kids did. Instead, the child decided to hand the gift to her mother without opening it. I guess she wanted to save it for Christmas—she knew that was perhaps the only gift she'll probably get.

I said to the child, “go ahead, ... open it, it's yours.”

She looked at her mother, “Can I?”

The child could not believe that she could open the gift, even though it belonged to her. I told her, “just to go ahead and rip that thing open.”

And she did. Her expression upon seeing a doll almost as big as her, was beyond words. I will never forget it. I will also never forget how much that child was affected by not having. She was already conditioned not to expect anything for Christmas. She was already accommodating not having. So often, we allow the past to determine our expectations. If you don't anticipate the new, chances are, you'll miss it when it does come.

So, you've fasted before, and nothing monumental has ever

happened, so you expect the same old this year. You are already denying yourself of some glorious possibilities. On the other end of the spectrum, you've had glorious things happen, and you expect the same, not realizing that G-d is fully well capable of doing greater. Do NOT let your past entirely determine your expectations. G-d is able to do greater than anything that you can remember or imagine. Do Not rob yourself of the joy of this moment in G-d because you know you're supposed to be miserable. Look at what G-d is doing right now in you. Unwrap what the LORD has placed in front of you now. He's fully well capable of giving you something new tomorrow. The gift is yours. Open it...Who knows... you just might be amazed

Regards

Pastor J

## DAY 5- Let's Draw Sonic



### *Encouragement and Criticism*

**T**oday I want to thank those of you who took the time to respond to the daily blogs that we've been sharing. I desire to bring encouragement and strength to those of you who may need it. I know your responses are encouraging to me—it gives me the zeal to keep on writing. So, thank you. Those of you who know me personally know that not everything I deliver to the body is encouraging; some of it is convicting; other times, it's challenging. I believe that encouragement can be a hindrance to growth if not balanced with criticism or challenges.

An excellent example of this is what I do with my baby boy, Elisha. It turns out he's like his daddy and grandfather in that

he is gifted in the area of art. I always take the time to encourage him by telling him how gifted he is and how great an artist he is. He believes it, and as a result, he is always encouraged to draw. Me being the father that I am, when he does not put a reasonable effort into a piece, I let him know. So, he and I decided to draw the cartoon character, Sonic. His was quite good. He was so confident in his artistic ability that he decided to turn our art secession into something of a competition. What he did NOT anticipate is that Daddy is pretty good with art as well.

At the end of our drawing time, we decided to compare our pieces. Elisha was in total shock when he saw what I had drawn. He instantly knew that he needed to get better. He asked, "Daddy is mine as good as yours?"

"What do you think, Elisha?"

"I think mine is better," He responded.

"Really?"

"One day, I'll be as good as you, dad."

"I know you will, son."

Had I not mixed in the criticism with the encouragement, Elisha may not have been prepared to lose his drawing challenge. Maybe, he would have been turned off art for the rest of his life (not that my drawing was that good). I simply wanted him to know that he is good at drawing, but he could always get better.

So many people are addicted to the encouragement, but they despise the challenges. In your fast, you will face moments of struggle. They are inevitable. Some of you will even fall off the wagon. It is then I encourage you to get back on the wagon. Nobody's perfect. Then there are those who don't fall off the wagon—they dive off. They intentionally falter in their fast while trying to make it seem inadvertent. How can you mistakenly end up at Panera bread eating a sandwich? How can

I encourage you in that type of dishonesty?

Notice, if Elisha did not know criticism, and as a result, gave up art, then the person who stands to lose the most would have been him. When You intentionally despise, reproof, correction, criticism while trying to justify your dishonesty—you become the biggest loser. When you cheat on your fast, the only person losing is—wait for it—YOU.

It is certainly my pleasure to encourage you, but there is no profit in it if you won't encourage yourself and determine in your heart to stay true to your sacrifice. So, if you've fallen off the bandwagon—no biggie—get back on. If you were thinking of throwing yourself off the bandwagon—STOP—let your passion for the LORD be more potent than your desire for food. If you stick with it, who knows what masterpiece the LORD will produce through you.

## DAY 6-Scavenging for Butts



*Avoiding the things that make you fail*

**I** once knew a very wealthy man who had a teenage son. He was having some discipline problems with the kid, so he and his wife thought it a good idea to have my brother and I spend some time with the problem child. Jude and I took the kid under our wings. We spent time with him, took him to the movies, we ensured that he was involved with the youth group. We even took him fishing—Yes... that's like a big deal!

One night we went fishing on a pier. The problem child went with us. While we were sitting waiting for the fish to bite, the boy told us that he needed to use the restroom.

“No problem, it’s at the head of the pier.” I offered to go with him, but he insisted that he knew where it was.

So, he ventured off to the restroom while Jude and I remained fishing. After some time, we realized that the kid did not return, so I decided to go look for him. I started walking down the long dark pier toward the main entrance. In the distance, I saw the boy. He did NOT see me because he was busy looking down. I saw him put a cigarette to his lips and take a deep pull. The minuscule fiery end of the little zoot he was sucking on glowed in the darkness of night.

“Where did you get that?” I bellowed as the boy almost peed his pants.

I knew he had no money to buy a cigarette, so I was making a genuine inquiry. Where on earth did he find that cigarette. As I continued to question the boy, I learned that he was scavenging for cigarette butts that people had already smoked and discarded. He was sucking on trash. A kid whose father was a wealthy businessman, was acting homeless. Why? Because he was addicted. His father could not for the life of him comprehend why his son would smoke cigarettes. That was stupid because his father was a chain smoker who would normally light a cigarette, take one waft, and then just leave it on an ashtray. Since the child was young, he was exposed to these vices. Now they were taking their toll. His ignorant father created the perfect conditions to cause his son to fall. What does this have to do with fasting? — HOLD ON!

One of my HOPE brothers sent me a text today... it said—Random thought.... could you imagine being on a fast and working at chick-fil-a? I responded, No, I cannot imagine that kind of torture. Well, that’s exactly what that kid was facing. No matter how hard he wanted to rid himself of his vices, his father



had them lying around, surrounding him... all the time. The powerful thing about a fast is that while you're in the midst of it, temptations, though abundant, are quite recognizable. In other words, you can clearly identify what you need to stay away from. If you spend most of your fast in the kitchen, you are basically setting yourself up to fail. Your fast makes it abundantly clear—where you should go and not go, who you should associate with and who you should leave behind. If you have 'friends' who know you're fasting and are constantly trying to tempt you, maybe you should let them go for a while. Perhaps you're seeing their true colors, and you should just...let them go.

Here's the kicker. Your fast is an excellent indicator of many of the things you need to let go— permanently. If they're a problem now, what makes you think they won't be a problem later. Consider how much more enlightened you feel now that you are abstaining from many of your daily distractions. Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

It's simple really, avoid the things that make you fail. When you bombard yourself with temptations, you just could end up scavenging for butts.

Regards

Pastor J

## DAY 7 - Overkill—Over-NOT-kill.



### Extreme Responses to Attacks

**W**henever you hear a Trini say... I'm not afraid of snakes, but you see frogs, I don't mess with them. That's a classic Trinidadian falsity—they just mention the snake to make their fear of frogs not make them look like cowards. My confession— I'm afraid of both. More of the snakes than the frogs, though. So, you can imagine the horror as I walked to my door to find an icky black snake sitting in my walkway. It was about sixteen inches long—but it may as well been sixteen feet long. He just sat there, refusing to move. I immediately alerted Jesh, and together we launched an assault on the vile little intruder.

I armed myself with a lengthy piece of 4X4 wood, a headlamp,

a broom, a very long piece of wood, and a gallon of gas...yes, gas. Snakes are repelled by gas. Jesh stood about twenty-five feet away—with a broom. As we prepared to kill the snake, a neighbor passed by. He noticed that we were armed to the teeth with common household items and stopped.

“Is it a snake?” he called as he stood in the driveway.

“Yes, sirrrr.”

“Awww, it’s a little black racer,” he chuckled as he looked a little closer. “They’re harmless. They’re actually a good snake.”

My response... “The only good snake is a dead snake.”

The neighbor moved on, and I took my first shot at the slithery Devil...I missed. I now know why they call it a racer. That little thing was quick. He dodged and raced into the small bushy landscaping at the front of my house. After many more swings of my lengthy piece of wood and numerous douses of the gas, we stopped to regroup. You might say we went overboard with our response to the notorious little creature. Some may say overkill... I say... Over-NOT-kill. You see, the snake got away. We tend to go overkill when these little critters present themselves. Once a little frog got into the house... imagine the pandemonium that ensued. Denise woke me up at 3 am to get rid of the frog from the house.

In a season where the snakes are coming out of the woodwork, it is only natural that many people are afraid. Even the children of the kingdom will be concerned. Don’t let fear or any other shortcoming incapacitate you; let them serve you. Go overkill. Let your struggles drive your faith to be excessive. Every response to the attacks of the enemy must be extreme. When you sacrifice for G-d, like in this fast, go overkill. Let your over-NOT-kill be turned into overkill. You see, after I lost the snake, I did not leave the situation like that. Undoubtedly, the malignant

little reptile was long gone, but I was not keen on having a repeat of that episode. So, I set up solar-powered ultrasonic snake repellants around the house. There would not be a snake within 350 ft of my home. Overkill? Probably—but I was taking no chances. I was not merely afraid of the snake, but I was irritated by my fear of the snake. I hate fear, but if it must come...then I let it serve me. My hatred of fear was greater than my fear of that snake.

Why take chances with your faith? Why do we scrape by with doing the bare necessities? We do just enough to make ourselves feel accomplished and righteous while letting the enemy lurk in the bushes. We are capable of so much more. Be excessive in your faith; Be excessive in your love for G-d, extreme in your worship. Go overkill on your sacrifice. Let your attacks fuel excessive praise. Ensure that the enemy has no room in your life. Ephesians 4:27 Neither give place to the Devil. Do all that you can do to not only drive the Devil out but keep him out. Let your anointing be like an ultrasonic repellant that sends the enemy running as soon as he comes in. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Don't let your sacrifice be over-NOT-kill. Accomplish that which you set forth to do for the kingdom. Love the LORD your G-d with ALL your heart, soul, and strength.

Regards  
Pastor J

## DAY 8- Glorious Red Relief



### *Solutions to Salty Situations*

**W**hen I was young, my mother and father went to the United States probably a billion times (not literally—but a lot). My sister went on those trips with them, maybe a billion times minus one. You see, Dad went to the U.S. every year to preach, and he took my Mom and Sister with him. My brother and I were usually left at my grandfather's house (my Mom's Dad) for the month they were gone. The time came when I became a teenager, and I felt that I was responsible enough to take care of myself and my brother while they were gone. I begged them to let us stay alone. One year they did. They left specific instructions and some money to spend while they were gone. For us, it was a crazy amount of money (not really).

Right about that time, KFC started doing delivery. You could just imagine the spree my brother and I went on. By the time we were halfway into the second week, the money was spent. One evening, my aunt, who was charged with cooking for us, for some unknown reason, did not. Naturally, by the time 8 pm rolled around, my brother and I were starving. We had no food since lunch.

Since I was the one in charge, I decided to go downstairs to the kitchen and ‘cook-up’ some macaroni. I lit the stove, put the water to boil, broke the macaroni, and tossed it in the pot. After a little time, I took one macaroni out and tasted it, and realized that I did not put any salt in. That’s a travesty to me because I am a salt lover. So, I put in a tablespoon of salt. I tasted a macaroni again and felt it needed more salt and put in another tablespoon. I repeated this a couple more times. When I strained the macaroni and was ready to eat it... Jude and I almost gagged. It was the saltiest thing I ever tasted. Take it from a kid who ate a pack of salt prunes a day. It was too salty, but we were hungry. We had to eat that poison. As I put the first fork full to my mouth, a light bulb came on in my head. I had to find a way to diffuse the salt or at least cover up the saltiness, and I came up with a splendid solution—Ketchup. I darted over to the fridge, grabbed a bottle of ketchup, and squeezed the glorious red relief into the poisonous macaroni concoction. I mixed it up with a spoon, then tasted it. It was still salty. I think the ketchup made it worse.

My hunger, coupled with my inherent desire to take care of my little brother, ensured that I did not even pray before tasting the poison. Probably if I did, he would have provided the relief that I needed. So often, we seek relief in troublous situations solely by our own inventions and actions. Even in your fast, when you face

hunger pains, body pains, headache, and other salty situations, we tend to try to fabricate our own relief. Actually, we tend to do that throughout life. As believers, our first action should be to call on G-d. He is NOT the last resort; prayer is NOT the last resort, but the first.

As soon as I realized that Jude and I were destined to spend the night on an empty stomach, I remembered G-d (Typical isn't it?). I really could not see how relief would come. But G-d. Out of nowhere, my uncle showed up. He noticed my novice macaroni dish drenched in the glorious red relief.

“You fellas hungry,” he smiled.

“Yes!!!”

“Let's go.”

He took us to down the road to a nearby house that was having a function. My Brother and I ate until we were stuffed. We could not have imagined eating such a lavish, curried, culinary delight that night, but G-d does relief better than us any day. 1 Peter 5:7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Cast your financial cares, emotional cares, physical cares, fasting cares, culinary cares...yes, even your salty macaroni drenched in retarded red relief care—upon him. He'll take care of all of it. You see all your afflictions, even the light ones should indicate to you that the LORD is near. How? Simple really. Is he not your shield and buckler? That means your affliction guarantees that you get to see him in action. So, before you squeeze that bottle of your own ridiculous red relief into the salty conditions of your life—seek G-d. His relief is really a relief—unlike many of the things we do.

## DAY 9-Drink up

# DRINK UP!

---

DAY 9- DRINKING DEADLY THINGS



### *Drinking Deadly Things*

**I** nner turmoil is definitely no discriminator. I mean, most of you can recall as far back as you could in your life and remember a time, even when you were young, when turmoil, worry, and struggle were present. I can remember being around ten years old and getting an unfavorable result in the common entrance exam. I sat under the huge mango tree in the school's playground and slumped beneath the crushing weight of the turmoil I was battling. Back then, I could not comprehend why G-d would allow such misery. I sat looking at the other children running and playing and coveted their freedom. Some of those kids got worse results than I did, some



didn't even get into a secondary school, but they laughed and played. I didn't realize that their freedom was based on nothing good. Some of them had parents who did NOT care if they passed or failed—Mine did. A child would think that to be a bad thing, but parents who care are a blessing.

For some time after, I struggled with the question of why G-d would allow the bad in my life. Did he not promise to protect us? Did he not say that no weapon formed against us will prosper? Did he not promise to condemn every tongue that rises against us? Did he Not promise to keep us and shield us? These questions led me to ponder that perhaps G-d is selective in which situation he intervened, concerning me. Nothing could be further from the truth. Some of you are probably asking these questions right now. Maybe you think that G-d is selective about your situations, and there's a chance that he'll not intervene in this one. Again... NOT true.

You see, the way G-d intervenes is far from what we expect or imagine. The LORD declares... Isaiah 55:9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Because we cannot see G-d working, it does not mean that he's not working. I assure you, even now, He's working. We need not be able to discern the hand of G-d (though that would be good). Rather, we must have faith to know that he is doing something, something good, beneficial, something in love.

It's now I see that G-d saved me that day back in elementary school. He spared me from making so many bad decisions and even a life full of torment. The following year I did get to the school I desired—the class year I was in was way better than the one I would have been in had I gone a year before. I now realize that the protection of G-d is not what we expect. Yes, the bible

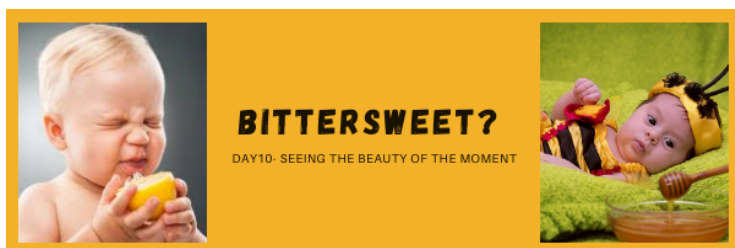
says no weapon formed against us will prosper—we take that to mean the weapon would not be formed. The weapon will be formed, aimed, pointed, and maybe shot. It may even hit the target—but still, it won't prosper. People will rise against you in judgment. They will speak and seek to destroy your name—but their words will not prosper.

You see, the enemy will come. The things we seek to participate in may be laced with poison. Obviously, many of our decisions are not the right ones. G-d has to negotiate that. Mark 16:18 shows us... and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them. It never says that G-d will keep us from drinking the deadly thing. We will drink it at times... but it won't have any power. God will protect you from Covid-19 despite it infecting you. Even then, the protection of G-d is still potent. Here's a kicker—even in death—G-d is still protecting you. So many times, our sacrifices, like fasting, circumnavigate the realm of excessive caution. We're afraid to drink the cup because it MAY be poison. As a result, we rob ourselves of something glorious. Think about it... You don't make the best sacrifice for G-d because you fear the possible fall out of doing that. I'm not saying to toss caution to the wind and to go lick some public restroom doorknobs. What I am saying is—G-d is G-d; the LORD Jesus is present despite what's in the cup that is before you. Our LORD drank his cup despite the bitterness knowing the father's love. So, Drink up. Something glorious is coming!!

Regards

Pastor J

## DAY 10-Bittersweet?



Seeing the Beauty of the moment

**A**s you should have noticed by now, I use stories from my past to illustrate G-dly principles for the present. Many of my stories are funny, even though, at the time of occurrence, they were anything but. I am grateful that I could look back at the days of my life thus far and see the hand of G-d everywhere. With that being said, the hand of G-d is working in the present. We just have to look for it a bit... but as some say, hindsight is twenty/twenty. Now I recall my past, the good times, and the bad times. The good times were good... the bad times—you guessed it—really bad. The good memories, however, surface to the top with grace and beauty.

I remember the days I spent as a child, climbing the plum

tree. I remember the giant mango tree in our yard that bore beautifully delicious long-mangoes every year. I can still vividly recall my grandfather making mango-chow under that tree and scolding me when I grabbed too much. I remember our ancient Mazda 929 that smoked so badly that a man asked my dad if he was driving a cloud. I will never forget the Saturday mornings when my sister, brother, and I went into stiff negotiations over the KFC that remained from Friday night. Pastor Sharo normally had all the leftovers cause she's the only one that didn't eat all hers on Friday. She ruled us with that. I remember Miss (My dad's pastor coming to the house); we loved when she came.

I can relay the memories of growing up with mushy romanticism and nostalgic bliss, but the truth is, the hard times of those days had us blind to all the good things. All the cares of my young life and other really grievous things back then, seem to be the entirety of my vision at that time. G.K. Chesterton once said...*“The center of every man’s existence is a dream. Death, disease, insanity, are merely material accidents, like a toothache or a twisted ankle. That these brutal forces always besiege and often capture the citadel does not prove that they are the citadel.”*

Why do we allow the hardships of our life to dominate our view? Because hardships besiege the citadel (fortress), this does not mean that hardship is all there is. Because there is an issue, let's say poverty, in your life, this does not mean that poor is the entirety of who you are. You can be poor and happy, trust me on that. You see, when our hardships become the focal point of our lives, we tend to miss the beauty in it. We could never fully enjoy the present moment. Since we're on G.K. Chesterton, here's another quote that I find quite telling...

*A couple of years ago I had the opportunity to visit a place where I'd lived for three years. For those three years I'd felt like a lump*

*of clay on the Potter's wheel. Not pretty, unusable, messy, and dull. Going back and showing my family the different places, I'd lived when I was there, remembering people who had been a part of my shaping and firing; walking through the township and seeing the old buildings, the beautiful parks, the river front – I thought, "I don't remember this place being so lovely."*

*I suddenly realised how much beauty I had missed because my eyes had been only on the vulgar lump of clay and all its irregularities. I was jarred by the thought that I hadn't made the most of my time in that place. That experience was gone and would never come to me again. I hadn't found the poetry in that unique experience setting. I didn't drink it dry. I don't want to ever let that happen again.*

As you fast, don't let the issues that come with fasting conceal the beauty of your sacrifice. Don't be so caught up in the bitterness of the moment that you miss the sweetness of it. If you do that, then you'll miss the beauty of the LORD. How can you declare the beauty of the LORD when you're busy lamenting ugly things? The scripture tells us in Psalms 29:2 Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. How can we do this if all we see is the challenge and never the success?

Do NOT miss the beauty of this moment. Even with all that's going on in the world, there is beauty in Christ. Now is when we give G-d the glory due to his name. Stop and see the beauty. Keep your mind on Christ. Isaiah 26:3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. The bitterness should not cause the sweet to become bittersweet; it should cause you to appreciate the sweetness of the sweet—the beauty of the beautiful. Your life is NOT bittersweet but sweeter in light of the bitterness.

## DAY 11 - A Bad hair day



### The Discovery of Self-Consciousness

**F**or the guys at least...ever notice that when you get a good haircut, it looks good for about a day, and then it goes away. The bad haircuts seem to last forever. I've always had strange hair. My hair is very, very curly, so not everyone can skillfully cut it. When I was young, about six or seven, I needed a haircut badly. My curls were getting out of hand. My dad was too busy to take me to get one, so my grandfather decided to carry me to his barber, Langra. This barber, a one-eyed man with a strange limp, stared intently at my head as I sat down on a wooden bench to get my cut. He and my grandfather struck up a conversation as the man began chopping away at my curly black hair.

There were no mirrors to see what he was doing, but I had a feeling it was nothing good. Honestly, I never really cared about how I looked or what I wore up to that point. I could have gone to the nearby supermarket in my underwear alone (And I did) and not care. This day, as I sat down to get my haircut, I felt a strange thing bubble up inside. Today I know what that was—self-consciousness. I became acutely aware that chances are, after this fellow was done cutting my hair, I would be looking totally ridiculous. I was right! When I got home, my siblings, aunts, and uncles found my new hairdo hilarious. What was even more telling was my mom was appalled by what she was seeing.

“What did they do to your head?” she shouted as she beheld the abomination lingering atop my visible skull. I think that was the time I discovered true self-consciousness. From that time, I became aware of myself and the way I looked. I was disturbed that my mother was constantly trying to dress my little brother, and I like twins. I noticed that many of my church pants were so short that I looked like I was expecting flood. I noticed that my immediate family were all lighter-skinned than I—I am plain old dark. Even as a child, I knew that all that I was becoming aware of concerning myself was simply what G-d gave me. I never desired to have straight hair or fair skin. This is who I am; I was and still am confident in what G-d created in me. For some people, however, their self-consciousness turns into self-love. When you become obsessively self-conscious, the more you begin to love yourself. Is that a bad thing? Well, hold on!

I believe it was Whitney Houston who sang, ‘learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all.’ That is absolute nonsense. **John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.** The Love of Jesus Christ is the

greatest love of all. But I expect idiotic psychological drivel from people like Whitney, you know, the secular world. When it comes to the church, there's no place for that. Unfortunately, I see this in the teachings of Christian pastors. I saw one bishop quoting Maya Angelou, "*I do not trust people who do not love themselves and yet tell me, 'I love you.'* There is an African saying which is: *be careful when a naked person offers you a shirt.*"

That bishop went on to state that... *A full life requires an unabashed love of ourselves.* I am looking for where in the gospel this concept is found. As a matter of fact, I see the opposite consideration in the scripture. **Matthew 16:24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.** If it's anything, we need to learn to love ourselves less. This is why we do things like fasting. It's not that we hate ourselves, but I realize that the more we are conscious of ourselves, loving ourselves... the less we are conscious of G-d. The denial of oneself is NOT the hatred of oneself. The denial of self is the best thing one could do for oneself. There is no need to teach people to love themselves. We're really good at that from an early age. Even those who claim to hate themselves and want to commit suicide, do so because they cannot deny themselves.

Honestly, I don't even remember what that bad haircut looked like. I can remember Langra though, the barber. I can remember the reaction to the hairstyle, but the haircut itself...nothing. I realize my novice bout of self-consciousness served no real purpose but to disturb my peace. As you fast, don't allow your self-consciousness to hinder the freedom of offering to G-d. I know your stomach is making loud noises, and your head aches sometimes. It will eventually pass. Hair grows back, clothes change, and that potbelly will come back real soon. Just hold on.



## DAY 12 - The Devil's dumpster?



### *The Trash we Carry Around*

**H**ave you heard the story of the two monks, Tanzan and Ekido, as they traversed the muddy road? Heavy rain was falling. Coming around a bend, they met a lovely girl in a silk kimono and sash, unable to cross the intersection. The girl bore a look of certain despondency as she remained trapped by the muddy conditions. Tanzan's heart went out to the stranded young woman.

“Do you need help, Ma'am?”

Before she could say a word, her eyes bore the answer. She gently nodded and bent her head.

“Come on, girl,” said Tanzan at once. Lifting her in his arms,

he carried her over the mud.

The girl softly smiled and bowed in respect. Tanzan reciprocated, and they departed. Ekido did not speak again until that night when they reached a lodging temple. Then he no longer could restrain himself as disdain and rage mounted upon his face.

“We monks don’t go near females,” he barked at Tanzan, “especially not young and lovely ones. It is dangerous. Why did you do that?”

“I left the girl back there,” said Tanzan. “Are you still carrying her?”

G-D is indeed merciful to us, and as a result, he demands that we are merciful as he is. He requires us to forgive others as we would want to be forgiven. Why does he make such a demand? Why do we have to forgive those who do the worse things to us while showing no remorse? Surely, they do not deserve our forgiveness. The reason to forgive is obvious, but we often miss it. When we harbor animosity in our hearts, it festers. Unforgiveness is like a cancer that seeks to destroy its host. When we forgive, we lay down that cancer. We dump it.

There are so many malignant things that we carry around. Even disagreements with others, we tend to harbor in our hearts, bearing the burden. The person we’re upset with has moved on, but we still carry it, and this only makes you madder. The scripture says in Hebrews 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. When we carry extra baggage, we hinder our own progress. No matter how justified it seems, excess weight slows you down.

Your fasting is an intentional dumping of excess weight.

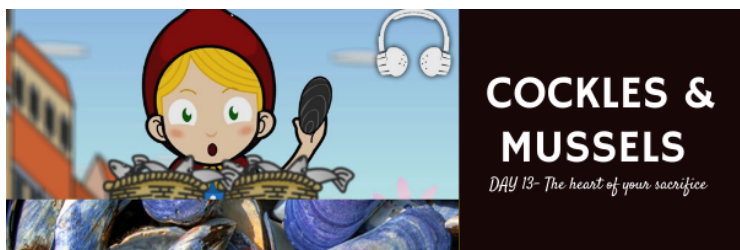
However, we must consider it makes no sense that you dump the pizza and keep the pain. You toss the fries and keep the fear. See what I did there with the words that start with the same letters... pizza-pain, fries and fear (just saying). While you're abstaining, see what's on the inside that you need to dump. Ever decided to clean a portion of your house and end up cleaning the entire thing? Well, your fast should be like that. Clean house. I know that some of you have already asked the LORD to take away the weighty things you're carrying. They are going nowhere if you insist on holding on to them. I recommend that you lay them at the foot of the cross and leave them there.

If we are honest and transparent, we will find that there are many things we carry around that need to be dumped. We've got a lot of trash in us that has accumulated over the years. Much of these things have been placed there by the enemy. If you're lugging around Satan's trash, does that make you the Devil's dumpster? I am NOT the Devil's dumpster, and neither should you be. Clean house today.

Regards

Pastor J

## DAY 13- Cockles and Mussels



### *The Heart of Your Sacrifice*

**I**t was a tender time. I believe I was in standard four (3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade) at the time. In those days, substitute teachers didn't seem to exist. When teachers were absent, students were basically on their own for a day (oh, the joy). On this particular day, our teacher was missing, and the class couldn't be happier. I was sitting in my classroom, minding my own business, when Miss Ganesh walked in. She was new, and no one was expecting what she was about to do. She recruited the entire class to join... the choir. I looked on in horror as I knew that my hidden talent was about to be discovered—I could sing a bit. When the time came for me to sing for miss Ganesh, I could

not bring myself to sing badly. I belted out a song from Sunday school, and the teachers squealed in delight.

“I believe we’ve found our soloist,” Miss Ganesh rejoiced.

*That’s alright, I guess... we’ll just go to this singing competition, I’ll sing my solo, and it will be all over, only a memory,* I thought. Boy, was I wrong. It turns out, the choir competition was held at our school, and all the students would be attending. You have to comprehend my position. I was one of the more athletic kids at my school. I was the kid who was great at cricket and football (soccer). Now, the big boy on the field was about to squeal like a girl in front of the entire school. Then it got worse. Miss Ganesh introduced me to the song I would be singing. I can still remember the morbid lyrics and haunting tune to this day. The lyrics went like...

*She died of the fever, and no one could save her,  
And that was the end of sweet Molly Malone;  
But her ghost drives a barrow through streets broad and narrow,  
Crying, “Cockles and mussels, alive, alive, oh!”*

The big man in school was going to sing about cockles and mussels. The mussels sounded alright, like muscles, but cockles, what on earth was that? So, the time came when the whole school gathered to hear this new choir. We moved in an orderly fashion to the wooden contraption they set for the choir to stand on. The choir started singing, and then my turn came. As I sang, I tried to keep my eyes forward, but I couldn’t help but look in the direction my friends were standing. Some were snickering; others were struggling to keep their jaws off the floor. I wasn’t sure how to react, and I became distracted, then there came the line... *“Crying Cockles and mussels, alive, alive oh!”*

I pulled off the *crying*, but the highest point in that song is *cockles*, and my tiny little voice skipped. The ‘ock’ in *cockles* went

missing from my rendition. Miss Ganesh bore a look of horror on her face as she led the choir. I couldn't blame my friends or my teacher; the only one to blame was myself. To add insult to injury, one of the judges, in his comments, mentioned my error.

What makes fasting so unique is that this is a sacrifice between you and G-d. No spectators. So often, we allow people to be the arbitrators of our sacrifice, and as a result, we falter. The LORD Jesus declared in Matthew 6:17-18, But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. Your sacrifice has nothing to do with what people think. You're not fasting to impress or please anyone. If that is the case, then you have your reward, the praise of men.

Some even embellish their struggles in order to make themselves look better. They twist their faces and act as if they're constipated... all in an effort to let people know that they're sacrificing for the LORD.' G-d has no delight in such tainted offerings. When you stop paying attention to what others think and focus on your sacrifice, your *performance* will be impeccable. Your father in heaven will reward you openly. The LORD is not waiting for you to screw up and then make comments about how you missed a note. He rewards the heart of your sacrifice. It's ALL for him. Since that day, I've sung that song many times; I've never missed cockles again...but it really doesn't matter now, does it?

Regards

Pastor J

## DAY 14- The secret Kung Fu technique



### *The power of Prayer*

**K**ids do silly things sometimes. I was definitely no exception to that truth. Man, I did some idiotic things. For instance, I remember seeing my first ‘kick-up’ —you know? —those Shaolin/ Kung Fu movies, where the dudes had the weird ponytails, beards, and half-shaved heads. I was only about seven, maybe eight. In the movie, before the Shaolin master ever fought, he would kneel, clasp his hands together as if he were praying, and then beat the living daylights out of his opponent. There were also scenes in the movie where he was losing, and he would assume his prayer position and then make a miraculous comeback. I thought that was the coolest

thing ever. How does that apply to my life? Well...

At school, there was this kid, Ruben, who was basically a bully. Everyone was afraid of him. On one particular day, Ruben and I had a not so amicable encounter. This day just happened to be the day after I saw the praying Shaolin master movie. Ruben and I squared off for a fight. As he ran in to fight me, I raised the palm of my hand and stopped him. The crowd of kids that gathered around to see the battle looked confused. I assumed the prayer position, just as I saw in the movie. Even my opponent was confused, so confused that he just stood there not knowing what to do. I knelt in the middle of the perplexed crowd, shut my eyes, and wondered exactly what it is I was supposed to do while in this ridiculous position. I felt stupid. So, I did the only thing I knew to do—I prayed. As soon as I said amen in my mind, I pounced out of my praying position with a flying Kungfu jump kick to Ruben's chest. This kick dropped him to the ground—I guess he was caught off guard. The crowd cheered, and I won the fight. All my friends came around asking what it is I was actually doing. It was my secret Kung Fu technique.

In retrospect, that was a silly thing to do before a fight, especially the part where I closed my eyes. All Ruben had to do was punch me in the head while I had my eyes closed, but my prayer confused him. Prayer confuses the enemy; it always takes him off guard; this is why he always tries to keep you from prayer. If your fast is your fight—your daily prayer is your preparation. If you feel beaten, stop, get on your knees, and summon the one that lives in you. That is your secret Kung Fu technique.

Your prayer need not be professional...you know... like some of those pastors that are called to pray on a national stage... that attempt verbose eloquence and enhanced literary techniques.



You may not even know what you're doing. Do what you know to do, simply be honest with the LORD. Express your weakness, expose your doubts to him. He will NOT despise or reject such a prayer. The enemy will come to make you think that you're vulnerable while in the position of prayer—but you're not. As a matter of fact, that's when you're at your strongest.

What's even more confusing to the enemy is when you pray in the Spirit. Ask G-d to fill you with His Spirit—to empower you to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. Just as the disciples in Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. When you pray in the Spirit, you speak words that the enemy does NOT comprehend. It's a private connection between you and G-d. Satan has managed to dupe many in the church into believing that tongues and the infilling of the Holy Spirit has ceased. Nothing could be further from the truth. Nonetheless, it is immaterial what men think—if you got the gift, you're much better off for it. Think about it, that gift is your secret Kung Fu technique. Get in position!

Regards

Pastor J

## DAY 15 -The little puppy who wasn't

### THE LITTLE PUPPY THAT WASN'T

DAY 15  
*An Examination of intentions*



*An Examination of intentions*

**M**y intentions were pure... I promise... but as they say—the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Imagine my surprise when I got up one morning to see that our brown and white dog (I can't remember her name) gave birth to a puppy. I was so happy that I rushed my little six-year-old self over to see the wonderful little creature making the weird, high pitched sounds. As I got closer and looked at the little creature, born mere minutes ago, I noticed something. See, I was an observant child. I noticed that the little thing looked wet and dirty and its eyes weren't open. By my reasoning, it couldn't open its eyes because of all that goopy stuff all over

it. So, I decided to give the newborn pup a well-needed bath. I didn't want to get the yucky stuff all over my hands, so I got a shovel. I scooped up the puppy, went to the nearby pipe, turned it on. I let the gushing water flow unto the shovel as the minuscule little puppy cried in displeasure. Soon the crying stopped, and the puppy went motionless.

My mom (I think) came out to find me bathing the puppy, but it was too late. That day I learned that what I thought was good was really bad. I had no thoughts of remorse then. I didn't deem myself a puppy murderer or anything like that—I was too young to piece that together. In retrospect, however—I could think those thoughts. Plus, I'm really not too lucky with dogs, so I avoid them altogether. Though they were noble, my intentions proved to be the demise of the very thing that I was seeking to cherish.

You see, any intention may seem noble when uninformed. This is why, if you want to cherish a thing, know about it, better yet, know it. You're coming down to the last week of your fast, and the home stretch gives birth to particular intentions. You intend to cherish the spiritual benefits of the sacrifice you've made during this time. You intend to stay in the spirit. I'm sure some have purposed to fast again during the year (we'll see). Some have even vowed to keep the weight you've lost off your liberated mid-section (good luck with that). None of these are bad intentions, but you must be aware of the debilitating effects of those intentions if they fail to materialize. If you're not careful, you could end up condemning yourself and the sacrifice that you've so industriously made because you were unable to fulfill your intentions. Yes, self-condemnation is the *modus operandi* of the enemy. Do NOT fall into that trap.

I encourage you to go to the word, use what you glean from

it to fabricate a viable plan to approach the things your heart intends to accomplish. Like I said in a previous blog, identify the things that permanently need to go and let them go. Identify the things that will serve to hinder your good intentions—and deal with those, upfront. As the intensity of your piety winds down nearing the end of your fast, you must already have a set plan to keep what you've gained from the LORD. Remember, the enemy comes to steal... John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

I've had many puppies since the debacle of my first puppy bath attempt. Every time I give a dog a bath, I remember that little puppy who wasn't. I really didn't learn utter remorse that day, but I did learn to examine my intentions.

Regards

Pastor J

## DAY 16 -The Construction Cowboy



### *The Power of Losing*

**I**t was a beautiful Saturday morning, almost twenty-two years ago. I was living in Texas at the time. On this particular morning, I got a chance to sleep late. My blissful slumber, however, was disturbed by the distinct sound of hammering. I waited for it to stop, but it did not. I lazily slid out of bed and groggily stumbled toward the sound. I ventured into the dining room to find Curtis, my brother-in-law, decked off in his tool belt, work boots, and safety shades. He looked like a construction cowboy. Apparently, he was in the process of demolishing a wall that separated the living room from the dining room. He was just starting, so I changed and decided

to join him on the demolition project. The wall proved to be a stubborn opponent and was more challenging than we both expected. We hammered away at the thing, but our progress was slow and retarded. All the commotion awoke my brother, who was asleep in his room.

Now Jude had a little temper, and we knew that this was the worse way to wake him. We didn't have a choice. His reaction, however, surprised us both. The door to his room slowly opened, and he sluggishly made his way into the work area to find Curt and me, armed with our hammers. He then looked at the pathetic progress we made on the wall.

“We're breaking the wall?” he mumbled.

We both nodded to confirm his observation. Jude walked over to the wall, still in his pajamas, crashed both his hand through, and pulled half of it down...with his bare hands. Yes, he's strong. We joined him, and the wall was done shortly after. Curt and I were shocked by his reaction to the disturbance. He could have come out angry and created a scene. He could have started an argument with us... or at least try to. Instead, he allowed the annoyance to drive him into something productive. His loss of sleep was aggravating, but he chose to react in a particular way, which benefited Curt and me.

During your fast, emotions tend to flare at times. As they say—a hungry man is an angry man. In addition to that, fasting, by its nature, constitutes loss. You lose meals, weight, and energy. On the plus side, you lose some distractions and weaknesses. Emotions arise out of loss, and it is up to you to discipline yourself to do the right thing. Because you're disciplining your soul—the seat of your emotions—you'll be tempted to retaliate in a soulish manner—with emotion. Everything will seem to warrant an emotional response. You'll

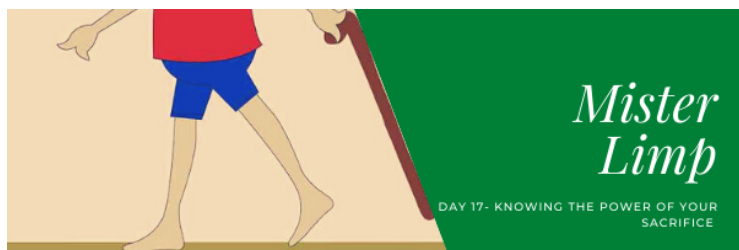
become acutely aware of the emotion of others; maybe you'll even read them wrong.

So, it's important to remember that you have a choice. You always have a choice in the way you respond to things. You could demolish your distractions, or you could allow them to crush you. As you fast, allow every distraction to expose itself and then...pull the walls down. Your fast could be the very best thing you've ever done or the most painful thing you've ever done. It's entirely up to you. Oh... and about the losing things during this fast... you stand to gain way more than you'll ever lose. I love you guys (That sounds so emotional).

Regards

Pastor J

## Day 17- Mister Limp



*Knowing the power of your sacrifice*

**G**rowing up in the nineties was certainly interesting. From the oversized pant legs, the outrageous colors (thanks a lot fresh prince), to the cyan three quarters farmer brown jumpers—it was certainly peculiar. I mean, we all wore steel toe boots to school...how weird is that. I must admit I was a partaker in some of those trends. I even wore pants where the crotch reached down to my knees once—no, not because I was ‘cool’ but because they were my dad’s jeans, and I didn’t have a pair, so I borrowed his. Fortunately, the oversized thing which engulfed my lower half was trending—go figure. Of all the



trends that came out during that decade, I will never understand the ‘fake limp.’

Many of the teenagers were walking around with canes (walking sticks) whilst sporting a limp to accompany them. There was one bully in particular that everyone feared. He had canes that were exotic, carved at the top. He sported an exaggerated limp. I don’t know what school he went to, but he was always amongst the afterschool crowd—the limers. On one particular evening, three of my friends and I were hanging out in school. It was late, and the school was almost empty. I was getting ready to leave. As we stood laughing, having a good time, Mr. Limp showed up. This skinny bully looked rough, much worse than the last time I saw him. He walked up to my friend and slapped him. Then he slapped my next friend. I became nervous...no, I wasn’t scared to be slapped... I was concerned about how I’d react. As a matter of fact, I could feel the blood rushing to my head. Mr. Limp reached me, looked at my now solemn face with its flared nostrils, and moved on. He slapped my last friend. We could have taken him...but the subsequent consequences could have been dire.

Strangely, I noticed that during this episode, Mr. Limp did NOT have a limp. He was walking perfectly fine. So, the rumors of him getting shot in a robbery gone wrong were probably not true. My suspicions were confirmed when I saw him speeding down high street one day—without a limp. To make matters worse, I found out that Mr. Limp grew up in the ghettos of... Gulf View (Yup...an affluent suburb not unlike Bel Air). The only ‘hood’ this kid knew was a wealthy neighborhood.

Many of the religious people in the LORD’s day, when they fasted, contorted their faces to show that they were hungry and thirsty. The worse they appeared, the greater the sacrifice

seemed to be. The greater the sacrifice, the more piety would be ascribed to them. I could imagine these fasters walking slower than usual and taking an eternity to sit down as if they'd collapse at any moment. The crowd would probably whisper that this scribe was fasting for twenty-one days. You must see that a fake limp is nothing to revere. It is pretentious and misleading—most certainly a sign of weakness. Think about it, you're missing a few meals, and you look like you want to die. Who would want to follow that?

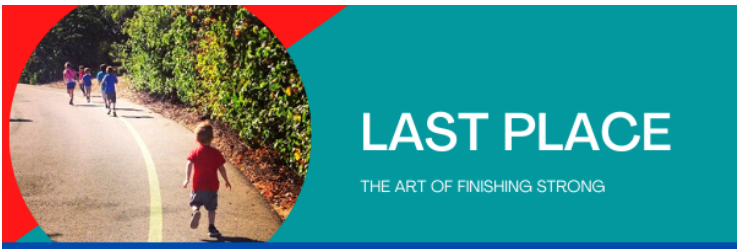
When the LORD entered the scene, he presented a different approach to fasting. He said to NOT appear unto men as if you're fasting. Don't go publishing what you're doing. There is greater strength in holding yourself together. The LORD spoke to the people as having authority and NOT as the scribes and the Pharisees. He proved to have power, not only over the elements and sicknesses, but he had power over his own mortal shell—his body. Your fast is a glorious opportunity to exercise power over your own thoughts, desires, and body. Why is this important? Besides the fact that seeking earthly praise negate your heavenly reward—remember... 1 Corinthians 4:20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. Strength in your fast is the exercise of spirit-led power.

Mr. Limp pretended that he did not have good things—a big house in an upscale neighborhood. When you embellish the suffering of your fast... you project to the world that you don't have divine authority—you're just like Mr. Limp.

Regards

Pastor J

## DAY 18 - Last Place



### The art of finishing strong

**N**o one likes losing. Everyone wants to win. You know what Ricky Bobby said, *If you ain't first... you're last*. Well, that's not true, there's second, third... there's a long way before last. Here's a more effective platitude concerning losing—*second is the first loser*. This is sort of true, but to each his own. I love winning; I think most people do. So, imagine the shame and discouragement I felt for myself when I lost a race.

I was about thirteen or fourteen at the time. My high school sports day was coming up, and they began to run the heats for various races. We really didn't have a choice; we had to run. I was selected for the 200m race. I was pretty fast, and in the

heats, I more or less destroyed the competition. I would take off quickly, cross the finish line, and wait for the rest of the pack to cross. I felt on top of the world. I began to think that I had the finals on lock. Boy, was I wrong.

The finals came, and I got a chance to see the dudes I had to compete against. My heart sank. Not one of them was from my year. They were all older guys from the upper form. How did I end up here? I knew I was one of the fastest runners in my form—but these beasts were on a different level. I began to inwardly panic before I ever got to the starting line. I decided to just run as hard as possible and leave the rest of the runners no chance to catch me.

We lined up, the starting signal sounded, and we took off. I quickly got ahead of the pack and steadily distanced myself from them. *This might actually work*, I thought to myself. As we approached the home stretch and I saw the finish line, a sense of excitement bubbled up inside. *I could actually win this*. That excitement was short-lived. Suddenly, the entire group of runners began to accelerate. By this time, I began to grow weary. I watched the whole pack of boys pass me. I actually finished last—dead last. Even fellas I know I was faster than—beat me. In retrospect, I lost that race from the moment I began to panic.

Every runner must have a plan for their race. I learned that, that day. I had a plan... but it was terrible. Those dudes all reserved energy for the final sprint—I did NOT. I didn't realize how complex some of the race plans are until I spoke to some Olympic athletes. One Jamaican runner told me that she won a race because she changed her coach's plan to one her husband recommended. A plan for the race is essential.

As we approach the final stretch of this fast and we sprint to the finish, it's important to finish strong because this is where

the enemy will seek to overtake you. This is when fatigue sets in. This is where the prospect of ending invites temptation. You know—like when you want to use the bathroom, and as you actually stand before the commode—the urge to go is unbearable. So, formulate a plan. Hebrews 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. The reward at the end of this is that we will be closer to our LORD. That is more than worth it. I've learned my lesson—I plan to finish strong.

Regards

Pastor J

## DAY 19- Sparkles



Ensuring no regrets

**W**hile living in Trinidad, many years ago (about 20), I was driving out of my street. As I slowly made my way to the main road, I noticed a little black speck on the road. I kept my eyes on the tiny black and tan thing, and as I drew closer, I realized that it was a puppy. The poor little thing looked as if it had been born only hours ago. Its eyes had not opened yet... (no, I did not give it a bath). I slowly drove around it and not giving much thought to what I just noticed. It's only after I got onto the main highway I realized that I just left a Rottweiler puppy on the road. I love Rottweilers. Well, it was too late to turn around. I hoped that when I returned that it would still be there. It wasn't. Someone else found it. I scolded

myself for my ignorance.

About two years later, on a glorious Sunday morning, I was driving out to church. As I turned the corner of my street, I noticed another black speck on the road. Immediately, I remembered my encounter with a puppy two years earlier. I slowed down as I reached the area where I saw the spot on the road. It was indeed a little black and tan puppy. The poor little thing looked dehydrated. I quickly scooped him up and reversed the car to my front gate. My mom was outside, and I gave her the puppy. She was opposed to bringing home a stray pot-hound (common dog), but I had no time to explain my decision. By the time I was leaving again for church, she was giving the little creature some milk. The next day I took the puppy to the vet. He confirmed my supposition—it was indeed a Rott. I was elated. Denise named her...sparkles. I wanted something like Killer—but she won that battle. Sparkles grew and proved the vet to be wrong. She was NOT a Rott but a German shepherd. So, I now had a bobbed tailed German shepherd. Sparkles was the best dog I ever had—she was beautiful.

They say hindsight is 20/20, and you only know the value of what you have after the fact. People tend to shun risks and unwittingly overlook opportunities because opportunities really don't present themselves as such. I've seen my Dad turn down so many good investment opportunities because he did NOT have the foresight to know the value of what was in front of him. I remember him saying that no one would ever pay two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the property next to our house. He was partially right; they paid millions. It is important to examine all the opportunities before you and be ready to take a chance—an educated risk or else...there will be some regret.

As this fast comes to a close, and we go back to stuffing

our faces (I hope NOT), will there be some regret? Would you say in your heart that there was more you could have done in sacrifice to the LORD? Are there opportunities you could have grasped, but you let it go because you were ignorant of the spiritual ramifications? Will fate be so cruel as to reveal to you what you missed? I don't know about you, but I don't want to miss anything that G-d is doing. We often quote the scripture...*Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.* For many, this scripture just an eloquent platitude, a mindless soliloquy. How can you do all things when you never seize the opportunity to do anything?

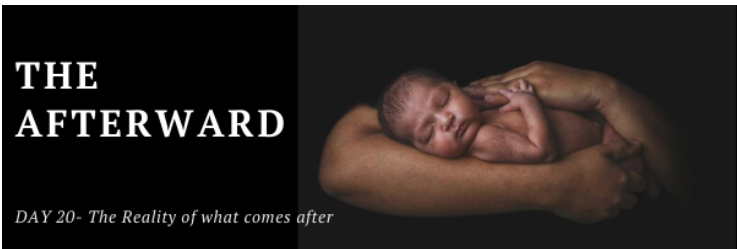
I know... a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. But you have no bird...and the bush is full of birds. Go hunting. Don't leave this fast mining any regrets. Do all that you can do. Better yet, don't leave this world with any regrets—do all you can do for the kingdom. Nothing else matters. I am eternally grateful for the second chance the LORD gave me with Sparkles. She was a joy. Second chances don't come that often.

Regards

Pastor J



## DAY 20- The Afterward



### The reality of what comes after

**I** was present (in the delivery room) for the birth of my three children. I must admit, the first one was the most nerve-wracking. While standing in the delivery room, I was concerned, not only for my unborn son but for my wife. I read somewhere that the closest a woman will ever come to death is while giving birth. Now she was staring this prospect dead in the eye. The contractions were coming, and the doctor came in to commence the delivery. It wasn't long before she was into the process of giving birth. I stood holding her hand, silently listening to the instructions the doctor was giving her.

“Push, Denise, you’ve got to give a good effort. C’mon... push, push,” the doctor encouraged.

Everyone in the room repeated the sentiment, push, including me. We all encouraged her, telling her that she was strong enough and was almost there while telling her to push. I was so engulfed in the moment that I did not realize that while I was telling her to push... I was pushing as well. I almost had an incident of monumental proportions. Praise Jesus—I didn't.

As Jeshua Seth Ramdial came into the world, I was elated but more relieved than anything. The previous nine months were filled with wondering and bouts of anxiety. Now, the morning sickness was done, the Braxton Hicks were over, the baby boy was here, strong and healthy. The hard times were over. The travail was done, and everything was fine. Now, we could go back to normal... NOT true. I was about to discover a new reality.

We brought my first-born son home; his room was ready for him. His crib was already set up, a rocking chair next to it, a changing table, and a wardrobe for all his clothes. Strangely, I found myself getting up in the middle of the night just to observe the rise and fall of his little chest. I just checked to make sure he was breathing—I think a lot of new parents do this. Then and there, I realized that the hard part wasn't done; it was just beginning. The real test comes afterward. In reality, you are now responsible for an innocent life. Your precious child was protected in the womb but now was open to the elements. It's was a little unsettling.

The bible tells us that our LORD Jesus fasted for forty days and nights. No food, no water. The scripture tells us... *Matthew 4:2-3 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. 3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.* It was after the LORD was in the position that he could eat... the tempter came with the temptation of food. It is after your great sacrifice

the tempter will come to cause you to err. Afterward, the enemy will come to negate all that you've acquired during your fast. When things seem lawful to do, then the enemy will come to engage you in things that will steal your eternal inheritance.

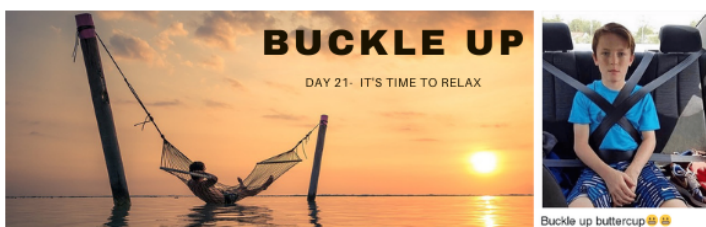
The first temptation began with... *if you are the son of G-d.* This was already spoken by G-d the father as Jesus was being baptized. *Mark 1:11 And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* The tempter seeks to cause you to doubt the word of G-d and the promises of G-d. So, as you come to an end of this fast and enter into the 'afterward,' remember all that G-d said to you during this time. Do NOT let the enemy steal your treasure. It is in the afterward the victory is won!

The birth of Elianna was smooth and without incident—Elisha not so much. Still, in both cases, I was ready for afterward. Are you ready for your afterward?

Regards

Pastor J

## DAY 21- Buckle up



*It's time to relax*

**W**hat? Is it the last day already? Well, congratulations on completing your fast. Some say it was easy this time around; others say it was more difficult than all the other years. For me, it was not as challenging as some of the previous years. I think it's because I was not as focused on food. Even now, as the final hours amble along, I don't crave food. Honestly, Jesus is our sustenance. Is he not the bread of life? I hope you've grasped that during this time of fasting. Now you know that you are capable of discipline—especially when Christ-centered.

I remember when I was a teenager, my dad took me along with

him to preach in another church. The pastor requested that I sing, so I went. On the way back, the police were executing a roadblock, checking all the cars that come through. That was right about the time they passed the new seatbelt law making it mandatory to wear the seatbelt. I did not have mine on. As the chubby little officer wiggled his flashlight, indicating that we were to pull to the side, my dad casually said, “put on your seat belt.”

Until that point, I did not realize that I was not wearing it. So, in my panic to pull the belt across my chest to the buckle, it got stuck. You pull it too hard, and it goes nowhere—a further sense of panic set in as I realized that the police officer was approaching the vehicle. My dad just sat there looking at me wrestle with the demonic contraption. The police officer came over, looked into the car to find me fighting with my seatbelt.

“Take care you hang yourself, youth,” the officer blared with an emotionless face.

My dad busted out laughing. Then, the police officer joined him. They then joined forces to make fun of me. You see, in my fear and panic, I was virtually debilitated. What is usually a simple task, became impossible. We often exalt the ordinary, causing it to become impossible when we try to solve things in fear and panic. Sometimes we aren't even capable of solving a thing, but we wrestle with it anyway. The bible tells us in Psalms 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

*Be still* (as in *Be still and know*) is translated as *relax*. The word ‘know’ in that scripture means *to experience*. Sometimes we need to relax and just experience G-d. This is what I’ve gleaned from my fast. *Be still* is also translated as *to be disheartened*. I know, that’s weird. And, the word ‘know’ also means *to tell*.

This tells me that though you be disheartened at times (this is inevitable for we still dwell in the flesh), keep telling that G-d is G-d and Jesus is LORD. Keep telling who? For starters, keep telling yourself. Not only that he is G-d, but he is your G-d.

In the times of temptation during your fast you, many of you placed yourself in the position where you had no other choice but to depend on G-d. Let this be the discipline of your life. Difficult times WILL come. I am facing a few right now—but this does NOT stop me from telling of G-d and his goodness. No matter what comes, our G-d is G-d, and the work of the cross of our LORD stands forever.

It was my pleasure writing these blogs for those who read them. I appreciate you. Drop me an email. I am interested in learning what You've gained from this fast. I love every single one of you. Be blessed and stay in the faith.

Regards

Pastor J