

CHURCH OF THE HIGHLANDS

Fasting for Breakthrough

Full Transcript

Chris Hodges
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Introduction and Highlands College Update

- 0:00 And Pastor Mark did ask me, too, to give you a quick, and I don't want to do very long because I want to get into the message tonight. I've got a lot of content for you, but he asked me to give just a brief word about what's happening at Highlands College. It's been amazing. I'm having the time of my life. We have our first senior class. We have our largest freshman class in the history of our school, everybody.
- 0:27 In fact, coming into the fall of this year, we have a wait list. We have more students that are applying than ever before, like by a lot, actually. And we're putting up a couple of buildings. We just finished a housing project that we called The Village, which was a hotel on the north side of the property that we acquired, that joined, kind of brought it all in together. And then we are putting up another dorm because we need the space, everybody. We're trying to get 1,000 beds on campus, and so God's blessing us in a great way in that area. We're opening this fall. We're going to call it the Dunn School of Business, everybody, so we're going to actually have a business major where they can study finance and governance as it relates to nonprofits and churches.
- 1:09 And so anyway, God's just doing an amazing thing. I'm very, very grateful to the Lord for that. I did want to give a quick little plug for those of you who say, hey, man, I kind of wish I was 18 again, you know, and to go to a school like that. We actually have, you may or may not know this, we basically have an evening program,
- 1:29 An adult version. Not that these students aren't adults, but an adult version of Highlands College. And it's really for three different reasons. We actually have three different certificates that you can earn over your course study. It takes place one night a week, but there are some people who just want to grow in their Christian leadership. So some of you guys are business leaders, and you want to bring Christian ethics into that business place. We're actually teaching Christian leadership as a certificate. We also have another one that's just purely for those. We also have another one that's just purely for those who want to know more about the Bible, biblical theology, and just studying God's Word in a very, very, very deep way.
- 2:08 And then there are some who, and this is my favorite part, there are some who have a call of God on your life. You've always had it, but for some reason, you ended up doing something other than serving God in full-time ministry, and you've been looking for a pathway back. And this gives you a chance to go to school and still do your job and have your family, but go to school once a week. And by the way, this is available. It's available at locations all across the state. So that's not just here in Birmingham, but you would like to actually study the ministry. And we have a different certificate for that as well.
- 2:42 In fact, we have actually placed more out of HCLI, Heisen's College Leadership Institute, than the students that we've been raising up. There's so many that have gone on to work in churches all across the nation and doing a great job. So we're very, very grateful for that. And I think the team's going to put something... There you go. There's a little... There's a little QR code if you want to go look at what it would take for you to be a student. We actually start class this coming Tuesday night, and it's not too late to jump in on this semester of classes. So there you go.

Biblical Foundation for Fasting

- 3:14 Pastor Marks asked me to teach on fasting, and I actually went back through my notes in the 24 -plus years that I was leading the church and realized that it's been a long time since I really dug in and taught on fasting. Of course, you know me. I went through all my old notes. And then I tried to... I tried to I tried to improve it as much as I could, too. And I want to take a few minutes, and this is going to be more of a teach than a preach, I'll just tell you, okay? Because I want to cover a lot of material. Here's a little preach at the end, I think. And so... But I really want to just explain something that for many Christians in all denominations, all walks of life in the Christian faith, really don't know a whole lot about, or they have a huge number of misconceptions.
- 3:54 And at the same time, fasting is mentioned more than 75 times in the Bible. And I'm going to just show you. I'm going to show you a few of those places. And then we're going to answer four questions, and then I'm going to show you five of the nine fasts that are in the Bible. So that's where we're going, okay? Let me start right here with Jesus himself. In fact, John's disciples... This is so funny. I laugh when I actually put this in my notes because, you know, even back... Even 2,000 years ago, the church was picking on the church. You know, John's disciples came in, and they were basically complaining. He says, hey, how is it that we, John's disciples, and the Pharisees are fasting, but your disciples, you know, they're always somebody complaining.
- 4:33 But anyway, but Jesus answered, how can the guest of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? And mourn, by the way, is a good word for you to just put in your head because I'm going to explain to you why you need to be kind of in that mindset whenever you're fasting. The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and then they will fast. So he says, as soon as I go, I want you to fast. And then there's another place in the New Testament or in the Gospels that I want to show you. And I've taught on this. I won't teach it a lot, but you may remember it's in Matthew 17.
- 5:03 It's also found in the book of Mark, where the disciples had tremendous success seeing people healed and saved and just, you know, the ministering in a great way. But then they encountered a boy who had a demon, and they were not able to get this boy healed. And so Jesus said, oh, you unbelieving and perverse generation, bring the boy to me. And I've taught you this. If you've been around, you can go back and watch some of the messages that start our fast from previous years. But the disciples couldn't heal the boy. And so Jesus said, oh, bring him to me. And then, of course, Jesus prays for him, and he gets delivered. And so the disciples, embarrassed, bring Jesus off to the side and say, why could we not drive it out?
- 5:42 And Jesus said, oh, I needed to tell you this, that nothing is actually impossible for you, but this kind. Everybody say this kind. Yeah, so this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. So he said, I forgot to tell you, there are some things that require a little bit more depth. There are some things that require a little bit more depth of your faith, of your experience in order to see it become a reality. And I'll explain why in just a second. And by the way, this is where I would like to point out to you, too, that a lot of the times, if not most of the times, fasting was always connected with prayer.

6:16

Mark 2:19-20

How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

- 6:48 And I just want to show you one. There again are many. There are actually 75. I'm only going to show you three here. But while they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I've called them. So they're basically having a commissioning service or an opportunity to send out people from their church to be missionaries or to do missions work. And so after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. So this was the custom that even when you did anything as important as sending someone off to do something for the work of the Lord, they fasted and prayed to do that.
- 7:24 So we have these 21 days once a year, but you would need to know that this was a common practice. All throughout and almost for every occasion. And I want you to consider that. I want you to be involved in what we're doing as a church with 21 days of prayer and fasting. But I want you to think through the idea that what if for this situation, maybe we need to pray and fast before we do that. Maybe before you buy that house, before you take that trip, maybe before you make that decision. I don't know what it is, but you're going to interject this. And I'm not talking about 21 days. I'm just talking about setting apart some time with God.

Why Fast: The Triune Being

7:58

Matthew 17:19-21

Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, 'Why couldn't we drive it out?' He replied, 'Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.'

- 8:21 And fasting was, it wasn't even like, again, a 21 days in January kind of a thing. They would have done something like that. But they... Most of them fasted every single week. I had that practice for a long time where I had one day a week that I fasted. I've tried to fast the first three days of every month. And then we had these 21 day times. I've studied people like, you know, John and Charles Wesley, the founders, basically the founders of the Methodist movement. They actually fasted, both of them fasted two days a week. And they said the reason why, just to keep their flesh under control. So I want to teach you about fasting.
- 8:58 And I want to do it by answering a few questions, okay? And the first one is, and this is my favorite part of the message, I think. And that is, like, why? Why does God want this? And this is where a lot of people actually have bad theology because they think that God wants us to mourn as in be unhappy and be suffering and be in pain. And you've been such a naughty little boy and girl. You need to, like... You know, prove your love to me in this way. God, listen to me, everybody. Look, listen to me. The wrath of God has already been satisfied through Jesus on the cross. You don't have to do anything else to earn the

favor of God.

9:40

Acts 13:2-3

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

10:24 Some of creation only has one. Like, trees just have the tree. Right? Animals, they have a different part. They have, you know, they have what you see, like the tree has the body. But, of course, animals have emotions and things like that. But we're the only ones that have a third part. So I want to explain these to you. The body, which is really the flesh. So I'm only adding this to your notes so that when you read the Bible, the word flesh is used a lot. And it's not talking about your skin flesh. It's talking about your bodily appetites. Okay? So it's... It's talking about what your flesh craves. And it's all throughout the New Testament.

11:04

2 Corinthians 11:27

I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

11:43 And there are parts of the living creatures who have that. I mean, Tammy and I raised dogs for a long time. We don't have any dogs anymore. To God be the glory, great things he has done. Okay. We're grateful. We have grandkids now. Okay? So anyway, we don't have dogs anymore. But we had, I mean, our dog, very clear when she was in trouble, she tucked her tail. When she was happy, you know, wag the tail, right? They have cats. I don't know about them. I don't know if they have any emotion at all. Anyway, but in fact, when I put this in my notes, it reminded me, it's not in my notes, but it reminded me of a Boudreaux joke.

12:18 Do you want to hear it? Yes or no? Okay. So this one's really funny. I don't think I've ever told you that Boudreaux had a dog and Thibodeau came over one time and they were watching. And then Boudreaux. Boudreaux was watching a movie and the dog was sitting there on the couch. And when the movie got exciting, the dog stood up real tall and looked concerned. And when there was a happy part, the dog wagged his tail. And it was the sad part, he tucked his tail. And Thibodeau says, man, Boudreaux, it's just amazing to see how your dog is enjoying, like how he's enjoying this movie. And Boudreaux said, yeah, I know, because he hated the book.

12:51 Anyway, so. That's stupid. But it's funny. I don't care what y'all say. All right. So, but it's the spirit part. It's the spirit part of us. It's the part of us that's like God. Okay. This is the part of us that connects with God. This is the part that humans alone have that bear this image of God. Genesis one, we are made in the image of God. What does that mean? Does that mean that God looks like, you know, me? Five foot nine and shrinking, you know, and no, no.

13:25 It's that we have this spirit part of us. And that's the part of us that connects with God. This is the part of you, by the way, when you say, Jesus, will you be the Lord of my life? Immediately, immediately, that part of you is made perfect, holy, and righteous. Okay. Here's the catch. You got to, you got to see these

two have to catch up.

- 13:46 Okay. They don't get perfect, holy, and righteous. So, so you still have habits. You still have addictions. You still cuss a little bit, or you kick the dog, or, you know, you've got some things, right? Or you've got some hurts or some wounds. There's some addictions or, so, so the process of Christianity, we call it regeneration. So there's salvation, which is a moment. You're going to heaven. You're going to heaven, right? Okay. And it's, and it's past, present, future. God has paid for your sins. But now the other two parts of you are being transformed into his likeness, 2 Corinthians says. We're having this process. Okay. So that, that is the Christian life. I hope all of you are on that journey.
- 14:24 I hope you're all on the journey of. I'm letting this part of me. I'm letting this part of me affect these two parts of me. Okay. Now, think about it with me. How would you get this one to have great influence into these two? How would you do it? And I would like to say to you, and this is where I'm getting into fasting. It happens. It has the better chance if it's the strongest of the three. In fact, let me say it this way. Whichever one is the strongest of the three is going to rule your life. Still going to go to heaven. But there are some people who their bodies. Is calling all the shots and you're that person.
- 15:02 I'm just going to say it. You're the person that every Sunday says, God, I'll never do that again. And you do that. You eat it, drink it, click it, uh, smoke it, whatever it, right. And you don't want to, but your body is so strong that it's dominating. If you want to read it in Bible texts, put this in your notes for you. Note takers go read Romans eight now with this understanding, because it says, those who are led by their flesh, it'll, it'll eventually kill you. But those who are dominated by the spirit have life in peace. It goes through a whole argument of that. I want you to see that there are some people.
- 15:39 And by the way, by the way, when your body's in charge, it has disregard for the other two. Meaning that when your body's in charge, it does. If I want to eat and just tear up my body, we know it's going to hurt your emotions. You know, it's going to hurt your self-esteem and it, it destroys. So, and doesn't even care, it destroys spirit too. Right. And, and, and the opposite when souls in charge, when it's totally in charge of your life, depression is more important to you. It'll kill body because I don't care what body thinks I'm in charge. So what do we want? We want spirit to be in charge. Okay. Put this in your notes.
- 16:18 If you're a note taker, the one that is fed is the one that is in charge it, because it becomes the strongest watch this and whatever ones are starved. Become the weakest. So what fasting really is, is getting to a place where we say, you know what? We're always on this journey without 21 days. You're always on this journey of letting this be so strong that it influences these two. Watch this, but fasting puts it on hyperdrive.
- 16:47 Fasting just allows you to accelerate the process because you're actively, and this gives you the spirit of what fasting is. Okay. Cause if you don't, you'll, it'll, it'll drive you crazy. If you're just. If you're just on like a glorified spiritual diet, okay, but what you want is you want, you're asking ourselves, what can I do to deny the cravings of my body and what can I do to deny the cravings of my soul? Right. And even the, in the areas where we lose and a lot of us are losing in this game, this king of the hill, if you will, of who's in charge of your life, when you lose, watch this, you lose your dominion.

17:27 So you still go to heaven, but you have no authority here on earth. The very first sin happened by satisfying a craving. They ate that. They didn't just believe in the apple. They ate it. They consumed it. In the story of Jacob and Esau, Esau lost his birthright because he wanted that soup so bad. Are you following me? In the days of Noah, go read it. In the, in the days of Noah, they wanted to party and carry on. They wanted so much and it costs them, right? And even Jesus said to the rich young ruler, he said, or to the fool, he said, he said, you say, oh, I've got plenty, eat, drink, and be merry.

When and How to Fast

18:09 But you didn't know this, this very night, your, your life would be demanded of you. You were letting the wrong part of you rule your life. Are y'all with me, everybody? So my little working definition, and I've never shared this before because this is the new part of the message of fasting is fasting is denying the fleshly appetites of the body.

18:27 And reordering the desires of the mind, will, and emotions so that our spirit becomes more responsive to God. And if you really want to know what fasting is, this is what fasting is. It gives us a season to say, you know what? I'm not going to watch the news for a month. I'm not going to be on social media for a month. I'm not going to, I'm not going to read anything but God's word. I'm not even going to read books, even if they're just fiction, just fun, fun, you know, fun books. I'm going to, I'm going to take some time and try to clean out every part of the body and the soul. And of course, food is at its, at the heart of fasting, food represents the cravings.

19:02 And, and, and when we can just say no, and you're going to be just fine. Because I've already laid up for many years. I think I could do a 40 day fast. I've laid, I've got storage, right? You know what I'm saying? Look, we're going to be fine. And when we just say, no, what? I'm not going to do that. And it's just a powerful way to let this more responsiveness take place. Here's another. Question I want to answer. And that is when should we fast? And of course we fast here at Highlands on 21 days of prayer. But I want to communicate something to you that I've never shared with you before. And that is, it is important that we start the year with 21 days of prayer.

19:37 Because we're communicating the priority that God has first placed in our life. And by the way, if you've not started with this, this is only day four. If you've not started with this, you can start now. There's no, there's no shame in jumping in on day five or six or whatever you could start. Hey, everybody start. Come jump in with this if you hadn't jumped in already. And by the way. If you've already messed up.

19:58 I'm sorry, God. Jump in. He forgets it. You can move on, everybody. All right. Okay. Yeah. Thank God for that. But I want to encourage you to actually integrate fasting all throughout the year. I want you to consider, you know, wonder, I wonder if in certain situations, even if it's for a meal or if it's for a day or maybe three days, like, hey, for this situation, this is so big. Hey, honey, we're going to fast. We're going to. And Tammy and I have done that regularly over. Over almost this May, 40 years of marriage, everybody, right? Yeah. Come on. Had to throw that in there a little bit.

- 20:33 All right. All right. Here's another question. And that is, how should we fast? And you have taught. I have taught on this more recently. I do it very quickly, usually at the beginning of the year, if you want to go back and watch some. But I want to give you three different kinds of fast. And that is what we call a complete fast or a total fast, which, by the way, is very, very doable. It's not as hard as you think. And when I mean complete fast, you're either on just water or you're on. You're on juices, but you're denying yourself chewing. And I'm not. Please don't take any of this like, man, I'm the standard that everybody needs to follow.
- 21:04 I am not. But for 20, 30, 40 years almost, this is what I did. I did complete, total fasting. And it's very, very doable. It's very. And you go study it yourself. When I was 19 years old, I actually did a study for a science. I had a science class at LSU. And I asked the professor if I could write a paper. We all had to write a paper on a topic. And I said, can I? And I And I studied fasting. He said, sure. And that's when I learned not just the spiritual benefits, but the medical benefits. And they're becoming more widespread and widely known now. Go do your own study. It's unbelievable, the medical benefits.
- 21:38 In fact, I think in some ways it's God's health system. Because your body will actually go and attack the things that could eventually kill you. And it's just amazing. Go study it yourself, okay? There's plenty of tools to do that now. You don't need my instruction. But always get medical supervision. Don't be a hero. And all this. And just use good plain sense, okay? You don't have to be a hero in all this and get crazy with it. I think I even got a little too zealous with it in the earlier years, in my 20s and 30s. Anyway, just be smart, okay? Because we don't want just the natural side of it. We want the spiritual side of this and the meaning of it.
- 22:16 The second kind of fasting is what we call selective fasting. And this is where you're either selecting meals or selecting certain food items to fast. So I'm going to fast. You know, the meals during the day, but I'm going to eat the evening meal. That'd be a selective fast. Or I'm going to select foods like, I'm going to give up cauliflower for a month. No, no, no, I'm not talking about that.
- 22:37 And honestly, if you want the true spirit of fasting, anything that you truly crave, that's what you should fast. So if it's sugar, if it's caffeine, if it's, I don't know, whatever your favorite thing is, that would be a good thing to fast, fasting certain foods or certain meals. And then last one, and I think, I'm not sure. I think I coined this phrase. A lot of people talk about it now is what I call a soul fast. And what a soul fast is, is to remember that we're not just trying to deny the body. We're also trying to deny the soul. And so for some of you, like you need to get off of all media for these 21 days.
- 23:13 Like I'm not going to, there is no Netflix or I'm not going to watch. And I'm going to purify my mind from those things that it desires. Are y'all with me, everybody? Some of you, you need to get off of social media. For a month. A lot of people do that. They'll sign off. They make a final post and say, I'm signing off. You know, but look in my eyes and hear this. We're not looking for easy and you shouldn't expect it to be easy. That's all I want to say. You and God talk. You decide. Okay. And I'm going to tell you what is going to happen. The devil's going to attack you.
- 23:47 Okay. And he's going to, and it's good. And you're going to think you're dying. You're not. You're going to be just fine. In fact, it's going to help you a lot. Okay. In fact, the way I like to say it is you've never get, you never die from what you eat. I mean, for what you don't eat, you die for what you do eat.

The Disciples Fast: Freedom from Bondage and Sin

- 24:04 Selah. Here's the last one. And this is where it can get a little preachy. Maybe I'm going to have a little fun with this. And that is what should we fast for? And this is where I wanted to do a study for you. There are actually nine different fasts in the Bible. And I don't have time to give you all nine. I wrote about them in my book, Pray First. If you want to get all nine. But I'm going to give you. I think I have time for five and we'll see what happens. I'm going to let you out right on time for sure. But I want to give you. I've already referenced the story.
- 24:37 I'm calling it the disciples fast. And the disciples fast in the story that I told you about the boy who had the demon. That was freedom from a bondage where the devil has a hold on you and you can't get him to let go. And you love God and you prayed and you got counseling and it just won't let go. The Bible would call that a strong man. But also, I'm not just talking about bondage. I'm also talking about freedom from sin. For a lot of us, we have what the Bible calls a besetting sin. And a besetting sin is, especially for those of you who have been Christians a long time, you've got like 90 % or more of the sin list under the blood of Jesus.
- 25:15 And it's never had another part of your life. But you just got those two or three. And it could be something like anger or patience. Or it could be something like, well, I don't know what it is. It's just, it's your, it's, it's, it's, the devil doesn't even have to work very hard to get you. To do it. And, and you're, it's not even a God wants it out. You want it out. And what does the Bible say about that? Well, I've already given you the fast. That's in Matthew 17. If you want to go read when Jesus said, look, this kind, if you're trying to really break a strong sin or bondage, this kind comes out only by prayer and fasting.
- 25:50 But I love Hebrews where it says, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, I need some of you to take serious that it's time to throw off. I need some of you to take serious that it's time to throw off everything that hindering you. And wouldn't it be great if this was the year? And that's the sin that so easily entangles. And if you do, it's going to give you the ability to run your race with perseverance, the race marked out for you because Jesus wants to be the author, the pioneer, and the, the perfecter of your faith. And sometimes that's never going to happen until you say, I'm going to fast and we're going to break this.
- 26:29 Because some strongholds only break when you fast and pray. You need to know that. And fasting truly is one of the best ways. If you've been around five, eight, 10 years or more, you know the story. It's the funniest story. It's the best story. It's one of the best stories. And it happened in the first year of the church, the very first year of the church. I'm teaching fasting. Nobody knows anything about it. There's only about 300 of us on a Wednesday night like this. And nobody knows anything about fasting. And so anyway, I teach, I think I taught a lot of this material. I talk about the triune being. And after the service is over, this, I jumped out as a college age, early twenties guy, stepped out.
- 27:04 He goes, Pastor Chris, man, that was really good. I'm going to fast. I'm going to fast marijuana. And I'm like, yeah,

- 27:15 I actually think that that'd be good. You know? And I walked away thinking, Lord, surely he's not on day 22 going to go, you know, whatever, you know, like, like, and I, and I prayed for him. I didn't even tell him. I said, I prayed that, that, that, um, that it wouldn't be something that he fasted. It'd be something that he. He'd never allowed in his life ever again. And sure enough, he came up on day 20 ago. He goes, I'm never going back to that. You guys, there's only 300. I don't, you know, so it's only a few people, but, and of those 300, I bet half of them are still in the church.
- 27:50 Others have moved off to other cities or whatever, but that brother is still in the church. He stopped me just the other day and said, still free in Jesus name. Can we give God, I think
- 28:03 It's so cool. Okay. By the way, Isaiah 58 is considered the fasting. Chapter of the whole Bible. So if you want to go read a whole chapter on fasting in the old Testament, uh, lens, that's what it says. Is this not the kind of fasting I've chosen to loose the chains of injustice, to untie the stuff that's got you all tied up the cords of the yoke to set the oppressed free and to break every yoke, every bondage out of your life. That's what it's for. And some of you ought to be fasting saying, I'm just sick of being this way, having this attitude, this mindset, this addiction, this habit, whatever it is. Here's the second one.

The Ezra Fast and the Paul Fast

- 28:38 Are y'all with me, everybody? And that is the Ezra fast. And the Ezra fast is the fast that is the restoration of what the devil has stolen or is trying to steal from you. So here's how the story goes. And I don't have time to, cause I'm, I'm, I'm running out of time. Go read it yourself. But basically Ezra, uh, had to bring 7,500, um, pounds of gold and 24 tons of silver from where he was to Jerusalem. No, knowing watch this, that between where he was in Jerusalem, we're, we're bandits and thieves and robbers. Okay. And by the way, you have stuff, and I hate to tell you this, but you have bandits, thieves, and robbers.
- 29:19 Who's trying to take it from you. The thief comes to still kill and destroy. So just think about that. So knowing he had to take a journey, the same journey that all of us in this room are own, you have things and the devil wants it. He, he have kids. The devil. The devil wants my kids. He ain't having my kids, not having my grandkids. He's not having my possessions. That's not, it wasn't for him. It was so that I could be a blessing to the world around me and I'm not letting him steal it in Jesus name. But Ezra was so serious about it that he proclaimed a fast. Watch this so that we might humble ourselves.
- 29:56 There's that morning concept and morning truly doesn't mean, Oh, it means just humble yourself and saying, God, I can't do this without you. I can't beat the thieves without you. Humble yourselves. Humble yourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey. Did you know that there was biblical precedent for you to fast just for a safe journey and for us and our children with all of our possessions? So Tammy and I have done this many, many times. The Ezra fast literally brings the restoration of what the enemy tries to steal out of your life. Okay. Another first year story. And it's a funny one too. I mean, literally, I think, man, I think this is actually a second year story because we had the little office complex on, on highway 280 where the Lloyd's was.

30:36 For those of you guys who know Birmingham, it was right back there, a little storefront. It only held, it only had 230 seats. And so we're having our morning prayer. We're so excited just to have any space whatsoever. And we're praying. And I'll never forget this lady on the first day came up and she goes, Hey, I'm believing God that I've been barren. I've not been able to have children. Doctor said we can't have children and I won't kid. She said, tears coming down her eyes. I said, okay, we're going to believe God. And I think it was like almost toward the end. I think it was day 15, 16, 17. And I'm up there.

31:06 There. I'm up there just praying. And she was a kneeler. So, and she knelt. And all I can remember is she was in what was, what was then in the small auditorium, this, this section over here. And I'll never forget. I'm just pacing. We're doing that 25 minutes on our own. And I'll never forget. She popped up like, like, like, like something happened. And she ran up. She goes, Pastor Chris, I think I just got pregnant.

31:29 I said, I didn't see anything. You know what I'm saying? She goes, no, no, no. I'm telling you. I think I just, I think, I think I am. I think I either. All right. I I have already conceived or, or God's supernatural. I don't know. And I said, well, why don't you go talk to your doctor?

31:46

Isaiah 58:6

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

32:02 I just love it. All right. This is a good one too, because some of you guys are in a decision making situation. You don't know what to do. And so we call this the Paul fast. And the Paul fast is for wisdom for the future. Okay. Anytime you're facing major decisions. And I, I, if there's any one thing that I fasted the most for, it would be, okay. During the transition process, you have no idea how many days I fasted. Lord, are we getting this right? Are we getting the timing right? We, you know, even my role at Highlands College. I mean, I knew I felt this in my heart. I didn't know, but I always confirm big decisions with fasting.

32:40 Now the story of the apostle Paul, you go read it in Acts chapter nine is when he gets converted. He's on the road to Damascus. God shows up. Paul, why are you persecuting me? He gets gloriously saved and called into ministry. And then the Bible says that in verse nine, that after that Damascus road encounter for three days, he was blind and did not eat or drink anything. He was actually fasting. And while he was fasting, this guy named Ananias who became his mentor that nobody knows, but probably had the greatest influence on the apostle Paul to mentor him just shows up at his house. And the Bible says that Ananias went to the house and entered it, placing his hands on Saul.

33:23 He said, brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on that road as you were coming here has sent me to you that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And immediately something like scales fell. So, so scales didn't fall from Saul's eyes. Something like scales fell from his eyes and he got up and was baptized. So he literally, it was the moment that he got the vision to end up writing almost two thirds of the New Testament to plant churches. All the scales dropped off and the vision for ministry and his, his outreach to the Gentiles happened after this time of fasting. Now, as I told you, if there's any one thing that I fasted, it's in, it's like, I don't know what to do.

34:05

Ezra 8:21-23

There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions.

34:31 Selah on that too, by the way. Sometimes we call it something and it's really, it's not what's in you. It's what's missing in you. And for me, I just didn't have any purpose. And God was actually making me uncomfortable on purpose. So I do something about it. And I did my first fast. My first, I mean, my first water only fast was in January of 2000. This church was born February, 2001. And it was on day 17 of that fast. I've only had three open visions in my life, meaning that I'm seeing something so clear. It's as if I'm really seeing it for real. And the Bible calls that an open vision where you're, you're not just seeing it in your mind.

The Daniel Fast and the Samuel Fast

35:14 It's like I had my eyes open. I could. And, and what I saw is the exact thing I'm seeing right now. I saw this auditorium shaped like this. This is the only auditorium that is this shape because this is that what I saw on that. If there's any auditorium that had to be built to what I saw, it was this one, right? The first one. And so I saw it. I saw it, this size, every part of it. And I saw myself from this vantage point. I didn't know where it was. Didn't know what city didn't know anything. I just saw this and immediately all this joy came in my heart and the vision came inside of me.

35:47 And I shared it with my pastor and in the long story short, Tammy and I moved here on December 26, 2000, the day after Christmas with everything we owned and a little trailer and came to Birmingham and didn't know a single person. And then, and then a few, just a couple of months, it was crazy to start on February is you don't do it that way. And, and we found some people to help us launch the church. 400 came in the first service and the rest is God's story. Not my story. I should never be credited one ounce of what happened here to God. God receives all the glory for what he's done for 25 years.

36:22 But some of you, you're in a, you're in a conundrum. You're in a, you're in a decision making moment. Maybe fasting is for you. Number four is the Daniel fast and pastor Blake here at Grantsville prayed this victory over the enemy. Like we're going to, we, and why did he play? We take our stand against you. Our enemy. Why? Guess what? Everybody you have one.

36:47

Acts 9:9

For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

37:22

Acts 9:17-18

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized.

- 37:58 So one of the options of fasting is not total food. In his case, he did didn't eat anything he desired. He only ate things he really didn't want to eat. So maybe he was on like a fruits and vegetables, but I don't know what it was. People have tried to define this Daniel fast forever. We just know it's no meat or wine, but it could have been all it could have today. They define it as no meat, sweets or breads. I don't know. There's all kinds of look, it is. It's just, you're no choice.
- 38:28 Okay. So just don't pleasure yourself. Let me say it that way in what, in what you eat. And I use no lotions until the three weeks were over. Watch this. And again, the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. So, at the end he came and he said, do not be afraid you who are highly esteemed. And he said, peace be strong now be strong. When he spoke to me, I was strengthened. In fact, he goes on to say from the first day that you fasted, I started fighting the Prince of Persia and there was a war going on. And I can't, I can't, I've come to tell you he's been defeated in Jesus name.
- 39:01 It's been defeated. He's been defeated. And I don't have time for this tonight again for another message. And we've taught some on this, that prayer is not just you talking to God pair is also confronting the devil. You've got to learn how to confront the devil in spiritual warfare. And here's the last one.
- 39:20 You know, when the music plays that that's the key for you're done. It's like the academy awards, like get off the stage. Okay. Like, so here, so I only have a few more minutes, but this is a fun one. And this is the Samuel fast. And I'm glad I'd say this for last because pastor Mark has asked us to make this a highlight of our fast this year. So this is one of the ones of these nine that we're actually focusing on. on. In our fast. And that is because we need revival.
- 39:46 Our nation has never been more divided, more chaos. It's, it's bad. I think it's real bad, but you ready for this? God does his best work when all that happens. Cause, cause people got it. It's hard to touch people when they're, they're satisfied and happy. It's when they're miserable that they go, God help us. God help us. And we're seeing that we're seeing, I can't call it revival yet. Some are calling it revival. It's not revival yet. It's probably in a while, but the awakening is happening. I think it's the first drops of revival, but we're seeing us. 2025 was an unprecedented year of people waking up and saying, we need God. The leading demographic in the church now, and this hasn't been true in over 50 years, the leading demographic are 20 year old males.

Historical Example and Closing Prayer

40:31

Daniel 10:2-3

At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.

41:12

Daniel 10:18-19

Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. 'Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed,' he said. 'Peace! Be strong now; be strong.'

41:56 And every year I've said, God, forgive us for murdering unborn babies. Forgive us for racism and prejudice. Forgive us for injustices. Forget. Are y'all with me? Everybody forgive us of those. So I'll close with this story. Um, you may or may not know this, but Abraham Lincoln was a fast. He fasted and he called the nation four times to a fast. The last of the four fasts was in 1863. And immediately following, of course, not only did the civil war in to God be the glory, but also following that season, there were some unprecedented things that happened. Like in just 19 and 1867, just a few years later, Russia sold Alaska to America for 7.2 million.

42:42

1 Samuel 7:3-6

Samuel said to all the Israelites, 'If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.' On that day they fasted and there they confessed, 'We have sinned against the Lord.'

43:32 It was, it grew so fast and so prosperous like no other city in America. They ended up calling it the magic city. Horrible name. Cause it wasn't magic. It was God. It was God. And I still think there's a redemptive calling on this city and this state for the glory of God. I believe that.

43:59 And did you know that to this day, Birmingham is per capita, the most generous city in America to charities and nonprofits. What's that all about? I was long before highlights by the way, that's been going on. Why? Cause there was a redemptive calling on our amazing city. I think, I think honestly, even Highlands, I feel so much like I stepped into something God was already up to. He's answering the prayers of people that were here long before we were. And we're just kinda, we're just kinda the ones out there reaping the harvest, you know, but we didn't plant the seed. And I think again, we ought to give God all the praise for what he's done in our city.

44:38 Yeah. And that's why probably the best fasting one is this, that if you'll pray, now people caught my name will pray and humble themselves. That's fat. That literally is talking about fasting and pray, seek my face, turn from your wicked ways. Then will I hear from heaven. I will heal your sin and forgive your sin and heal your land. And so when I'm praying for you, this is what I'm praying. In fact, stand up on your feet and I'll pray it for you before you go home.

45:10 When you love to have freedom from sin and bondage father, I'm asking for the people of God. This will be the year that our addictions or habits or attitudes, the plague that happens in our minds, the uncontrollable things that we don't even like is broken in Jesus name. God, I'm asking for the restoration of what's been stolen. Our finances, our family, you're not having our kids. And I thank you, God, you're bringing the stray back home. God, I'm asking for wisdom for our future, Lord, that you would help people who need to make important decisions. And God, they're so big. It's like the one you led me to that. I had no idea how big it was that God, you would lead us.

45:51

2 Chronicles 7:14

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

46:31 And everybody said a good. Oh, I couldn't love you more, everybody. All right. Go home. Get some sleep. Come back at six o'clock. We'll see you in a few minutes. All right. God bless you guys.