

Fasting
for a Marriage

Breakthrough



Sandy Ralya

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This book is dedicated to wives desperate for a breakthrough. May you experience a greater awareness of God's presence while fasting and may it give you great joy!

Sandy Ralya

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Foreword

Women around the globe have contacted me in the hopes of experiencing a significant breakthrough in their marriage. They want to learn everything they can about the miraculous metamorphosis my messy marriage underwent.

In the course of these discussions, the topic of fasting always comes up. Why do I talk about fasting on a regular basis?

Because fasting played a significant role in the dramatic turnaround in my marriage.

In fact, not until I began writing this book did the realization dawn that *every* significant breakthrough in my marriage has *always* been preceded by a fast!

If fasting creates so much power, why isn't it talked about much? It's not difficult to imagine why fasting isn't popular. After all, who wants to limit or eliminate food or anything else you enjoy to practice an ancient, little known spiritual discipline? Even the word "discipline" turns off many.

Yet when I share the story of God's demonstrated power in my marriage after a 6 month fast, women pepper me with questions wanting to know more. They are hungry for a breakthrough of their own and will give up almost anything to get it.

Fasting isn't an end-all solution. God has provided everything we need to live abundantly in mind, soul, and body. Fasting is one part of His total provision for you.

If you want your prayers to pack a powerful punch, then fasting is for you. There are places Christ is longing to take you and your marriage through the power of a fast.

Prologue

An Unwelcome Marriage

Married at nineteen, my teenage taste buds craved McDonald's chocolate shakes. It was no secret that I enjoyed these frozen, chocolaty confections. When Tom and I were dating, I'd always order chocolate when choosing a shake.

Once married, we continued to frequent the local McDonald's, but Tom repeatedly changed my order from chocolate to vanilla when he was driving (and closest to the speaker). When I angrily questioned him, his response was always the same. Chocolate would cause me to gain weight and my face to break out—two things that threatened his pleasure in me.

But my troubles and Tom's control didn't end there. The first eleven years of my marriage were characterized by verbal, emotional, and spiritual abuse. My husband used foul language and degrading words to describe me. When he was unhappy with my actions (or for that matter, inaction), he ignored me. He repeatedly attempted to control where, when, and with whom I could enjoy friendships because he felt threatened and wanted to isolate me.

I knew that Tom's anger, control, and disregard for my happiness and security went against the grain of Scripture. A quick look at the popular marriage passage found in Ephesians 5:28 magnified the error of his ways: "So husbands should care for their wives as if their lives depended on it, the same way they care for their own bodies" (The Voice).

I Peter 3:7 verified that Tom wasn't following biblical guidance and consequently didn't respect or value me as an equal heir of God's abundance and blessing. I regularly pleaded with him to reflect on these passages, but he would either turn a deaf ear or threaten me with Ephesians 5:33, "...[E]ach wife is to respect her own husband." When Tom quoted Ephesians, it signaled his vindication. And my guilt.

I was stuck and at a low point when I decided I couldn't live this way any longer. Sick of the downward negative spiral our arguments took, tired of

feeling depressed, put down, and marginalized, I needed something to change! In desperation, I dug into God's Word for answers.

The Need for an Offensive Strategy

Matthew 17:14-21 tells the story of an epileptic boy in need of healing. His seizures were so severe that he'd fall into fires and water. It was a dangerous situation. Desperate for help, the boy's father approached Jesus' disciples. Though nine of them tried to deliver the little boy of the demons plaguing him, they were unsuccessful.

When Jesus arrived on the scene, the boy's father asked Him if there was anything Jesus could do for his son. Jesus answered, "Everything is possible for those who believe." Then He rebuked the crowd, comparing them to their forefathers who had revolted against God by worshipping idols. Then Jesus drove the demon out of the boy, restoring him completely.

When the disciples asked Jesus why they were unsuccessful in their attempt to exorcise the demon, Christ noted that their problem centered on a lack of faith, as well as failure to seek the Lord's direction in prayer.

Remarkably, Bible commentaries suggest that while Christ and the other three disciples were on the mount of transfiguration, the remaining nine had been feasting and indulging themselves with the townsfolk and therefore were not prepared to exercise the miraculous gift of healing. Yet, their future ministry would require great faith and constant connection with Jesus through prayer and fasting.

Every woman in a difficult marriage, take note!

Tom's treatment of me was abusive, and I recognized that it represented a ministry opportunity for which I would need increased faith and a constant connection with Christ. Because I believed my husband was oppressed by Satan, this passage opened my eyes to the spiritual battle I was fighting. It also opened my eyes to the tools Jesus said I would need to fight it.

Having already dealt with so many of my own issues, I knew it was time for an offensive strategy. I sensed that fasting was the missing power needed to accomplish the miraculous deliverance my husband and our marriage needed.

Chapter 1

Before You Fast

My daughter, her friend and I had a garage sale this past weekend. The friend decided to bring us some Starbucks coffee drinks - caffeinated coffee drinks! She had no idea I was fasting caffeine. Well, I'm thinking, "Oh dear, how do I handle this without hurting her feelings?" She is such a sweet girl and just wanted to do something nice. So, I decided I would just drink it. Well, my drink was put into one of those outdoor, fold up type of chairs, with a hole in the arm for your drink to go into. My grandson decides to climb into my chair - he knocks the drink out of the cup holder, it hits the ground and spills the entire thing! I didn't even get a sip of it!! To top it off, my daughter's friend said, "Well, I guess God didn't want you to have any coffee today!" and she doesn't even know what I'm doing! I was stunned that God had answered the situation in such a funny way! My daughter & I just laughed because we both knew it was God! God isn't finished with me yet and is certainly working in this fast! J.H.

You can't just leap into a fast. Well, I guess you could, but fasting would be easier and more effective if you spent even a brief time preparing beforehand.

As with any important event, preparation is key to gaining the most from the experience. If you plan a vacation, you'll give thought and preparation to the destination, finances needed, and reservations for camping or "glamping" (hotel-stays). All the prep work adds up to a memorable experience.

Fasting, too, requires preparation in order to enjoy an effective experience. When fasting, preparation is needed for spirit, soul, and body. You are not just a physical body. You are also spirit and soul.

Spirit

Preparing your spirit involves asking the question, "*What am I fasting for?*" After answering that question, consider whether your aim is selfishly motivated or not. If your motives focus on self-indulgence, James 4:3 promises you won't get what you want because selfish motives are impure.

I'd like you to consider taking this question to God. Motive can be tricky to discern, and He knows what's in the best interest of your marriage. He promises that when you acknowledge Him, He'll direct your path (Proverbs 3:5,6).

A God-directed, spirit-led journey will always get you where you want to go!

Soul

Your soul, or mind, needs preparation as well. Preparing your soul involves decision. You will need to decide to complete this fast beforehand, so that when your stomach screams, "Feed me!" your will to ignore it will have already been established.

This makes me think about my relationship with exercise. When I see my body growing flabby, I start thinking I should exercise. *Should* rarely translates into action at this point. When I decide that I will exercise, everything is different. I make sure that it happens.

Make the decision beforehand that you will complete this fast!

Body

In preparation for a fast, it's important to prepare your body. Though it's tempting to binge on food as you anticipate days where you won't be eating as you usually would, binging will only make fasting more unpleasant.

Instead, slowly begin to cut back before the fast. Binge eating before a fast produces more toxins in your system that will need to be eliminated. The more toxins built up in your system, the more sluggish you'll feel until they've moved through your system.

Slow down your intake of food before you start fasting!

Choosing Your Fast

Another important facet of preparation involves choosing the right fast for you. Your choice may be motivated by health, schedule, or other related circumstances. Read through the list below, and prayerfully select a fast that will require a physical sacrifice without sacrificing your physical health.

Disclaimer: You should always consult a doctor before attempting a fast, especially if you have any health issues.

Complete Fast

A complete fast eliminates all food for a day or more. It's important to drink a lot of water during a complete fast. Be intentional about this. Do not attempt a complete fast for longer than 3 days without first obtaining your doctor's permission.

When I first began fasting for my marriage, I eliminated all food from my diet one day a week for six months. Choose a day when you are normally home for a longer duration of time and have less distractions than usual. Currently, I'm fasting all foods and beverages except water and coffee from 6:00pm on Sunday until 6:00 pm on Monday.

Last year, I attempted a 3-day fast. By the middle of the second day, I was dizzy and weak. After finding me close to passing out on the couch, my husband made me drink some juice (sometimes he just shakes his head when my discipline goes sideways!). Drinking juice got me through the three days in one piece, safely! A complete fast isn't easy, no doubt about it, yet it's important to use wisdom while fasting.

Juice Fast

A juice fast includes all vegetable and fruit juices or clear broths. Make sure there is no added sugar or extra ingredients in the juice. Also, soda pop is not on the menu!

Daniel Fast

The Daniel Fast is recorded in Daniel 10:3 and eliminates wheat, meat, and sweets from one's diet. My husband and I have completed a 21 day Daniel fast for the past several years in January as a part of our church-wide fast. It's a great way to supercharge your spiritual battery for the New Year.

Knowing how to prepare food without wheat, meat, or sweets for 21 days can be challenging. And if you're like me, you may need help. Kristen Feola, author of *The Ultimate Guide to the Daniel Fast*, writes a blog at ultimatedanielfast.com which provides inspiration and yummy recipes for those who choose this fast. Additionally, if you google "Daniel Fast," you'll find many other helpful resources.

If choosing a Daniel Fast, prepare your pantry beforehand. Otherwise, it will be tempting to cheat because you don't have the right foods in your cupboard or refrigerator.

Favorite Food/Activity Fast

What is your favorite food or beverage? Have you become addicted to its power? By eliminating this one thing, you are choosing to be satisfied instead with the one thing that satisfies our deepest longings and desires: Jesus.

This fast is a powerful exercise in replacing earthly cravings with spiritual food. One of my friends chose to eliminate Dr. Pepper from her diet. It was one thing she needed to have every day, and eliminating it from her diet was a continual reminder of her need to seek God in prayer.

What favorite activity might you eliminate during a fast? Refraining from social media may be a good choice for those addicted to catching up with friends. In its absence, spend increased time catching up with the best friend (Jesus) you could ever have, reading His words and talking to Him in prayer. When determining which activity to remove, ask yourself, "What will cost me something?" Don't participate in a fast which costs you little.

Chapter 2

What is a Fast?

Fasting helped me to get in touch with the healing I longed for in relationships with loved ones. I was able to forgive those who had hurt me. Fasting was my spiritual breakthrough to an attitude adjustment and closer fellowship with God. –Shonquinta

When I first began fasting, I was ignorant about the process and misunderstood the use of this powerful tool. Chances are good that you are unfamiliar with this powerful spiritual discipline too. For this reason, I want to share a few fasting basics.

Before I describe what fasting *is*, I want to explain what it is *not*. Fasting is not going without food or a particular food for a certain length of time. That's dieting.

Fasting is a physical action taken during a specific time for a spiritual purpose.

A fast is devoted to seeking the *mysteries* of God's knowledge and exploring His wisdom for you and the particular struggles you face. Fasting allows you to get to a place of hungry desperation for His wisdom, rather than relying on your own thoughts or those of a friend. It's a time to listen more than you speak so you can hear what the Spirit is saying to you. God is always speaking, and fasting unplugs your ears and makes you more attentive and receptive to His words. The more you listen for His voice, the easier it becomes to hear Him speak.

When you fast, you remove all food or a particular food or drink from your life for a spiritual purpose. It's also a time to cut back on entertainment, such as TV, movies, fictional books and social media, so you have increased chunks of time to spend communicating with God and reading His Word.

I'll be honest. Fasting isn't easy because your desire for food and entertainment are addictive. Can I get an Amen?

When You're Tempted

When Tom and I couldn't decide whether I should accept an invitation I'd been given to travel to Africa and lead a women's conference, God prompted me to begin a spending fast for 30 days. I was fasting specifically for direction and unity regarding this big decision.

While fasting, I needed something to distract my mind from the relentless desire to spend money. That's when I pictured myself running into the arms of Jesus each time I was tempted to spend. Because the temptations came frequently, I was in His arms a lot! I experienced so much peace in His arms that I decided to extend the fast to 40 days. In the end, God provided His answer about the trip to Uganda through a dream that a close friend had.

In the dream, abused and broken women were crying out for help before being swept over a waterfall. Something was connecting their need for help to the ministry of Beautiful Womanhood. At the conclusion of the dream, my friend heard, "This [message] is for Sandy." When my friend woke up, he was prompted to record the dream along with II Corinthians 1:3-5, which describes the comfort God provides us in trouble. The passage also provides an exhortation to comfort others with the comfort we've been given.

When Tom and I saw how extraordinarily God had moved to reveal His answer, we both had tears of joy and amazement running down our faces. It was as if the finger of God was writing the word "Go" on the wall of our great room.

A visual image may help you break addictions to food, spending or entertainment. If so, ask God where He is and what He desires to do for you so you can find comfort in His loving arms.

What to Do During a Fast

Pray

Praying is simply talking to God. It's an important part of growing a relationship with God.

Prayer includes giving *and* taking. Through prayer, you give your concerns to God, but you don't leave empty-handed! God wants to give you the answers you seek. Because communication with God is a two-way street, it's important to not only talk to God but also listen for His guidance. Spend quiet moments listening for His voice while fasting.

Though few ever hear an audible voice, many sense it deep in their spirit. Others, while listening, will see a picture or vision. Yet others will see a Scripture passage in a new revelatory light.

For the first eleven years of my marriage, I brought a lot of concerns to God but rarely allowed Him to teach me. Had I listened, I would have heard His thoughts about me and my role as a wife. He wanted to do good works through me. Because I wasn't as teachable as I thought, I forfeited the wisdom I needed so badly.

Since then, I've learned to listen with a journal and pen in hand. During prayer, I form a question based upon my concern and wait. Often, a verse of Scripture, a thought, a picture, or an impression penetrates my conscious mind. Whatever it is, I write it down. Sometimes it makes sense to me, and sometimes my understanding doesn't come until later. If He instructs me to do something, I try to obey right away.

If you're unaccustomed to sitting quietly, it may take some time before your mind settles down to listen. It will take practice. Give your concerns to God

In 1998, I was able to fast for very long periods of time. During that time, my prayer life increased considerably. The Lord would wake me every morning around 4:30 a.m. and I would immediately know that I should pray and what to pray for. And I had much more clarity about the things I prayed for. I would pray for someone about something that God gave me to pray for only to have that person reveal to me later that they had been struggling over that very thing. - Gina Duke

and wait.

At other times, the answers I'm seeking don't come how or when I expect them. If you've experienced this frustration, it doesn't mean that God isn't working through your prayers or that your faith is weak. Often, God answers in ways you don't expect. His timing is rarely yours. That's because His plans for you are much broader than you can imagine (Jeremiah 29:11), and He is working everything together for good (Romans 8:28). In times like these, you have an opportunity to deepen your faith by trusting Him.

When you're fasting, it can be tough to focus on prayer or know what to pray because your stomach will try to lure your focus away. Fasting is a discipline which does become easier, but initially you may not pray as much as you had hoped you would. Don't worry! God sees your heart and is pleased with your desire to seek Him during a fast.

I've found it helpful to begin any time of prayer by entering God's presence with praise and thanksgiving (Psalms 95:2). This practice warms up your spirit's engine and prepares you for prayer. Praise pleases God and you are welcomed into His presence.

Once in His presence, talk to Him about the issues which have prompted you to fast. Ask God to reveal areas in your life that need his healing touch. Ask Him about the questions which trouble you. Repeat the process in regard to your husband.

Another approach to prayer is to ask God what He would like you to pray about. First thing in the morning on a day of fasting, I quiet myself and ask God this question. Many times I hear His still small voice directing me. Maybe you'll see a vision of something to pray for. Or perhaps you'll find a Scripture passage that hits the bull's eye of your problem. Craft the verse or verses into prayers.

Meditate

Meditating on God's Word is an important exercise while fasting. The book of Joshua (and many others) confirms that Christians should practice the discipline of meditation.

Let the words from the book of the law be always on your lips. Meditate on them day and night so that you may be careful to live by all that is written in it. If you do, as you make your way through this world, you will prosper and always find success. Joshua 1:8

The Hebrew word for meditate is to growl. Think *Grrrrrr*! Imagine a lion chewing on a piece of meat until the meat becomes a part of the lion. In the same way, Christians should consume the Word until it becomes part of who they are. Murmur it to yourself inwardly, focusing all your attention on its meaning. Become immersed in it in a way that it flavors you from the inside out.

Meditating on Scripture is helpful for activating one's ability to hear God. Because you want to hear and know God's will for your life and marriage during the fast, it's critical that you learn the practice of meditating.

First, get comfortable enough that you won't need to move around. Put both feet on the ground. Place your back against the back of your chair. Rest your hands on your legs. Comfy?

Now take deep breaths. This isn't a mystical practice but rather a way to slow your brain. If your brain is moving a hundred miles an hour, meditation will be impossible.

Next, think of a verse. Have you thought of one? If not, open your Bible and choose a verse. I'll choose John 15:5a.

If you abide in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.

Now, repeat the words with your eyes closed. Move your lips, repeating the verse over and over. Begin to think about the meaning of the words, engaging your intellect. Reflect for a minute or two.

Next, ask God if there's anything He wants to say to you through this verse. When I asked Him this question, He said,

I am your source and supply.

I heard His still small voice and received instruction, comfort and joy! Because you are fasting, it will be easier for you to hear his voice. Perhaps God spoke to you through a picture or an impression. Isn't it wonderful hearing God's voice?

Chapter 3

What You Can Expect from a Fast

While on vacation in 2011, I had just concluded a 40 day Daniel Fast. Struggling with a recurring issue that had plagued my marriage for five years, I'd become addicted to thinking through my problem. My thoughts were in turmoil and our unity was deteriorating. One day I felt prompted to take an early morning walk, and while I was out, the Holy Spirit arrested my tumultuous thoughts.

His words? "Sandy, be still and worship Me." In other words, take your problem to God. Once I was still, He spoke again. "What would you say to another woman in this position?"

I knew the answer immediately—I would tell her, "Go get help!" In other words, share within community. When I returned home, I shared my struggle with mentors and a Christian counselor.

While in community, my role in the problem was revealed and I was able to make much-needed adjustments in my thoughts and actions, which ultimately increased unity between Tom and me.

—Excerpt from The Beautiful Wife Mentor Guide by Sandy Ralya

There's a common phrase I repeat often: When you do what you can do, God does what you cannot. When you fast in order to focus on God, what can you expect to receive?

God's Attention

Jeremiah 29:12 says, "At that time, you will call out for Me, and I will hear. You will pray, and I will listen. You will look for me intently, and you will find Me. Yes, I will be found by you," says the Eternal...."

God gave these words to Jeremiah to give the Jews living in exile in Babylon. The challenge of living in exile prompted the Jewish people to seek God wholeheartedly. When they cried out to God, God was true to His promises and gathered them from all the nations where they had been banished. When the Israelites did what they could do (turn to God), God did what they could not (gather them from many nations and bring them home).

In your troubles or desire for growth, you can be assured that when you call out to God and intentionally seek Him through prayer and fasting, you will capture His attention! He will be all ears to your cries for help. He will also restore all that's been lost.

Perhaps you may argue that you've been crying out to God and purposely looking for Him without receiving the answers you've been praying for. If so, please consider the fact that God's answers seldom look like the ones you envision.

When I prayed and fasted, pleading with God to change my husband, He led me to passages in Scripture specifically for wives. These passages were a mirror in which I could see several destructive habits I had, such as preaching, withholding love, and returning evil for evil that were negatively impacting our marriage.

Do you trust God to orchestrate your life events as He chooses or are you bent on trying to make things go according to your will and ideas? Keep your eyes on God rather than on the answers you seek when you fast. This is the secret that will prevent you from experiencing discouragement. This is the key to seeing God's movement in your life and marriage during a fast.

It's possible you haven't gained God's attention because you're asking the wrong questions. James 4 reminds us that we don't get what we want

because our motives are self-indulgent. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal whether or not your motives are self-serving.

A woman I mentored struggled with motive. She wanted to divorce her husband because she longed for the happy, care-free life she'd enjoyed before marrying him. She wanted to raise her son in peace without all the drama and tension their relationship created. She saw divorce as the best option.

Her desire for happiness and peace weren't wrong, but her motives were questionable. Her desire for happiness and peace superseded her desire to love her husband sacrificially and cooperate with the Spirit to reflect Christ's love to a hurting man. She recognized the selfishness in her motives and decided to participate with God in her husband's healing.

Power

When you pray and fast, expect to receive God's power. Luke 4 tells us that when Jesus entered the wilderness, He was full of the Holy Spirit. When He exited, He was full of the Holy Spirit's power!

When you fast and receive more of the Holy Spirit's power, you will also enjoy more of God's peace and joy. The Bible implores Christ-followers to spend time in God's presence where you can taste of His goodness and see how wonderful the Eternal truly is and experience His blessing and comfort.

If Jesus needed to fast in order for demons to flee and bodies to be healed, how much more do we need to practice the discipline of fasting? When I'm fasting specifically for my marriage, the encouragement and instruction I receive fills me with power.

Direction

If you desire to know God's will for your life and marriage, add fasting to your prayers. Prayer and fasting usher you into God's presence where His wisdom flows abundantly.

II Chronicles 20 tells the story of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, who was in a desperate place surrounded by a powerful enemy army. Without God's help, his people would all be destroyed. What was the king's response? He proclaimed a fast for all the people, even women and children. God responded to His people through a prophet who encouraged them with these words:

Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's...You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you O Judah and Jerusalem!

God continued by telling Judah exactly how the enemy would approach and what they should do in response. God did the fighting for them and Judah got to collect all the riches from the enemy army. The fighting took one day, but it took them three days to collect all the spoil. Let that thought sink in. The specific wisdom they needed to win the war was received when they fasted!

When I began fasting about the unhappiness my husband was experiencing in his career, he lost his job! This wasn't the result I wanted. To be honest, I was mad at God!

After hearing the news, our daughter responded differently and announced with great faith, "Well, you and dad were fasting. This must be a part of God's plan for you and Dad!"

You will often encounter difficulty in life. Some difficulties are brought on by poor choices. Sometimes others sin against you. In both these instances, God can make something good from evil because you love Him.

At other times, God's will just plain differs from your own. Because the answer you received isn't the answer you wanted, does it make the answer bad? What if you looked at God's will through a different paradigm? What if the answer God gives is exactly what you need?

Tom and I have seen God's goodness in the job loss he suffered. It set him on a path to a different career that is bringing him much fulfillment and joy! We couldn't be more surprised or happier.

During a fast, ask God to help conform your will to His. Joy awaits!

Chapter 4

When Attacks Come

Spiritual

Expect to suffer attacks during a fast. Satan doesn't want your marriage to be healed because his goal is to destroy it. When marriages end, people get hurt, and he enjoys a wicked thrill. Satan knows fasting releases God's power, because he's been on the butt-kicking end of that power. Consequently, he will exercise a lot of might to try and discourage you from fasting.

Once I began fasting, Tom's abuse would often intensify. I fully believe this was Satan's attempt to get me to quit. At those times, it was tempting to believe that fasting wasn't working. History proves that I was actually winning the war for my marriage even though it didn't initially appear that way.

Behind the scenes of your fast, you are waging a battle in supernatural territory. Ephesians 6:12 reminds believers that they're not waging a war against flesh and blood alone but against Satan and his demons.

Satan is a tyrant that isn't about to relinquish the territory he's gained in your marriage. Expect resistance! Resistance is a sure sign you're gaining

ground. God's power will be made available (through the fast) to continue on with firm resolve.

When Jesus was in the wilderness fasting for 40 days, Satan came and tempted Him to turn stones into bread and thus bring the fast to a premature end. But Jesus didn't quit, because He was determined to complete the fast God called Him to finish. Jesus was aware that fasting produces benefits that can't be gained in any other way! So He rebuked the devil and sent him packing.

Rebuke the devil when he attacks you during your fast. Say, "I renounce you Satan in Jesus' name! I command you to flee!"

Remember what happened in Jesus' life and ministry after His fast? Immediately He began to do mighty miracles.

John 10:10 says of Satan, "The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy." Satan wants to *steal* your breakthrough, but don't let him. The enemy does not want you to experience the power, peace, and joy that will come as a result of your fast.

Satan often uses attacks to distract you from completing the fast. In his book, *Fasting*, Jentezen Franklin agrees:

"Don't allow the enemies in your life to cause you to focus more on your appetite or circumstances than on the promises that are released when you employ the powerful weapon of fasting. – Jentezen Franklin"

Emotional and Physical

An emotional and physical void will be created when you first fast. Being prepared for this form of attack will help you endure and receive a powerful blessing.

Many of us have an emotional attachment to food and, when it's removed, you're naturally going to feel an emptiness or void. At this writing, we've just come through the holidays and if the green bean casserole and raspberry Jello weren't on the menu at our family Christmas dinner, I'd hear a whole lot of complaining from my kids and grandchildren. They would miss those foods!

When you fast, it becomes important to fill that void with a satisfying substitute. If you don't, you'll run into trouble. Let me explain by giving a little science lesson here: There is an expression that says, "Nature abhors a vacuum." This idiom is used to express the idea that empty or unfilled spaces are unnatural because they go against the laws of nature and physics. When your stomach is empty, it demands to be filled. When you decide to fast and say "No" to your stomach, you'll probably experience a little rebellion! This is the point where it becomes NECESSARY to have an effective replacement for food.

Jesus tells us where to find that replacement in Matthew 4:4. He says, "Man should not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

When you're hungry for food, grab your Bible and read. Find satisfaction in God, Himself. If you're at work, this can be a bit tricky so I suggest having a few verses printed out that you can glance at and chew on throughout the day.

Another technique I use for filling an emotional void is this: Ask God to give you a picture of where He is in relationship to you. When experiencing difficulty while fasting, I picture myself running into Jesus' arms. I see Him with His arms outstretched, ready to engulf me in his billowing robe. At other times I see Him holding me by the hand, and I experience His comfort.

Finding comfort in Jesus lasts. Finding comfort in food lasts only until the next meal or your next thought about food.

Attacks will come, but remind yourself that God *in you* is greater than your enemy. In Him, you will overcome.

Chapter 5

Breakthrough!

I'm still fasting and experiencing breakthrough! My husband and I are attending classes about freedom in Christ together and the Lord is speaking to Him! It's amazing! My daughter and her husband are back together after separating! This is nothing short of God's intervention and brings tears to my eyes whenever I think about it. - Jackie H.

My pastor often says that there are certain breakthroughs that can only be achieved through prayer and fasting. In Matthew 17:20-21, Jesus says nothing is impossible and that faith, prayer *and fasting* are the keys which open the door to impossibility! That's why Jesus fasted while He walked the earth.

Fasting provides breakthrough because it breaks the power of your carnal desires or sinful nature, which is opposed to God and His Word. When you are not opposed to God's Word, the power of His word will flow through you and produce breakthrough!

Galatians 5:17 explains.

The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict.

When you fast, the desires given you by the Holy Spirit get the winning edge in the fight against sinful desires. Now you have increased capacity to control your words and actions which affect your life and marriage.

When your sinful nature loses power and control in your life, the Spirit rises to power. Barriers are shattered and breakthrough is released when the Holy Spirit takes up more real estate in your heart and soul. After all, the Spirit's power raised Christ from the dead, and it can certainly raise your marriage to new life.

Imagine possessing the power to catch yourself before uttering a disrespectful word to your husband. Envision an increased ability to listen to your husband without defending yourself. Picture yourself lovingly confronting your husband's sinful behavior in a God-honoring way that captures his attention.

Fasting changes Christ-followers, not God. You will experience increased power to make godly choices when you fast. Godly choices provide the seed for breakthrough to blossom.

When you are filled to a greater degree with the fruit that the Holy Spirit produces—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—you will experience an increase in supernatural power. This supernatural power shatters all barriers in your life and marriage. The key to experience this power is fasting.

Derek Prince said, "Many of God's choicest provisions for His people lie within the area [of prayer and fasting]. There are some places of God's will for your life that can only be reached by prayer and fasting."

Your decision to fast is authoritative and you WILL see the fruit of it in your life. You will experience breakthrough!

Epilogue

A Welcome Marriage

In the eleventh year of my marriage, after six months of prayer and fasting, I felt the Spirit prompting me to ask Tom to leave after an incident occurred when Tom was especially cruel. A separation certainly didn't look like the answer I'd expected to receive while fasting, but I knew in my heart I couldn't go on as we were any longer. So I asked Tom to leave.

After living with friends for a few days, my husband asked a couple from our church if he could live with them. They had a reputation for helping others. They agreed to take him in if he would agree to abide by their rules.

Over the next several weeks, this godly couple prayed for him, with him, and over him. He experienced deliverance from addictions, habits, and selfish attitudes which had long plagued our marriage.

Two weeks after asking him to leave, Edwin Cole visited our church and made a tremendous impact on my husband. Ed prophetically declared that there was a man in the audience who had dealt treacherously with his wife. He went on to declare that the man's wife had just kicked him out.

Moved by the Spirit of God, Tom went forward, lay prostrate on the ground, and cried a puddle of tears and snot (Tom's words, not mine). I'm told it was quite a sight.

Miraculously, after just four weeks apart, I asked Tom to come home. After offering heartfelt repentance, the promise of ongoing accountability, and the

biggest box of chocolate I'd ever seen, I was encouraged by his mentors to allow him to come home.

His first night home, he washed our children's and my feet, stating that he was home as a new man, a servant leader. To this day, neither of us can talk about that event without experiencing a wellspring of joyous emotion.

Later, after the miracle, I asked God why the fast didn't prevent the need to ask my husband to leave. What He spoke to my heart remains with me to this day. In a still small voice I heard, "The sacrifice of your fast plowed up the hard ground in Tom's life so that when a godly man and woman spoke the truth in love, the seed went in and immediately started bearing fruit."

Remember Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the Bible (Daniel 3)? They fasted and THEN were thrown into a fiery furnace, **but** God delivered them. They trusted God to deliver them and He did! Not a hair was singed, and they didn't even smell like smoke when they came out.

The fast you offer up as a sacrifice to God will accomplish great and mighty miracles! I'm not sure how God will move in your life and marriage as a result, but I *am* sure that His power will flood your life when you do.

Fast for Your Marriage Devotional Guide

Meditate each day on the following passages using the instructions on pages 15-16 of this book.

Day 1

Read: Isaiah 58:6-14

Pray: Lord, Help me to understand what you want in a fast and how Your guidelines for fasting apply to my life. Thank you that when I choose your kind of fast, I can expect to receive direction, healing, protection, and the gift of Your loving, comforting presence. Amen.

Day 2

Read: Psalm 4:1-8

Pray: O True God, the righteous One, who makes me right, answer my prayers for my husband, our marriage, and me. In the past when I've been

hopelessly surrounded, you rescued me. Once again, hear me. Hide me in Your favor. Bring victory in defeat and hope in hopelessness. Amen.

Day 3

Read: Lamentations 3:22-26

Pray: Lord, I thank you for your loyal love. Your compassion toward me is inexhaustible. Your mercies show up new every morning. Your faithfulness to me knows no end. I declare that my hope is in you. Yes, I will wait for you to work in me, my husband, and our marriage. My expectations are rooted in You, not my thoughts about what would be good. During this fast, I desire to seek You wholeheartedly, waiting quietly for you to speak and act. God, make things right again! Amen.

Day 4

Read: Ephesians 3:20-21

Pray: Lord, I thank you that when I pray *and fast*, you are able to do infinitely more than I would ever dare to ask, think, hope, or imagine! As power flowed through you to heal a young boy possessed by a demon, I ask you to activate my prayers with wonder working power for my marriage. I'm putting my trust in your holy Word and counting on you to deliver our marriage from evil! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 5

Read: Proverbs 8:1-36

Pray: Lord, I ASK you for wisdom concerning my marriage. Help me to be perceptive, honest, and upright. Show me if I'm harboring pride, arrogance, disrespect, or evil talk. I confess my sins to you now. Give me the strength I need to confess my sins to those whom I've offended. Thank you for washing me white as snow. Amen.

Day 6

Read: Psalm 143:9,10

Pray: Lord, You alone are my shelter. Rescue me from my enemies! Teach me your will and how I should walk in Your will, for you are my God. Allow Your good Spirit to guide me on level ground, to guide me along Your path for my life and marriage. Amen.

Day 7

Read: Ephesians 4: 2,3

Pray: Lord, through the power of the Spirit at work within me, help me to be humble, gentle, and patient with my husband. Help me to tolerate him in an atmosphere thick with love. Help me to make every effort to preserve the unity the Holy Spirit has already created. Though I can't keep peace, help me to make peace whenever possible. Bind my husband and I together in peace. Amen.

Day 8

Read: II Chronicles 20:1-28

Pray: Lord, I put my trust in the true God rather than in my own abilities. Support me as I lean on You, Eternal One. Yes, I put my trust in You and Your promises! I will do what you ask me to do. When I do what I can do, please do what I cannot: Deliver me from attacks against my marriage. Amen.

Day 9

Read: II Chronicles 7:14,15

Pray: Lord, Help me to humbly submit myself to Your will through prayer, following Your commandments, and abandoning any actions or thoughts that might lead to further sinning. Hear my prayers, forgive my sins, and save my marriage from disaster. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 10

Read: Galatians 5:19-26

Pray: Lord, lead me to higher levels of freedom in the Spirit. I am done with the demands of the law! In this freedom purchased with Christ's blood, the Spirit gives me the characteristics of Jesus: love, joy, and peace. I can have patience along with kindness and faithfulness that can only come from the Father. I can reflect the goodness of God while being gentle and exhibiting self-control. I receive these good gifts because I follow You and live in the Spirit. Thank you for helping me implement these good gifts in my marriage! Amen.

Day 11

Read: Acts 2

Pray: Lord, as I'm seeking you I know you will unplug my ears and cause scales to fall off my eyes so I can hear and see where you are moving in my marriage. Like the Jews in the book of Acts, I will respond to the move of the Holy Spirit and obey what you tell me to do. I call on the name of the Lord who will liberate me *into God's freedom and peace*. Amen.

Day 12

Read: Jeremiah 29:11-14

Pray: Lord, like the exiled Jews in Babylon, I've been stuck in a place where I didn't want to be. Keep your promise to me to bring about plans for peace and not evil. Give me a future and hope. Help me to keep this promise in the forefront of my mind. When I call out for You, I thank you that you will hear me. When I pray, You will listen. When I look for you intently, I will find You. Not only will I find You, but I look forward to the day when you promise to restore all that I've lost. Amen.

Day 13

Read: Ezra 8:21-23

Pray: Lord, as I acknowledge total dependency upon you through this fast, I thank you for protecting me. Help me to realize that when I place myself in the position of protector, things never turn out well. I'm in deep water, Lord, and I need you to protect me. I'm declaring my trust in the One True God! Amen.

Day 14

Read: Matthew 17:20,21

Pray: Help me to understand that you don't tell me I have little faith in a condemning tone. Rather, compassion permeates your words. As I fast and pray, I will command the mountains in my marriage to move. With just a sliver of faith, I will find nothing impossible. Thank you Jesus! Amen.

Day 15

Read: Colossians 3:12-19

Pray: Father, reveal any inconsistencies between your Word and my life during this fast. Just as I would take off and throw away old, worn-out clothes, help me strip off certain attitudes and actions of my old self that conflict with life in You. And, help me to put on the new thoughts, actions, and attitudes that reflect Jesus' qualities: compassion, gentleness, and humility; putting up with others, forgiving, and above all, loving others. Amen.

Day 16

Read: I John 5:1-6

Pray: Lord, While it might seem easier to go off and live in isolation, I recognize that when I said 'I do' I entered into a covenant with you to love my husband regardless of how hard love is. Help me to reflect my worship of You by living respectfully with my husband. How I treat him and others around me on a daily basis is the real test of my love for God. Amen.

Day 17

Read: Matthew 5:1-12

Pray: Lord, I want to live a life of blessing by following the practical teachings you gave while on Earth. Help me to claim the promises in this sermon for my own and trust that you will perform everything you've said you would do in response. Help enlarge my trust in You! Amen.

Day 18

Read: Matthew 5:13-16

Pray: Father, I want to draw out the very best in my husband and preserve what would otherwise spoil. This is a high calling and I need your help to accomplish it. When my husband looks at me, I want him to see You first. Amen.

Day 19

Read: John 8:12

Pray: Thank-you for reminding me about the importance of thinking like You, living like You, and following you in order to thrive in relationship with my husband. This must be my constant focus. When my eyes stray to my husband's behavior, draw me back toward You and Your thoughts. There I will find any instruction I may need. Amen.

Day 20

Read: John 9:14-17

Pray: As I receive direction during this fast, I ask you for a new ability to hold these new revelations. Give me new wineskins to hold the precious new wine you are pouring out on my life. Amen.

Day 21

Read: Ephesians 1:3-14

Pray: Lord, help me to live my life in a way that will bring much glory to You. As Your heir, I am predestined to play a key role in Your unfolding purpose that is energizing everything to conform to Your will. Help strengthen me to play a key role in your purpose to conform my marriage to Your will. I want to work with, not against You. I choose to partner with You by turning my attention to you whenever I grow anxious or fearful about things I can see. Help me to live by faith, not by sight. Surround me with Your favor and protection as I follow You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

About the Author

Sandy Ralya

Sandy Ralya is an acclaimed author, popular speaker, and the founder and director of Beautiful Womanhood. As a Christian mentoring ministry, Beautiful Womanhood seeks to promote and demonstrate an evangelistic mindset as they strengthen and unite a worldwide community of women who are—or desire to be—beautiful women.

Beautiful Womanhood's goal is to raise up and train mentors who come alongside wives, as well as those preparing for marriage, and encourage them to embrace Jesus Christ and biblical principles in marriage, struggle, and decision.

Since 2003, thousands of women, churches, and non-profit organizations have been directly impacted by Sandy's presentations on radio, television and at women's events.

In addition to seminars, Beautiful Womanhood offers mentor-led small groups, trainings for mentors and church leaders, social media forums, and personal mentoring programs for wives.

In 2012 and with much praise, she released *The Beautiful Wife* mentoring curriculum, designed for both individual readers, as well as small groups. Popular Christian author, Shaunti Feldhahn, called Sandy's *The Beautiful Wife* book "an incredible handbook that every woman needs."



You can find out more about Sandy Ralya and Beautiful Womanhood at www.beautifulwommanhood.com or follow her blog at www.beautifulwomanhood.com/blog.