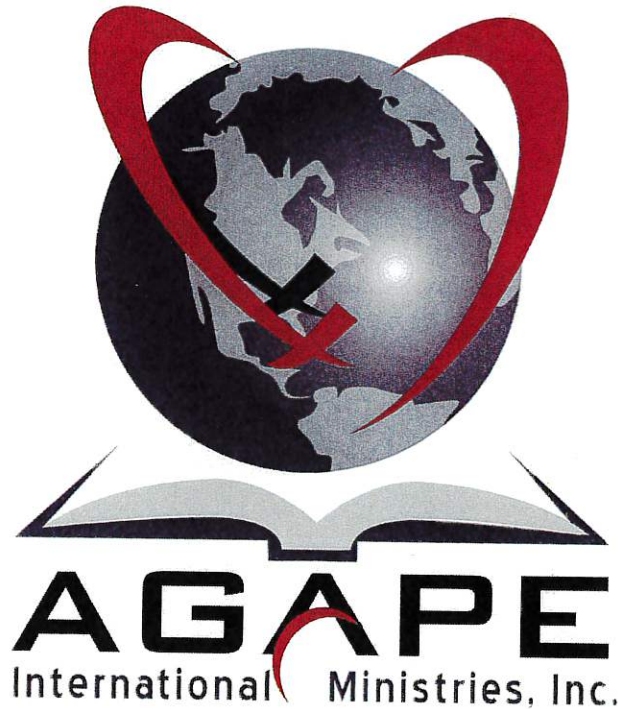


July 12
through
July 18,
2026

7 DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING



We are so excited that you have chosen to participate with Agape by setting aside 7 days to pray, fast and draw near to God. Fasting is not just an exercise for super-spiritual people. It is actually supposed to be a part of every believer's spiritual life. We have found there is no better way to reset one's spiritual compass and bring about change and discipline in every area of life than through fasting.

As you go through your 7-day fast, we hope you will be encouraged and strengthened by the following detailed information on the Disciple's Fast. The Disciple's Fast is a fast for Deliverance. We pray that you will experience the presence and power of God in an extraordinary way as you commit yourself to Him over the next 7 days. May God continue to bless you and enlarge you as you seek Him first.

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The Disciple's Fast

For Deliverance

"I have a sexual addiction," a person told me at the church altar. This person had been to several counselors. He had come to the altar several times and had tried everything suggested. This person was serious about being released from the problem.

"Have you tried fasting?" I asked.

"No."

I explained the steps described in this chapter for breaking bondage, introducing the Disciple's Fast: "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. 17:21 KJV).

When I later saw the contented smile on this person's face, I knew God had answered the prayers and honored the self-discipline of the Disciple's Fast.

The Problem of "Besetting Sins"

A significant reason to fast is that it releases people from the bondage of sin. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness" (Isa. 58:6 KJV).

Many Christians are helpless victims to "besetting sins" (see Heb. 12:1 kjv). Besetting sins are not common sins of neglect or momentary lapse. Nor are they sins of rebellion, in which God says, "Thou shalt not," and the person says "I will" in His face. Besetting sins are habitual sinful behaviors or attitudes that victimize and enslave people.

When you are a victim of a besetting sin, you do not clench your fist in the face of God and transgress His purpose; you are helpless and broken before Him because of your sin. A besetting sin makes you a slave and takes away your will. You cry out, "I can't help myself!" As one person said, "I am forced to play a game where I always lose, and I can't quit playing. I hate the game. . . . I hate playing. . . . I hate life."

The apostles tried unsuccessfully to deal with such a sin involving a demonized boy. Jesus said the problem was so severe that it couldn't be treated by ordinary means. "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting," He said (Matt. 17:21 kjv).

Are you, as a disciple of Christ, besieged by a besetting sin that calls for such measures? Jesus died on the cross for all sin, including your besetting sin. The substitutionary blood atonement of Jesus Christ is the most powerful thing on earth because it destroys sin and delivers from death and hell. Christians sing, "There is power in the blood," and believe in the accomplishments of Calvary.

Yet some Christians are in bondage to alcohol, drugs, sex and tobacco addictions. Others struggle with compulsive eating, extra-marital affairs and lying. Any sin that can't be broken with ordinary "willpower" can be termed a besetting sin.

Scripture promises, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man" (1 Cor. 10:13). Your temptation to sin is not unique; others face it as well. You, however, are chained to it like a compulsive slave. Yet Scripture promises a way out (see 1 Cor. 10:13). The Disciple's Fast can be that very way of escape for you, as a disciple.

Why Are We in Bondage?

Besetting sins beset us because we believe Satan's lie. "He is a liar," Jesus said (John 8:44). Satan lies to us about sin and we believe him instead of God. In besetting sins, Satan gets us to believe one of the following three lies (otherwise called "compulsions"):

1. I tried before, and can't break it.
2. I don't want to do this, but can't help it.
3. I need an answer, but can't find it.

Because we believe Satan's lie, we cannot see that there is a way of escape. Although we can change our desires and find the answers, we believe we are powerless because we have surrendered our wills to Satan rather than to God.

Satan's lie convinces us that we have no power against sin. Fortunately, Paul testified for our encouragement, "For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice" (Rom. 7:19).

When Satan controls our thoughts, he controls our lives. When he lies to us about our lives, we are in bondage.

We ask the questions: How can we break external bondages in our lives? How can we regain control of our lives?

When you take control of your physical appetite by fasting, you develop strength to take control of your emotional appetite.

The Power of the Disciple's Fast

The demon-possessed boy's father did not understand his son's problem. He said, "Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is a lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water" (Matt. 17:15 KJV). The father thought his son was sick or had some internal retardation, not understanding that his son was controlled by an external spirit. But Jesus knew that

a demon had entered into the boy and had taken control of his life.

The father brought his boy to the disciples for deliverance, but "they could not cure him" (Matt. 17:16). The disciples were unable to break the boy's bondage.

Some people are unable to quit smoking or break their homosexual relationships. Although they weep, pray sincerely and seek deliverance, they remain in bondage. The Disciple's Fast deals with these kinds of bondages.

You are wrestling for control of your life when you enter the Disciple's Fast. By controlling what you eat, you determine that you will control your life for God's purpose. When you make a vow and reinforce it with the Disciple's Fast, you move into the strength of decision making. You give up necessary or enjoyable food as a demonstration of the commitment of your will. When you make a choice to fast, you strengthen yourself to stand against a force that has enslaved your spiritual appetite. In the Disciple's Fast you control your physical appetite to strengthen your spiritual appetite. Look at what happens in this fast.

You make a life-freeing choice to be delivered. A paralyzed man was confronted by Jesus asking, "Do you want to be made well?" (John 5:6). Jesus knew the man wanted to be cured, so why did He ask the question? He was not asking for information, because Jesus knew all things. He was asking to build anticipation or "willpower" in the patient. Jesus wanted the man to *desire* the power that He could give him.

Some people will go to their church altars to ask God to take away bondages. "Lord, please take cigarettes from me," they beg. These people are often expecting God to do it all. They want God to "zap" them and instantaneously take away their appetites for tobacco. That is not the way God works. He wants us to look within, so *we* make the decision to follow Him. God does not want people to be robots controlled by switches He presses to force them to give up their sins.

God wants people to love Him voluntarily and to quit sinning voluntarily. He wants us to demonstrate our commitment to Him,

not in one big “quick change,” as Clark Kent into Superman, but by making choices and acting on those choices.

You recognize that an external power is responsible for your bondage. The boy’s father in Matthew 17 did not recognize that a demon held his son in bondage. Apparently the disciples did not recognize the cause of the problem either. Yet Jesus immediately “rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy” (v. 18 NIV).

One of the first steps in the Disciple’s Fast is to recognize the external power of our bondages. This does not necessarily mean we have demons, but it does mean we are controlled externally, not internally. Some believe they are alcoholics because their fathers were alcoholics. Others have convinced themselves that they were born as homosexuals. Although the causes of these problems are external, these people suffer internal depression. “I’m worthless,” they inwardly confess, and give up—when in fact, if they regained control of their bodies through fasting, they could reach into their spirits to take control of their inner humanities. Recognizing that an external power has made us weak is the first step in recovering control of ourselves.

You confess your previous lack of faith. Before you can be strong, you have to confess your weakness. Before running the marathon, the runner must realize the physical need to practice, exercise and build up the physical body. The disciples did not realize their need in the face of the demonic power in the boy, therefore they could not cast out the demon. They asked, “Why couldn’t we force out the demon?” (Matt. 17:19 CEV). Jesus answered, “It is because you don’t have enough faith!” (v. 20 CEV).

It is a statement of faith to recognize what God can do. It is also a statement of faith to recognize what a person cannot do. Faith is recognizing God’s strategy and submitting to it.

You specifically state your besetting sin. As you will see in the next section, the Disciple’s Fast involves stating its faith-purpose specifically. When you are fasting to break bondage, you must write out the specific bondage you want to break. Notice what happens when you start writing:

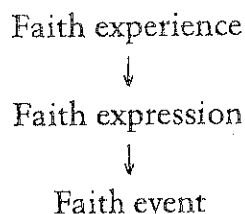
- You strengthen your will by stating what you want.
- You focus your energies on the problem.
- You build up anticipation to break the problem.
- You build up your faith in God to expect an answer.

Jesus said to the disciples, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence" (v. 20 KJV).

Faith is never blind faith, such as walking to the end of the diving board and jumping into a pool, hoping there will be water in it. Faith is confidence. When you say, "I believe," you are saying, "I know." When Jesus said, "If you have faith," He was saying, "If you know you can break this bondage, it will happen for you."

The old farmer said, "Faith is believing what you know ain't so"—but that is not New Testament faith. New Testament faith is believing what you know *is* so.

When you write out a faith-purpose statement, you begin to exercise the faith that is required for deliverance from your problem. Your faith experience leads to a faith expression (what you say) that leads to the faith event (fasting).



Although it is important to *fast specifically for a specific sin(s)*, it is not necessary to list specific acts. Identify the bondage by its principle, but do not write out the gory details. (Reliving the details can rekindle the fire of lust rather than producing power to overcome it.)

You fast repeatedly until you get a breakthrough. When Jesus said, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (v. 21 KJV), the verb action in the original language is continuous. Jesus meant we should continuously fast to get power over besetting sins.

This may involve fasting for a longer time or more often (once a week for several weeks) than we might have expected.

Fasting for an answer is similar to prayer. Sometimes you can pray once in an act of faith, and God hears and answers. You don't have to keep it up like a child begging for something a parent doesn't want to give. On other occasions you must continually ask in faith before an answer will come. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matt. 7:7). Why does God sometimes make us wait? Frequently He tests us to determine if we mean business. Often it takes time for conditions to answer our prayers. For example, we pray for rain, but it takes time for rain clouds to form.

Look at it from God's perspective. He could answer immediately. He knows beforehand that we will pray in faith, so God could prepare the rain clouds ahead of time. But God sees our perspective. We need to pray often and fast continually to build up our faith and our "spiritual character."

The longer we fast, the more we obey God. The longer we abstain from food, the more determined we become. After a time, our faith grows to trust God for greater miracles in our lives.

Prescription for Deliverance

Those unable to break bad habits experience an overwhelming sense of frustration. They can't break free of the bondages associated with their habits. They want to change, but something inside refuses to let them take control of their lives. Whether physically addicted to a substance or not, people experience psychological addictions to sin that prevent them from making the significant changes they desperately desire.

For those who struggle with a sin that has a grip that just won't let go, the Disciple's Fast offers hope. Choose the kind and duration of fast that is right for you. Write down the specific foods to be avoided (see "Preparing for the Disciple's Fast" at the end of the chapter).

Specific spiritual steps need to be taken, too. Spiritual bondage grows from seeds that are planted in our minds. The seeds send their roots into our subconscious minds, influencing our emotions, physical capacities and desires. Those of us in bondage would affirm our belief in God's omnipotence, yet would also describe ourselves as helpless victims unable to break the power of sin, our old natures, Satan or our addictive habits.

This is why Scripture so often links fasting with prayer. If we attempt to break an addictive sin without taking into account the spiritual steps necessary to break that sin, we will experience the frustrations and discouragement of persistent failure. To break spiritual bondage, we must follow the steps God has provided for spiritual warfare.

“(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4–5 KJV).¹

Step 1: Renounce Counterfeit Control

The first step in breaking spiritual bondage involves *discerning reality from that which is counterfeit*. This requires recognizing and renouncing any control over your mind that is not from Christ. “As the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3 KJV).

Counterfeit control may come from one of several sources. The anti-Christian values learned in an ungodly home can impact a family for generations. We have all been exposed to the godless influence of the mass media in the books, movies and music we experience. Have you ever been involved innocently or actively in the occult, New Age, spiritism, black or white magic, cults or other religions? These sources represent an external power that would influence your life. Satanic rituals and bonding oneself to alien spirits also place people in spiritual bondage.

Jesus contrasted His ministry with that of the devil when He stated, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). To experience the abundant life Jesus promised and be free of spiritual bondage, we must renounce the counterfeit influences in our lives.

Pray audibly, "I renounce (*insert here those counterfeit influences that are holding you in spiritual bondage*)."

Praying audibly is the first important step on the road to experiencing your liberty in Christ. Take time to examine your history. Note all external and internal influences, and denounce them audibly when you pray.

Step 2: Acknowledge Self-Deception

The second step on the road to Christian liberty involves *discerning truth from that which is deceptive*. For many people, this step is very difficult. It involves acknowledging our own efforts to deceive ourselves, and not choosing to embrace the truth of God. God wants to begin the process of liberating us from the spiritual bondage internally. David wrote, "You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom" (Ps. 51:6).

The problem with self-deception is that we are so successful at it that we don't know we are successful and don't realize the damage it does to us. Many people have deceived themselves for so long that they have difficulty believing they are deceived.

Several biblical principles may be applied to discern areas where we have deceived ourselves. First, we deceive ourselves when we hear and fail to apply the Word of God in our lives (see Jas. 1:22). Second, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Also, "If anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (Gal. 6:3).

Another way we deceive ourselves is in evaluating our wisdom by the standard of this age rather than by the wisdom of God

(see 1 Cor. 3:18). Finally, we deceive ourselves when we think we can sin and then escape the consequences (see 1 Cor. 6:9). Some ministers who have fallen into sexual sins probably began as men of God, but committed “minor” sins and thought they got away with them. As one thing led to another, their sins became more severe and they thought they were above the consequences of sin.

As long as we continue to deceive ourselves, we will remain in spiritual bondage. In contrast, Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). To move out of the realm of self-deception into the liberating truth of the gospel, we must admit we are deceived.

Pray audibly, “I acknowledge (*insert here those areas where you have deceived yourself*).”

When you are honest with God and yourself, you allow God’s truth to free you from deception.

Step 3: Forgive to Overcome Bitterness

The third step on the path to liberty involves *forgiving others so you can overcome bitterness and gain freedom*. If you refuse to forgive anyone, you place yourself in spiritual bondage to them and to sin. Paul reminded the Corinthians:

Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

2 Cor. 2:10–11 NIV

As you work through your bondage to sin and others, you should list the names of those you need to forgive. This is a list of names, not a list of sins or other violations they may have committed against you or someone to whom you are close. Continually bringing up past sins is evidence that you have not forgiven them.

Forgiveness is a choice. Because God requires us to forgive others, it is something we *can* do. Our natural inclination is to seek revenge when we have suffered. When we don't want to let others "off the hook," however, it means they still have their hooks in us. That places us in bondage to them. If we don't forgive others for their sakes, we should forgive them for our own sakes.

Forgiveness is not merely a conflict between yourself and the offender, but a matter between you and God. When you forgive, you choose to live with the consequences of wrongs committed against you. If you do not forgive, you will live with bitter consequences anyway. The choice is yours. You choose whether to live in the freedom of forgiveness or in the bitterness of bondage.

Pray audibly, "I forgive (*insert here the names of those who have wronged you in some way*)." As you forgive others, you experience God's forgiveness in your life.

Step 4: Submit to God's Authority

The fourth step involves *overcoming rebellion in your life by submitting to the authority of God and those He has placed over you*. Jesus compared being under authority to a manifestation of great faith (see Matt. 8:8-10). This involves trusting not only God directly, but also the line of authority He has appointed to provide leadership in your life.

God has placed all of us "under authority." We are called to submit to the authority of (1) civil government (see Rom. 13:1-7); (2) church leadership (see Heb. 13:17); (3) parents (see Eph. 6:1-3); (4) husbands (see 1 Pet. 3:1-4); (5) employers (see 1 Pet. 2:13-23); and (6) God (see Dan. 9:5, 9). Each of these authorities has a sphere of influence in our lives. Dealing with a rebellious spirit or attitude and placing ourselves under authority is another step toward breaking bondage in our lives.

Pray audibly, "I submit to (*insert here the specific authority in your life*)." "

Submitting to the authorities God has placed in your life is an important element in the Disciple's Fast because it is evidence of your submission to God Himself.

Step 5: Take Personal Responsibility

To break your bondage, *confront the problem of pride with a spirit of humility*. This is the only way you can accept your share of the responsibility for your problem. You can overcome bondage in your life by following the example of Jesus Christ. But when you give in to the sin of pride and self-exaltation, you are in bondage. Jesus Christ wants you to be free. He promised, "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Freedom is not being passive. You submit to Christ to become active. You are free to actively do what God wants you to do. The key to experiencing full freedom in Christ is to take responsibility for your actions. When you confess your sins, God promises both cleansing and forgiveness (see 1 John 1:9).

Each time you confess the same sin, God forgives; however, even though God forgives, the inner "you" becomes progressively weaker in esteem or acceptance. Many Protestants suffer from a condition called "confessionitis," which is the same "confession box" cycle of Roman Catholics. They repeatedly confess their sins, but then immediately return to their sins after confession because they are in bondage to them.

The cure for confessionitis is found in the way we confess our sins. We should not just say, "I'm sorry for (*insert specific sin here*)."

This leaves us with excuses for our actions such as "I couldn't help it" or "The devil made me do it."

You are responsible for the sin that has habitual control over your body (see Rom. 6:13). To pray, "I'm sorry" doesn't mean you take responsibility for it. You are called upon to renounce (repent) every sin done in your body. This involves praying audibly.

Fast and pray, "I am responsible for (*insert specific sin here*)."

When you take responsibility for yourself and your sin, you humble

yourself before God and enable Him to bless you with the freedom He desires to give you.

Step 6: Disown Sinful Influences

The final step to spiritual freedom involves *disowning sinful influences that come from friends and acquaintances*. Each of us is predisposed to certain behavior from several sources, including (a) emotional/psychological problems, (b) genetics, (c) direct sinful stimulation, (d) wrong heroes or role models and (e) direct satanic or demonic activity.

For many people, these things are part of their family heritage. To gain spiritual liberty over the bondage associated with these influences, we must disown the sins of others and their influence on our lives (see Exod. 20:4-5; Gal. 5:24).

This may appear easier said than done. Actually, a few simple steps can help you through this process. First, recognize that you have been crucified, buried and raised with Jesus Christ and you now sit in the heavenlies (see 2 Cor. 4:14). Second, publicly state that you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ (see Gal. 5:24). Then verbally claim the blood of Jesus over the evil one (1 Cor. 6:20; 1 John 1:7).

Pray audibly, "I disown (*insert specific negative influence in your life*)." "

These six steps can help you break the influence of things that might otherwise keep you and your family in bondage for generations to come. To summarize:

Six Steps to Freedom

1. I renounce . . .
2. I acknowledge . . .
3. I forgive . . .
4. I submit . . .
5. I take responsibility . . .
6. I disown . . .

Principles to Remember

Practicing the Disciple's Fast successfully will not be accomplished by slavishly following the preceding six steps. You must be actively and purposely involved in determining how, and whether, each step is to be applied to your own unique situation. The following are some principles to consider.

Take inventory of all six principles. Some people will need to work through all six steps, praying audibly each of the six prayers. You may think you have no problem with one of these items until you make it a matter of prayer. Be especially aware of your tendency to delude yourself. Make each step a matter of honest reflection and prayer before you follow it.

Focus on your problem. If, after honest reflection and earnest prayer, you sincerely believe that you do not need all six of these steps, select those that do apply to your individual needs. Only one or two may be adequate to deal with your problem. Spend your time on your major problem.

The purpose principle. The more specific and purposeful you are, the more specific your results. If you are vague in dealing with your sin, you will have diffused any possible results. When you fast to break a specific sin, you focus all of your energies onto that sin. Then God can give you the ability to overcome it.

The prescription principle. When you deal with sins, you must learn to pray the exact prescribed words that deal with why you were in bondage. Only when you audibly remind yourself of the causes of your sins will you be able to break the result. It is not enough to pray "Forgive me, Lord," and let it go at that. You must also fast and pray; for example, "I take responsibility for having allowed myself to become addicted to alcohol." Naming your sin and affirming your accountability for your actions is a step toward overcoming the besetting sin.

The inner journey principle. You never gain an outward victory over sin until you take inner responsibility for your actions. You cannot journey without until you have journeyed within. Just as

the rings of a tree tell us it grows from the inner to the outer, so Christians must develop inner character before they can deal with the outer problems. The roots must grow before there is fruit.

The public principle. Obviously you will have to deal with your sin to break its bondage over you. The question arises: How public should your confession be? Basically, sin is an internal act or attitude. It is something that usually begins in the heart long before it reaches the hand. Given time, however, sin eventually becomes public. Those things done in darkness ultimately work into the glare of camera lights and public scrutiny.

Fasting is a private vow made to God. Therefore you must begin dealing with sin in your private fast before it becomes public. You begin with your confession to God. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9). Sometimes, however, sin must be confessed to another person, or to a church—that is, the public.

How public should your confession be?

You should include in your circle of confession all those who were included in your circle of sin. If it was a private sin, keep your confession private. If only a few people know about your sin, then only those people should hear your confession. If you have sinned against the Church and the world, your confession should be open and in public.

Preparing for the Disciple's Fast

- Aim:* Achieving freedom from addiction, or from a besetting sin.
- Affirmation:* I believe there is no earthly temptation that can enslave me, but that God has a way of escape for me (see 1 Cor. 10:13). I believe in the power of the blood of Christ and in the strength of the name of Christ (see Acts 3:16; 16:18). Therefore, I am fasting because I want the Son of God to make me free indeed (see John 8:36).
- Vow:* God being my strength, and grace being my basis, I commit myself to the Disciple's Fast outlined here.
- Fast:* Foods from which I shall abstain _____

Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough

Beginning: Date and time I will start fasting _____
End: Date and time I will stop fasting _____
Purpose: I am fasting to _____
Bible Basis: "To loose the bands of wickedness" (Isa. 58:6 kjv). _____
Resources Needed: _____
Signed _____ Date _____

Discussion Questions

1. The writer of Hebrews identifies the problem of besetting sins that many of us struggle with (see Hebrews 12:1). How are besetting sins defined in this chapter?
2. Are you struggling with a besetting sin?
3. How can you break free from bondage and regain control of your life?
4. The Disciple's Fast begins with making a life-freeing choice to be delivered. Why does fasting strengthen our desire for deliverance from besetting sin?
5. What specific problem are you hoping to address in the Disciple's Fast? Be as specific as possible in expressing your purpose in fasting.
6. Review the six steps in the process of breaking free from bondage as part of the Disciple's Fast. Walk through these six steps, audibly praying the prayer for each step.
7. Sin needs to be confessed only as publicly as it has been practiced. How public do you need to be in confessing your besetting sin?

8. Complete the "Preparing for the Disciple's Fast" section at the end of this chapter.

Prayer

*Heavenly Father, I find myself struggling with _____
_____ and am unable to overcome
this problem on my own. My personal efforts to break free of
this bondage have only resulted in frustration. Still, I believe
You are able to accomplish far more than I could dream,
even in this area of my life. Lord, as I follow Your leading
in my life and observe the Disciple's Fast, guide me through
the process You intend to use to enable me to experience
liberty in Christ. Grant me the grace to be receptive to Your
Word and submit to the principles You reveal there. In Jesus'
name, I pray. Amen.*