

Sunday Celebration (1-2-04)
"Restoring Prayer and Fasting"

Restoration of the Church (Pt. 11)

INTRO

— Greatly Needing the "NEARNESS OF GOD"

Hab 3:17-19

Ps 73:25-28

Ps 65:4

Ps 84:10-12

James 4:8

How Can We Draw Near? The Restoration of Prayer & Fasting

"How many people do you know who regularly practice fasting? How many sermons have you heard on the subject? In most Christian circles you will rarely hear fasting mentioned, and few will have read anything about it. And yet it's mentioned in Scripture more times than even something as important as baptism." Donald Whitney, "Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life", p. 159

"A biblical definition of fasting is a Christian's voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes." Donald Whitney, "Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life", p. 160

"Richard Foster defines fasting as 'the voluntary denial of a normal function for the sake of intense spiritual activity.'" [quoted in "Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life", p. 160]

"Andrew Bonar defined fasting as abstaining from anything that hindered prayer. Though himself an avid reader, he had to fast at times from his excessive love for reading to find time to commune with God. Phillips Brooks described fasting as abstaining from anything innocent in itself in order to grow more spiritually or serve God more effectively. Perhaps for our generation fasting should often be from radio and TV in order to give ourselves more totally and intensely to prayer. Fasting is a God-ordained form of self-denial." Wesley Duewel, "Mighty Prevailing Prayer", p. 182

MOST COMMON BIBLICAL REASONS FOR FASTING

1. To Strengthen Our Ability to Turn Our Attention to the Lord

Dan 9:1-3

— "TURNING MY ATTENTION" a Much Needed Understanding for Today's Christians— Here Daniel is Engaging God through the reading of Scripture, but he's about to TURN IT UP A NOTCH!!

"The purpose of fasting is (1) to subject the physical to the spiritual and to give priority to spiritual goals; (2) to disentangle oneself for a time from one's environment, material things, daily responsibilities, and cares; and (3) to devote one's whole spiritual attention to God and prayer. We do not imply that daily duties and life's necessities are unholy or unspiritual; rather, we subject permissible things, even profitable things, to greater spiritual priorities." Wesley Duewel, "Mighty Prevailing Prayer", p. 182

2. When Facing a Great Challenge or Obstacle

“When you face an overwhelming need, a human impossibility, and your soul hungers to see God intervene by supernatural power, add fasting.” Wesley Duewel, “Mighty Prevailing Prayer”, p. 183

2 Chron 20:1-4

Ezra 8:21-23

Well, how does fasting actually accomplish this? Let us not be so arrogant to ask for understanding before we have submitted in obedience!

3. To Be Receptive to Direction and Wisdom from God

– How many times might God want to REVEAL SOMETHING BIG, that we won't even hear without more times of Drawing Near?

Acts 13:1-3

Acts 14:23

4. To Strengthen Our Spiritual Appetites & Longings for Him and to Protect us from Becoming Satisfied with Natural and Temporary Things

[Guarding Our Wandering Hearts from Displacing God as Our Primary Dependency & Delight]

“the point of fasting is to express longing for Christ and all that God is for us in Him. Fasting is the hungry handmaid of prayer. Like prayer she both reveals and remedies. She reveals the measure of food's mastery over us— or television or computers or whatever we submit to again and again to conceal the weakness of our hunger for God. And she remedies by intensifying the earnestness of our prayer and saying with our whole body what prayer says with the heart: I long to be satisfied in God alone!” John Piper, “When I Don't Desire God”, p. 172

“[Fasting] is an intensifier of spiritual desire. It is a faithful enemy of fatal bondage to innocent things. ... If you don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things and there is no room for the great.” John Piper, “A Hunger for God”, p. 22-23

5. To Bring Our Flesh Under Submission

FAST (fast), (fast'-ing) (tsuṁ; `innah nephesh, "afflict soul or self," i.e. practice self-denial; (from International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)

Ps 69:10 When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. KJV

FAST – The sacrifice of the personal will, which gives to fasting all its value, is expressed in the old term used in the law, afflicting the soul. The faithful son of Israel realized the blessing of "chastening his soul with fasting" (from McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia)

1 Cor 9:27 I discipline my body and make it my slave , so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

1 Cor 6:12 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

6. To Humble Ourselves

Ps 35:13

1 Kings 21:27-29

7. To Combat Temptation and Spiritual Opposition

Matt 4:1-3 "The Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 And the tempter came

Mk 9:29 "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer [and fasting]."

8. During Times of Repentance and Intercession

Neh 1:4-6

Is Fasting Optional or Necessary?

- Fasting is Associated with (and necessary for):
 - Turning Our Attention to the Lord
 - Receiving Help & Direction
 - Humbling Ourselves
 - Afflicting Our Flesh
 - Facing Spiritual Opposition

APPLICATIONS OF THESE PRINCIPLES

- There are a variety of ways to fast and durations of fasting in Scripture. What they all have in common is the accomplishing of the above mentioned goals. So the purpose of fasting is common, but the specific type of fast and duration of fasting is variable.

- Fasting a Meal
- Fasting a Day or a Number of Days
- Fasting from Something Distracting in Order to Pursue the Lord
 - Media Fast – TV, Movies, Newspaper reading, etc.
 - Activities Fast – Shopping, Sports, Hobbies, etc.
 - People Fast – Pursuing time with the Lord in place of social interactions
- "The Non-Essentials Fast" [an adaptation of Daniels fast in Dan 10].... 3 wks of just the basic needs being met and the disposing of luxury foods and practices.

Dan 10:1-3

Fasting is Normal and Regular ... not to be a rarity in the Christian's life, and certainly not limited to a few radical individuals

Fasting opens the door to God and His involvement in our lives, in ways that would otherwise have not occurred