

Introduction:

- There is a spiritual discipline in the body of Christ called fasting.
- We will start on the morning of 7th of October and end on the evening of the 27th.
- I want to equip you tonight on the basics of fasting so that you can intelligently and with understanding talk about fasting with the rest of the church.
- Jesus had several things to say about fasting.
 - It wasn't an option—He said, "When you fast..."
 - We would do it lots while He was away. "You cant fast when the bride groom is with you."
 - It increases our spiritual authority. "These come out only by prayer and fasting."

1) What is fasting?

- a) It is the denying of the body food, and drink.
 - i) Many people want to associate fasting with TV, video games etc. That is not fasting. That is an act of self-denial. It is a good thing to do but it is not fasting. It is great to do along with fasting.
 - ii) Fasting is denying the body food or drink.
 - (1) Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines a fast as:
 - (a) The abstinence from food; properly a total abstinence, but is also used for an abstinence from particular kinds of foods, for a certain time.
 - (b) Voluntary abstinence from food, with a view to mortify the appetites or to express grief and affliction on account of some calamity.
 - (c) To deprecate an expected evil. To disapprove, denounce, condemn.
 - iii) Fasting reduces man to two very basic needs that he must have to survive. Without water you will die in 3 or 4 days. Without food eventually you will die. Therefore to fast is to bring you into subjection to God for His strength and grace based on the two fundamental needs we have in this life.
- b) Fasting is the afflicting of one's self in order to encounter God. Is. 58:3 & 10.
 - i) The afflicted are those who are put down, depressed; humbled. That is the state of the poor. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for there is the Kingdom of Heaven.
 - ii) If we vs 10 remember the poor in their afflicted state, while fasting (afflicting ourselves) then there are promises that God says he will do.

2) What does fasting focus on? Mostly:

- a) Repentance - We/I have sinned.
 - i) Joel 1:14; 2:15 Consecrate a fast. Will often be in reference to the sins of a nation.
 - ii) 2 Kings 18:6 Hezekiah calls a fast, repents, tears down the wicked high places.
 - iii) 2 Samuel 12:23 David fasts in repentance that his son might live.
- b) Crisis/humbling ourselves to One greater than ourselves—we have great need/crisis in life and we need help.
 - i) Ezra 8:21 Ezra calls a fast for protection/they humbled themselves. They are preparing to return to Israel—remnant returning to the land.

- ii) Jehoshaphat call a fast for wisdom and help from God as an army was marching to destroy them. 2 Chron 20.
- iii) Ezra 8:21 humbled themselves to God for protection.
- iv) Mt. 6:16,17 Regular fasting to stay in the position of humility. If we do not practice the discipline of regular fast then our cutting edge dependency on God will become dependency on ourselves.

(1) Matthew 6:16-17 "*Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,* NKJV

- c) This is the basis of all fasting.
 - i) Humility, and humility is the soil in which the seed of God Word grows.
 - ii) Repentance

3) What Kinds of Fast are there?

- a) Total fast/total abstinence. No food or no water. Remember—**DO NOT DO THIS BEYONE THREE DAYS**. Your body has to have water to function and after three days with no water bad things will happen to you.
- b) Fast all foods. You drink liquids, water and juices. Again be careful how you do this. Some people, like me, cut my juice in half with water because the acid in the juice is to much.
- c) Partial fast-Dan. 10:3
 - i) One meal a day
 - ii) Fast meats
 - iii) Desserts
 - iv) Soups only
- d) Daniel Fast–Dan. 1:10-ff Daniel and the Hebrew children fast eating only vegetables and water.

4) How long should I fast?

- a) In the Bible you find
 - i) Three day fasts-Esther 4:16
 - ii) 21 day fasts-Daniel 10:2-14
 - iii) 40 day fasts-Ex 34:28; Dt. 9:9
 - iv) When you fast–time not designated.
- b) It also depends on your medical condition.
 - i) If you are taking meds, some meds require food or you get sick. Now, don't eat the house –find out how much food you require in order to not be made sic.
 - ii) If you are diabetic you have to eat, just adjust how you eat, what you eat and when you eat.
 - iii) If you work outside in the heat or have a very strenuous job that require lots of physical labor you will have to drink lots more than usual and adjust food accordingly.

5) How do you prepare for a fast?

- a) The best way to prepare for a fast is not to stock up on food by over eating. That only enlarges your stomach and cause hunger to come quickly. Start cutting back on the amount of food you eat and let your stomach shrink.
- b) Cut sugar and caffeine. Both of these items will cause you have severe headaches and nausea. They come because they make the body toxic. As the body cleanses itself you are actually experiencing what an alcoholic or drug addict goes through on a very limited basis. The poison is being pulled out and your body becomes toxic and craves at the same time. Start about 3 days ahead eliminating sugar and caffeine drinking lots of water.
- c) Begin asking God what He wants you to focus on. Take notes and ready a journal to write down the things that God shows or speaks to you about. When the fast begins, your head will "already be in the game" and you will not be trying to find your way as your body begins to react.

6) How do I break a fast?

- a) If you are doing a total fast and you reach the finish, If you have fasted three days, take three days to reintroduce your body to food once again. Start slow, with gentle foods that are easy on the digestive system.
- b) If you go longer than three days, say 21 days, take at least a week to get yourself acclimated to eating again.
- c) Why?
 - i) If you break your fast with hot wings, steak, pizza supreme, you will not be happy with yourself and neither will your body. It will cramp up, as your digestive track that has shrunk to pencil size now forces golf ball size bites through it. Therefore expect cramping and diarrhea as your body says, This must go!
 - ii) Your body has went into starvation mode and your metabolism has all but stopped. If you down foods that are fattening in a continual way your first few days eating, you will blow up like a house! Your body is now programmed to store every calorie it gets. Therefore eat low calorie stay away from foods high in sugar and bad carbohydrates. Eat easy to digest foods, veggies, and eat small portions well chewed, at least 6 times a day for the first week. This begins programming your body's metabolism to get in gear and burn and not store calories. Yogurt is also good as it help restore your bodies flora.

7) Bridegroom fasting focuses on Jesus out of necessity. Luke 5:34-ff; Mk 2:19

- a) Power
 - i) The disciples lacked power.
 - (1) Mt. 17:16 The disciples could not cast out a demon. Boy with epilepsy.
 - (a) Jesus calls them faithless and perverse
 - (i) They let doubt subdue them.
 - (ii) They were bent - still thinking this comes by their strength.
 - (b) Jesus rebukes the demon and it comes out.
 - (c) The disciples ask why could we not do that?
 - (i) No authority. Ie. Acts 19:15 "Jesus we know, Paul we know, who are you?"
 - (ii) No power
 - (2) Mt. 17:21 This kind comes out by prayer and fasting.

- ii) Jesus gained power through fasting.
 - (1) Luke 4:1, and Luke 4:14
 - (a) Led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Mt. records for the purpose of testing, and Jesus was fasting.
 - (b) Returns in the power of the Spirit.
 - (c) Note that fasting must be practice regularly to result in continued power. Because Luke 4:13 says he will wait for more opportune time.
- b) Protection
 - i) Ezra 8:21 Ezra sought to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the nation. **Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions.** NKJV
 - (1) Ezra 8:22-23 **The hand of our God is upon all those for good** who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him."
 - (2) **So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.** NKJV
 - ii) Jehoshaphat 2 Chron 20:3 calls a fast throughout all Judah.
 - (1) Revelation comes as to strategy. Praise me, says the Lord.
 - (2) The enemy is routed before destruction came.
- c) Revelation
 - i) Fasting is a way of setting our face toward God to get answers and understanding.
 - (1) Daniel 9:3 Then **I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting , sackcloth, and ashes.** 4 And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, NKJV
 - (2) Note the humility and dependence on God. Pray, supplication, fasting, sackcloth. Dan 9:20 **Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication** NKJV
 - ii) An angel shows up with answers. Dan 9:22-23 **I have now come forth to give you skill to understand.** REVELATION. NKJV
 - iii) Cornelius is fasting and revelation comes. Acts 10:30 **So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,** NKJV
 - (1) Note that Cornelius is simply seeking God with fasting and revelation comes to him.
- d) Encounter/Intimacy
 - i) Acts 13:2 They were fasting and ministering to the Lord.
 - (1) Ministering to the Lord means they were loving him.
 - (a) Dance
 - (b) Praise
 - (c) Time in the secret place.
 - (2) Fasting was afflicting the soul in order to encounter Him.
 - (3) As they fasted God spoke—It was a God encounter.
 - ii) Zech rebukes the Israelites for fasting to themselves. Zech 7:5-6 **"Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh**

months during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me – for Me? 6 When you eat and when you drink, **do you not eat and drink for yourselves?** NKJV

(1) Selfish fasting

- (a) To loose weight
- (b) To cleanse the body of toxins
- (c) To perform religious duty.

(2) God wanted the fast for him.

- (a) Is. 58 - picture of mans motives vs. Gods.
- (b) Zech 7:9-10 **Thus has the Lord of hosts spoken: Execute true judgment and show mercy and kindness and tender compassion, every man to his brother; 10 And oppress not the widow or the fatherless, the temporary resident or the poor, and let none of you devise or imagine or think evil against his brother in your heart.**

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(3) Joel 2:15 Consecrate a fast is an invitation to encounter God again.

iii) A real show of Intimacy

(1) Intimacy with God to be desired more than intimacy with your spouse. 1 Cor 7:5-7

Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

(2) Make sure the season is short. **6 But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment.** NKJV