

**Introduction:**

- We started our 21 day fast this morning.
- *"But **when** you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you."* (Matthew 6:17-18, NLT)
- *"One day the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked him, "Why don't your disciples fast like we do and the Pharisees do?" Jesus replied, "Do wedding guests mourn while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and **then they will fast.**"* (Matthew 9:14-15, NLT)
- Down through the centuries, godly people who have done mighty things for the Lord have testified to the necessity of prayer with fasting. John Wesley, who shook the world for God during the Great Awakening, which gave rise to the Methodist Church toward the end of the eighteenth century, is representative of such great spiritual leaders. John Wesley so believed in this power that he urged early Methodists to fast and pray every Wednesday and Friday. He felt so strongly about fasting those two days a week that he refused to ordain anyone in Methodism who wouldn't agree to do it.

**I. What is Spiritual Fasting?**

- A. It is intentionally abstaining from eating food for the purpose of praying and fellowshiping with God. We use meal times or time we spend eating to pray. I.e. If you go to the doctor and he wants to do labs on you he asks that you fast 12 hours. That means no food only water. He doesn't say fast TV, though he might say you need to quit watching TV and exercise.
- B. Types of fasts.
  1. Total fast: Most fasts in the Bible were fasting food and liquids, except water.
  2. Partial fast: Daniel fast - fasting of meat and delicacies. Eat only vegetables.
- C. How will you fast?
  1. One meal a day?
  2. Salads?
  3. Total fast?
  4. You choose I will not dictate how you fast.
- D. We abstain food to purposely pray and to worship....not just to go hungry.

**II. What Are Our Prayer Targets?**

- A. Here are five prayer targets to focus on for the fast.
  1. Pray for the lost to be saved. **Any lost person** is considered a prodigal (they are away from God.) Believers mostly associate their lost child as a prodigal. It motivates them to pray because it is personal. Ken Malone, of Kingdom Gate was given a word from the Lord, *"The prodigals are weeping, it's time for their return."*

Luke 15:11-32 Many of the prodigals are those who have been hurt in the church, and by Christian parents who made mistakes in parenting. Other prodigals are those who just lusted after the things of this world and now are empty. Pray for:

- a) Prodigals to come home to Father. In your family, who may be friends or neighbors; pray they come home to Father.
  - b) Pray they come "to their senses"; to be awakened so that they can return.
  - c) Pray for their shortest and easiest route for their return to the Father.
  - d) Pray for their return to their true identity. (Sons)
2. Pray for the release of our nets: It is time to catch fish. "*Release the nets to catch fish.*" (I feel the enemy is standing on our nets and keeping us from throwing them out for a great catch.) Many have just abandoned their nets and it is time to pick them up again. I.e. Peter quit fishing for lack of catching. Prophet Bob Jones gave us a word that our nets were caught on the rocks. Let's pray them free/loose.
- a) Luke 5:4-7 Launch out and cast your nets.
  - b) I.e. Dream of fishing and fish chasing the lure as it was cast. I.e. Dream 2015: The dream starts: I am fishing with Pastor Tony Hauck in a crystal clear lake. We are in a boat set up for fishing. I stand and throw my spinner bait out a long ways. When I pull it back in I notice that there is a bobber on the line. Not sure why it is there and I take it off saying, "You cant use bobbers on spinners. I cast it again. You could literally see the fish chase the spinner as it was being cast. It hit the water and I heard the Holy Spirit say, "Let it sink." Suddenly we see a big fish hit the bait! I reeled it in. It's a big bass. I do not want to touch the fish as I am putting the weigh scales into the gills. Then I wake up. **Interpretation:** This is a good dream. We are in the things of the Spirit and fishing. I believe we are fishing for men. I use the wrong set up at first but after making changes the fish literally keep their eye on the bait and chase it. Listening to the Holy Spirit is key to catching fish. Don't weigh the fish, weigh the Breath. Lord help us find the right set up to reach people.
3. Pray that Holy Spirit prepares hearts for the entrance of the Word.
- a) Prevenient grace is grace that goes before. Pre meaning 'before'. It is grace that goes before a person is saved.
  - b) This grace is leading people towards God, softening their hearts causing them to be open to Christ and exercising their faith to be saved.
4. Pray for the beautiful conviction of the Holy Spirit to come to those who do not know God.
- a) "*And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:*" (John 16:8, ESV)
  - b) "Convict means to show people their sins and summon them to repentance. It means to expose, blame," etc. TDNT

- c) Conviction points to Christ. Condemnation provides no way out.
- d) IE. Amazing grace - "twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears received."
- 5. Awakening in the State of Florida and specifically in the city of Viera. Signs of awakening are visible in our state! This is not a new target but one we must continue to contend for.
- B. Prayer targets for Freedom Christian Center Pray for...
  - 1. Young families and young adults to come into Freedom and to be born again.
  - 2. For souls. All ages all walks of life.
  - 3. Pray for Key people to come to Christ. Those who open doors to others!
  - 4. The fire of God to fall on us and be alive within us!
- C. Personal Prayer Targets - identify prayer targets for yourself and your family.

### III. We Need To Fast, Why?

- A. Bill Bright gives seven reason to fast. Note to self: weight loss, better health, detox are not in his list. The fasting we are talking about today is a spiritual fast for the purpose of time with God.
  - 1. Fasting is a biblical way to truly humble oneself in the sight of God. (PS. 35:13; EZRA 8:21). This was primary way of fasting in scripture and church history. Humility is an attitude of the heart. The Scripture says, "A broken and contrite heart--these, O God, You will not despise" (Psalm 51:17 NKJV). God will hear us and respond to our cry when we come before Him in humility and brokenness--acknowledging and repenting of our sins, and asking Him to cleanse us by the blood of Jesus and to fill us with His Holy Spirit.
    - a) *"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."* (Ezra 8:21, NKJV)
    - b) In his book *Fasting*, author and teacher Derek Prince describes fasting as "a tremendous lesson in establishing who is the master and who is the servant. Remember, your body is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master." And, according to Galatians 5:17, the flesh, or carnal nature, always strives to be in control. Jesus said flesh counts for nothing Jn 6:63.
  - 2. Fasting brings revelation by the Holy Spirit of a persons true spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance and change.
  - 3. Fasting is a crucial means for personal revival because it brings the inner working of the Holy Spirit into play in a most unusual powerful way.
  - 4. Fasting helps us better understand the word of God by making it more meaningful, vital, and practical.
  - 5. Fasting transforms prayer into a richer and more personal experience.

6. Fasting can result in dynamic personal revival ...being filled with the Spirit and regaining a strong sense of spiritual determination. ie. Nehemiah
  7. \*\*\*\*\*Fasting can restore the loss of one's first love for the Lord. \*\*\*\*\*
- B. Key take away: Fasting, according to these seven reasons, brings us into a closer, more meaningful relationship with God. The closer you are the more you experience His presence.
1. In Mt 9:14-ff Jesus is asked about fast. His answer to their question reveals some things about fasting.
    - a) The Pharisee's kind of fasting involved mourning. And you can't mourn when the bridegroom is with you. The King of the Kingdom is here so celebrate. The Kingdom is at hand...this is good news not sad. The Kingdom is here we are not waiting its arrival.
    - b) The New fast: The King will go away and then you will fast. Why? Because you will long for Him to return. There will be both sadness in absence and longing at the same time. John Piper said it this way: *"We have tasted the powers of the age to come, and our fasting is not because we are hungry for something we have not experienced, but because the new wine of Christ's presence is so real and satisfying. We must have all that is possible to have. ...The new fasting, the Christian fasting is a hunger for all the fullness of God."* John Piper Hunger for God, p 42. *"You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart."* Jer. 29:11. Dream 11/14/2019. *I had found a table looking piece of paper, like one on a magazine. I was looking at the numbers on the table and realized I had just won the lottery! I put it in my pocket and later I went to show someone and it was gone. This resulted in a frantic search and I felt like a searched all night long. Retracing footsteps etc. I am looking at my hands thinking where could it be and I hear, "You will find when you search for it like gold or silver." Suddenly it was in my hand!*
  2. When the Bridegroom is away then they will fast. Why? Because they long for His presence. Search for it as for gold or silver.
  3. When we long for His presence, His Spirit woos us and surrounds us with His presence. (Three of our 7 reasons for fasting speaks of the Holy Spirit.) The seven reasons all have to do with our relationship/intimacy with Him!

#### IV. Fasting and The Fire of God

- A. God wants us to believe for the fire of His presence to fall on us. How...
  1. Get the fresh oil.
  2. Trim your lamps.
  3. Lord light the fire.
- B. God is seen as/in fire all through the Bible.

1. Fire of God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Gen 19:24 fire to destroy sin culture in the heart.
2. God appears in a burning bush to Moses. Ex 3:2 fire for revelation and commission/calling
3. Pillar of Fire Ex 13:21 - fire for protection, leadership of nation, comfort
- C. *"Fire blazed forth from the Lord's presence and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When the people saw this, they shouted with joy and fell face down on the ground."* (Leviticus 9:24, NLT) The fire of His presence! You are that sacrifice to God!
- D. There are three places in the Word that I want to direct our attention. In all three, fire falls from heaven and accomplishes Kingdom purposes.
  1. 2 Chron 7:1-ff., Solomon dedicates the temple. Fire in the place of worship.
    - a) Solomon prayed a prayer of repentance, dedication and worship.
    - b) God responded with the fire of His presence consuming the sacrifice.
  2. 1 Kings 18:22-39, Elijah calls down fire. Fire in holy confrontation.
  3. Acts 2:1-4 Pentecost. Fire for service. Fire in the people for empowerment.

**Conclusion:**

- Lord let your fire fall
- *Afterward the disciples asked Jesus privately, "Why couldn't we cast out that demon?" 20 "You don't have enough faith," Jesus told them. "I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible.\*" Mt 17:19-20*