

Fasting

Pray

Tonight, we will be discussing the purpose of fasting and how it relates to our relationship with GOD

Speaking of a relationship with GOD, lets take a look at David, and his relationship with the Lord.

[1Samuel 30:8 ESV]

8 And David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I pursue after this band? Shall I overtake them?" He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue."

[2Samuel 2:1 ESV]

1 After this David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" And the LORD said to him, "Go up." David said, "To which shall I go up?" And he said, "To Hebron."

According to these, and many other examples, David speaks to GOD and GOD answers.

However, at a time of great sorrow, David fasts and weeps and his pleading went unanswered

[2Samuel 12:21-22 ESV]

21 Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food."

22 He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?'

Sometimes the Lord will even tell us “it’s not happening”

[Jeremiah 14:11-12 ESV]

11 The LORD said to me: "Do not pray for the welfare of this people.

12 Though they fast, I will not hear their cry, and though they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence."

Sometimes prayer and fasting “works like a charm,”

[Jonah 3:4-10 ESV]

4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

5 And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

6 The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water,

8 but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.

9 Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish."

10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

I wonder, does it have go do with us not following instructions? Do we have any instructions to follow?

[Matthew 6:16-18 ESV]

16 "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,

18 that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

It seems to me that the Lord Jesus is telling us that fasting is a personal activity between us and GOD

Jesus gives us an example

[Mat 4:1-4 ESV]

1 Then 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 and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

4 But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

It is written, for many years I had never bothered to look up what the Lord Jesus was referring to in this passage, (I felt pretty safe taking his word for it)

[Deuteronomy 8:3 ESV]

3 And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

Let's look a bit closer on how the Lord views our fasting

[Isaiah 58:2-8 ESV]

2 Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God.

3 'Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?' Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers.

4 Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.

5 Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD?

6 "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?"

7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

8 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

[Joel 2:12-14 ESV]

12 "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

13 and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.

14 Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God?

So, what is the “upshot” of all of this

Is fasting a way to “tip the odds” in our favor, so we have a better chance of GOD doing what we want?

NO it isn't that.

Maybe it's the way we can show GOD we are really sincere in what we are praying for, after all we are giving up something, he should “take that bargain” and give us what WE want.

GOD knows your heart, when you pray, fasting or not fasting, is your heart righteous, that is what matters.

Fasting wont “prove” anything to GOD

I am told that there is this “thing” called vacation, it is supposed to be something one does to refresh and renew themselves, has anyone here ever been on one of those?

Really, that many, huh

My understanding is that people plan them, setting aside time for them. Having itineraries, goals and such.

Did you take time to plan out time to spend with GOD? To renew your faith in him, to solidify your relationship.

Fasting is to “prove” to us that, we truly desire GOD, that communing with him means more to US than anything the world has to offer, that our spirit wants to be with him more than anything, earthly flesh be Dammed.

Abraham and Isaac

God didn't tell Abraham to sacrifice Isaac for what it would prove to GOD (remember GOD knew what would happen) but to have Abraham prove to himself how deep his faith was.

Fasting reinforces to us that our priority is GOD, nothing else.

If you remember nothing else in your life, remember this:

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

PRAY