

Fasting-A Hunger for Jesus

I. THE PURPOSE

- A. Imagine there is a great big veil in front of you. You have not eaten for days and you can smell fresh pizza behind it. If you had been without food how hungry would you be for it. Your taste buds would be going crazy and your sense of smell would be heightened. You would do anything to get a taste of that pizza. The Word of God should be like that for all believers. Jesus says all throughout the bible that He is the Word of Life.
- B. This document was created to give a greater understanding of fasting, or another way to look at it, hunger for more of Jesus in our lives. It is the purpose and intent of this document to stir and awaken a new hunger for Jesus within you.

II. WHY FAST

- A. The Holy Spirit is preparing His bride across the earth for the greatest time of pressure in human history.
- B. Part of us preparing, both individually and as a community [Church], is to restrain from natural pleasures so we can position ourselves to receive more from the Holy Spirit.
- C. Fasting is a normal part of following Jesus and His commandments. Matt. 6:17,18 “When you fast.... Your Father in who sees in secret will reward you openly.”
- D. Fasting is restraint, but it is also hunger.
- E. Jesus Himself fasted. He did a 40 day fast before He started His ministry. If Jesus fasted and He is fully God, how much more are we called to do the same?

III. RISK & REWARD OF FASTING

- A. Fasting is not easy as we see in our nation [America]. We have symptoms of obesity in every aspect of life. For most to miss one meal would be difficult to say the least. This is an epidemic and is the outward expression of an inward problem.
- B. Most times anyone mentions restraint in the American church they are slapped with the label of being “religious.” This is a title no one wants.
- C. We must get our perception of what is religious and what is not from the Word of God, not from what is popular today.
- D. To Jesus, fasting was part of life and though it is not easy today, we must embrace the things of the Spirit, not the flesh of man.
- E. His rewards are both internal and external. He rewards us internally by allowing us to experience more of His presence. He rewards us externally by changing our circumstances. Many times they are touched by Gods power.

IV. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES AND REASONS FOR FASTING

- A. Fasting looses wickedness and sets oppressed people free (*Isa. Chap 58*)
- B. Fasting to help the poor (*Isa. Chap 58*)
- C. Fasting sets our hearts to seek the Lord (*Dan 9:3*)
- D. Fasting is a part of confession of sin (*Dan 9:20, Acts 3:19*)
- E. Fasting helps toward the fulfillment of God's promises (*Acts 10:1-4, vs 30-31*)
- F. Fasting averts a crisis (*Joel 2*):

There were locusts coming as well as the Babylonian kingdom. God told Joel the only way for them to avert this crisis was too fast. Also, Nineveh fasted when Jonah brought the word of judgement. This is one main reason for corporate prayer and fasting together.

- G. Fasting released greater power (*Matt. 17*)
- H. Fasting gives direction (*Acts 13:1-2*)
- I. Fasting for choosing leadership (*Acts 14:23*)

V. NEW TESTAMENT FASTING

²² After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. ²³ Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. ²⁴ For John had not yet been thrown into prison. ²⁵ Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. ²⁶ And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!" ²⁷ John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' ²⁹ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is fulfilled. ³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease. ³¹ He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. ³² And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. ³³ He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. ³⁴ For He Whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. ³⁶ He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:22-35)

- A. John was giving hints on something He would give us later on in the gospels. He was saying there is a season to receive from men and then we are to mature into the image of Christ.
- B. John was pointing His followers toward THE VOICE in the wilderness. He was saying it was good that they followed him for a season and that was until it was time for them to receive their own bread. This is the case for many believers today.

- C. We are to receive the word from men for a season and then we are called to receive our own fresh bread.
- D. In John 6 Jesus calls Himself the bread of life. He was referring to the Israelites in the wilderness and them receiving daily from God His bread.

¹⁴ Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?” ¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶ No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. ¹⁷ Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” (Matt. 9:14-17)
- E. Jesus was not talking about the old and new covenant. He was talking about fasting. He was telling them why His disciples did not fast.
- F. They were some of the only people on the face of the earth to walk spend time with the bridegroom. You do not long for something you have. You do not mourn for that which you already own. How could they fast?
- G. Fasting is longing for Jesus. It is about hunger, not restraint, self-abuse, or self-discipline. It is about longing.
- H. When is the last time any of us really longed for Jesus to the point we missed meals we were so love-sick? It is about hearing His voice and feeling the touch of the Holy Spirit.
- I. **Joel 2** calls the people to gather together and call a sacred assembly including a fast.
- J. A corporate fast has been a part of shaping the history of mankind. It started in the Old Testament and actually helped develop our own country.
- K. It is our belief that the time has come for America as a nation to repent, fast, and pray. There are no other options. He is the only option. Corporate fasting is a declaration that man does not have the answer, but that Jesus is the only answer.

VI. DIFFERENT TYPES OF FASTS

- A. Complete fast. This means no food or water. This should only be three days maximum. Most people do not have the physical capabilities to do any longer than this and it can be very dangerous to one’s health. Biblical examples include, Ezra, Moses, and Paul.
- B. Normal fast, also called a water fast. One only consumes water on this type of fast. This fast can be done for extended periods of time. Stay away from tea and coffee on this type of fast. Your body will try to cleanse itself and if you are consuming stimulants, it makes it tough for the body to cleanse itself. Biblical examples of this type of fast are Jesus and many New Testament Christians.

- C. Partial fast or also a Daniel fast. On this fast, only fruits, vegetables, and whole grains are allowed. No meats, sweets, cheese, dairy, etc. This type of fast can be done for extended periods. One thing to remember is this is a fast, not a diet. Daniel is a great examples of this type of fast.

VII. PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF FASTING

- A. If you are new to fasting, start light. One day a week can be a good start.
- B. Always go into an extended fast with at least a week of raw or cooked vegetables. Juice is fine as well.
- C. Look at regular fasting as a lifestyle.
- D. Eat smaller meals in preparation for a fast.
- E. Drink LOTS of water.
- F. Take a short walk each day, or some other brief exercise to get your heart rate up. This is very healthy.
- G. Fast with other people. We always go further in God when we go together!
- H. Have a target of days and be prayerful about what kind of fast and how long. Also have prayer targets to press into as you are fasting.
- I. Slow down and get more rest during a fast.
- J. Pray for dreams and visions to be released.
- K. Expect breakthrough after the fast is over!
- L. Take extra time to read the Word and pray.

VIII. THINGS NOT TO DO

- A. Break an extended fast with a full, high calorie, high fat or sugar meal.
- B. Go straight into an extended fast without cleansing on fruits and vegetables first.
- C. Do no fast if you are pregnant, nursing, or are a child.
- D. Use extreme discretion and accountability on fasting if you have struggled with an eating disorder.
- E. Try to stay away from caffeine and other stimulants on an extended fast (for the reasons discussed above).
- F. Don't get condemned if you break a fast. Simply begin fasting again and keep going.
- G. Don't brag about your fast

IX. CLOSING THOUGHTS

- A. How hungry for living bread are you? Jesus is that living bread. If you need a fresh hunger for more of Jesus, then just ask Him.
- B. GTHOP family commits to fast every Tuesday in what we call the Bridegroom fast. This is in accordance with the scripture listed above. Please pray about joining us in this continual fast for continued breakthrough personally, as a church, a region, and a nation.

X. OTHER SCRIPTURES ON FASTING

- Exodus 34:28
- Deuteronomy 9:9-1
- 2 Samuel 12:16
- Ezra 8:21-23; 10:6
- Nehemiah 1:4
- Esther 4:16
- Job 33:19,20
- Psalm 69:10; 102:4
- Isaiah 58:6
- Daniel 9:3,20-23; 10:3
- Joel 2:15
- Jonah 3:5,10
- Matthew 4:2; 6:16; 9:15
- Acts 13:3; 14:23
- 1 Corinthians 7:5
- 2 Corinthians 11:27,28