

## FASTING AND MOURNING

Hi, and welcome. Today we'll talk about fasting and how it relates to mourning for the people of God.

### *Scripture*

Psalm 35:13–14 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> But I, when they were sick—  
I wore sackcloth;  
I afflicted myself with fasting;  
I prayed with head bowed on my chest.  
<sup>14</sup> I went about as though I grieved for my friend or my brother;  
as one who laments his mother,  
I bowed down in mourning.

### *Devotional*

Psalm 35 is a prayer of David in which he mourns over his enemies who contend with him. “Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me” he says. “Draw the spear and javelin against my pursuers,” he continues. “Let their way be dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them.” These enemies David speaks of are people who he has loved, who he has prayed for, who he has mourned over. When they were sick, David afflicted himself with fasting, he bowed down his head on his chest, he grieved as for a friend or brother and as one who laments his mother. He bowed down in mourning. And it is this heart posture I want us to consider. Why did David fast? To afflict himself. Why did he afflict himself? Because people who he counted as the covenant community of faith were sick. Fasting for David was a physical representation and outlet for his inward grief and mourning. Think of the wife who can't bring herself to eat after losing her husband. Think of the man who has no appetite after being laid off and having to tell his family. Think of the parent whose child is sick and can't bring themselves to eat while their child suffers. This is the heart behind David's fasting in Psalm 35. He wasn't seeking to change God's mind, and he wasn't seeking to change the other person. David fasted as a physical affliction because of a spiritual and social affliction. Our minds, spirits, and bodies are connected. And our parts don't hurt in isolation. When one part hurts, they all hurt. Fasting is a way to experience that pain and share that pain across our whole person.

Consider something in your life that is causing you pain, grief, or turmoil right now. Have you lived your life as if that is a separate thing from the rest of you? Are you trying to go about business-as-usual thinking that you'll get to it eventually? Are you ignoring that pain and seeking distraction elsewhere? Like David, fast. Feel that pain and turmoil with your whole person and ask God to restore your whole person. Don't ignore it and pretend it doesn't exist by seeking distraction elsewhere.

### *Prayer*

O LORD, make me whole. Unite my mind, soul, spirit, and body that I may love you with all of me. Unite my members that I will be a whole person. And in that wholeness, heal me and give me strength. Amen.