

Lifting our Heads to the Radiance of Jesus

Prayer & Fasting 2018

Fasting

an intentional act of stripping away

posturing yourself in humility

seeking the face of God

Ezra 8:21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods.

Psalms 35:13 But I, when they were sick—

I wore sackcloth;

I afflicted myself with fasting;

I prayed with head bowed on my chest.

Why should fasting be part of Jesus' followers' experience?

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

In Matthew we are given Jesus' experience with fasting as well as his instruction on the matter.

Matthew 4:2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

Matthew 6:16-18 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.

Fasting gives us uninterrupted time to;

Repent

Jonah 3:5,10 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. 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.

Taking an honest look at the actions and attitudes in my life that don't please God. How do I meet my needs my way instead of trusting God to meet my needs His way?

Respond to God's love for us

Jeremiah 29:13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

Seeking the face of God

This is the Hebrew way of saying, "be in God's presence".

His face -> The brightness of his personal character.

In our week of prayer and fasting we are making the conscious choice to direct our heart toward God.

1 Chronicles 22:19 Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God.

Colossians 3:1-2 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

2 Thessalonians 3:5 May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

We seek God, not because he is lost, but because our lives have become cluttered.

We may have some things to work through and go around in order to find and rest in an unobstructed view of his presence.

God has revealed himself through

The heavens

His Word

The evidence of grace in others (community)

Doing this together - a collective freshening of faith as a group.

We live in a environment of mindlessness. We must routinely engage in mastering the obstacles of our lives.

We all engage in activities that are spiritually dulling

Question: What are the things that dulls your spiritual aptitude? What blinds your vision? What makes you apathetic to God's reality and kingdom?

The task of fasting is to seek and plead.

Isaiah 55:6 Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near;

Job 8:5 If you will seek God and plead with the Almighty for mercy,

This is why humility is key! Fasting can quicken humility, dependence, weakness, & longing.

Psalm 10:4 In the pride of his face[a] the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, "There is no God."

Seeking -> Finding

1 Chronicles 28:9 or the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you,

Finding -> Rewarding

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

The Reward -> Radical Fellowship

1 Chronicles 16:11 Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!

Intercede (Asking)

Through fasting we can determine the sincerity and correctness of our requests.

Know and discern God's will.

Acts 13:2-3 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Develop a pattern of discipline / Promotes self control

Saying no to our natural appetites develops the skills and disciplines necessary to say No to other fleshly desires. (Luke 9:23; 1 Corinthians 9:27)

So what does fasting actually accomplish? This spiritual discipline is a physical way for me to slow down, tell God how much I need Him, listen to what He has to say, and then act on how He leads me. He revives my heart, clears my head and gives me the courage to face living in a broken world. ~ Anne Marie Winz (oversees Writing for Life with Cru)

Who shouldn't fast...

What steps to take...

What to expect physiologically...

The sacred discipline of breaking your fast...

Great resource for practical insight into fasting.

<https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/personal-guide-to-fasting.html>