

March 7, 2022 - Prayer & Fasting to Encourage Devotion and Spiritual Clarity

Scripture Reading: Matthew 6:1-8

Jesus not only modeled fasting, but He taught is about it as well. He teaches clearly about fasting in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:16-18) when he begins by saying “When you fast . . .” Jesus begins this section, not by commanding His followers to fast, but by assuming that they would fast. Planned fasting days were very much a part of the religious culture and pattern of the leaders of Israel in Jesus’ day. Luke 18:12 tells us that the Pharisees fasted two complete days a week. In addition, the disciples of John the Baptist also fasted on a regular basis (Mark 2:18). Rather than commanding His followers to fast, Jesus simply assumed that they would weave this practice into their discipline.

We both are a little uncomfortable after reading this – because I have only fasted once from food and Briana has not. We have given up some and added some things in our life to become more spiritually connected but have not practiced fasting from food.

I gave up some old friends because it was not good for me to be around them. I gave up sleeping in on Sunday mornings when I was young adult because I felt obligated to worship. Giving up alcohol and drugs for four years was honestly out of desperation and knowing that if I did not it was going to further ruin my health, eventually my job, and my relationships with others. Looking back, I remember searching for guidance through the Bible by just opening a page and putting my finger where it landed for help. I had heard of this by others in recovery and was hoping to find some peace. I must admit I was disappointed by the verse that I was led to choose – John 14:15 ... “if you love me keep my commandments”. Though disappointed, it was appropriate for my life.

We both grew up in church and were knowledgeable of the scriptures. Neither of us, however, had a “relationship” with Jesus as our savior and had not accepted *His* teachings and advice, *His* freedom from bondage/sin and *His* example of living in some areas of our life.

We look forward to learning more about the subject of fasting and practicing this “assumed” advice of Jesus. We know without a doubt that spiritual clarity is very important in our life today and that we want to do anything that will encourage and assist us. We personally do a devotion every morning together to help us grow together spiritually. This has made a big difference in our marriage and our lives.

We have spent a lot of our life learning biblical knowledge but we are aware today that we spent time trying to find peace through knowledge that would have benefitted us much more had we searched for a deeper, spiritual, more meaningful relationship with Jesus.

Our goal through this fasting is to grow spiritually closer to Jesus, to listen more to *His* advice.

***God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
And wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time; Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right If I surrender to His Will;
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him
Forever and ever in the next. Amen.
(Complete Serenity Prayer, Reinhold Neibuhr, 1892-1971)***

By: Scott & Briana Smotherman

Pray the 4 prayer points on page 1 or stop by the war room at the church building for prayer.