

Building Confidence Through Prayer and Fasting

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1.12.2020

Good morning everyone! We are so excited to be here today to continue the conversation on what it means to be a Confident Community. To be a church family that puts its trust and hope in the living God. That our confidence doesn't come from ourselves, our power, our strength, but is comes from God. I've heard people use the term God-fidence.

God-fidence

is having assurance that God is who he says he is and he will do what he said he'll do.

Our theme verse for the year is found in Jeremiah 17:7

Jeremiah 17:7

7 "But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him.

I would like to read verse 8 of this scripture also because verse 8 explains what the blessing actually looks like.

Jeremiah 17:7

7 "But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him.

8 They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

If you didn't get to a chance to hear the message from last week I recommend going back and listening. Last week Lester opened his message by making a statement that "we are still here, which means there is more work to be done." He said he believes there is a great harvest and we need to get ready for that. "It's part of what's coming ahead of us that we need to be preparing our hearts for."

So how do we put our confidence in the Lord, and how do we prepare our hearts for what is ahead of us this year?

One of the ways we do that, is that each year we do something together as a church that has become a powerful and life-giving exercise for us. We call the church to a week of prayer and fasting.

If you are new to Petra or you are a part of our online community, you may not be familiar with the fact that our church does this. We would love to invite you to be a part of this year's fast.

If you have been at Petra for a while you know that this is something that we look forward to every year. If your new to the family, a week of prayer and fasting might seem a little intense. So, we take this Sunday to talk about what the week will look like and how you can get involved and participate.

I've had the privilege of teaching the Sunday before fasting week for the last two years. I want to encourage you if you are new to fasting or have questions about biblical fasting to go back and listen to those messages. I cover why and how to fast; I give some biblical evidence for fasting and talk a lot about the heart behind intentional extended times of communal prayer and fasting.

I'm encouraging you to go back to those resources because I wanted to spend the majority of my time this morning preparing us for the week in a different way.

I actually wrote this almost a year ago. Last year during the fast I had several people ask me how the fast was going. Unfortunately, in every case they asked me how much weight I had lost. And I get it, it's the beginning of the year people are thinking about their goals and weight loss is normally one of them. But I was a little sad that the questions that were being asked me weren't about my time with God, or is God speaking to you.

So, I wanted to encourage us this morning as we prepare to go into the week of fasting that it's not about the food, and it's certainly not about your weight...

So, what do I mean by that? I believe that God wants to call this church to grow in our devotion to time with him. Waiting is both active and inactive. Waiting on a table is active. It's attentive, it requires intentionality, skill, and endurance. Waiting is also inactive, it requires stillness, time, patience, and trust. I believe God is calling us to grow in both of these areas.

It's not about your Weight.

It's about your Wait.

That's right! This year I'm asking that while you are fasting this year you

Gain Some Wait.

In fact, gaining wait is the whole point of the morning. The question I asked earlier, how do we put our confidence in the Lord, and how do we prepare our hearts for what is ahead of us this year?

I believe the answer is found in waiting on God. I'd like to gain some wait this year.

1. Inactive waiting means spending more time in his presence.

Intentionally creating space in your week to be with Jesus. To give your time to him, his word, to prayer and worshipping him. Waiting even sometimes in silence.

2. Active waiting means being about his business.

Intentionally creating space in your week to serve Jesus. To give your time to the kingdom. Intentional and consistent time devoted to a neighbor, co-worker, church ministry, local outreach ministry.

I used to wait on tables while I was in school...(distance, strength, last sermon)

Wait on God.

8 They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

8 They will be like a tree planted by the water. This is inactive. It represents your status as a believer when you came to Christ you were planted in him.

that sends out its roots by the stream. This is active. It represents the spiritual growth and discipline of the believer to stay close to the father. To seek him and move towards him.

It does not fear when heat comes. This is inactive. It is the absence of fear in the midst of trial. This is what trusting in the father looks like. Regardless of what is going on on the outside, there is peace on the inside. I love how God's promises speaks directly to our emotional needs.

its leaves are always green. This is active. It represents the person whose life is a display of God's goodness. You can't even help this sometimes.

It has no worries in a year of drought. This is inactive. It speaks again to God meeting our emotional needs in the midst of turbulence.

and never fails to bear fruit. This is active. This is the growth that takes place in your personal life as the Holy Spirit develops the fruit of the Spirit in you. You think different, act different, talk different. This is also the good works; the ministry God has called you to.

Inactive waiting in the provision, being planted by the water, being free from fear and worry, resting in his presence.

Active waiting is the production, sending out your roots, having leaves that are green and always bearing fruit. Running in his power.

Let's gain some wait this year!

Open up your bibles to Isaiah chapter 58. I'd like to show you what I mean in scripture. Isaiah 58 is actually a rebuke of the nation of Israel for the way they have been fasting. I want to be perfectly clear I don't think our church community needs a rebuke. In fact, the reason I'm reading this is quite the opposite reason. I think there is a real genuine heart here at Petra and I want to see that to continue.

It starts in the first verse with God talking to Isaiah as the messenger to Israel.

Isaiah 58

True Fasting

58 “Shout it aloud, do not hold back.

Raise your voice like a trumpet.

Declare to my people their rebellion

and to the descendants of Jacob their sins.

Verse 2 is God’s opening remarks to the nation there’s a tone in his accusation comments,

**² For day after day they seek me out;
they seem eager to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that does what is right
and has not forsaken the commands of its God.
They ask me for just decisions
and seem eager for God to come near them.**

Then God is quoting the people. this is their accusation against him. They are mad because they have been going through this religious exercise, but things don’t seem to be going the way they want.

**³ ‘Why have we fasted,’ they say,
‘and you have not seen it?
Why have we humbled ourselves,
and you have not noticed?’**

God responds to them

**“Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please
and exploit all your workers.
⁴ Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife,
and in striking each other with wicked fists.
You cannot fast as you do today
and expect your voice to be heard on high.**

God is saying you have completely missed the point. You're not humbling yourselves; you're just going through the motions. Then he asks a series of questions.

**⁵ Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,
 only a day for people to humble themselves?
 Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed
 and for lying in sackcloth and ashes?
 Is that what you call a fast,
 a day acceptable to the Lord?**

"Only a day" to be humble, to bow, to lie in sackcloth and ashes? A day acceptable to the Lord? How about a life that is acceptable to the Lord? Living out every day in devotion to him. Not just Christmas and Easter or Sundays or prayer around the table but everyday fully devoted, humble, bowed in reverence, contrite.

Intentionally creating space in your week to be with Jesus. To give your time to him, his word, to prayer and worshiping him. Waiting even sometimes in silence.

This is their failure to wait on God in their inactive way. They had failed to sit at his feet to humble themselves in prayer to seek him in the quiet and in silence.

Then God explains what real fasting looks like, real active waiting on God looks like.

**⁶ "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
 to loose the chains of injustice
 and untie the cords of the yoke,
 to set the oppressed free
 and break every yoke?
⁷ Is it not to share your food with the hungry
 and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
 when you see the naked, to clothe them,
 and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"**

Intentionally creating space in your week to serve Jesus. To give your time to the kingdom. Intentional and consistent time devoted to a neighbor, co-worker, church ministry, local outreach ministry.

When we devote ourselves to this kind of activity it comes with a promise.

⁸ Then your light will break forth like the dawn,

and your healing will quickly appear;
 then your righteousness will go before you,
 and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

⁹ Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;
 you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

“If you do away with the yoke of oppression,
 with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
¹⁰ and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry
 and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
 then your light will rise in the darkness,
 and your night will become like the noonday.

¹¹ The Lord will guide you always;
 he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
 and will strengthen your frame.

Then the final part of the promise that sounds so similar to our theme verse this year:

**You will be like a well-watered garden,
 like a spring whose waters never fail.**

I think the prophet Joel says it so well:

Joel 1:14

¹⁴ **Declare a holy fast;
 call a sacred assembly.**

Why?

Joel 2:12-13

¹² **“Even now,” declares the Lord,
 “return to me with all your heart,
 with fasting and weeping and mourning.”**

¹³ **Rend your heart
 and not your garments.**

**Return to the Lord your God,
 for he is gracious and compassionate,
 slow to anger and abounding in love,
 and he relents from sending calamity.**

Rend your heart and not your garments. Rending your garment was tearing your garment to an external sign of the fear of God, repentance, and shame. Joel is saying stop tearing open your clothes. Tear open your hearts. In the secret places of your life make him king. Because if you do that every outward action will glorify him.

So why are we fasting this week? Why are we going without food and spending extra time in prayer? Because it helps us to wait on God.

(Explain what fasting is and abstaining from things other than food. People with medical conditions. It's an invitation not a command.)

Setting aside time this week to pray.

Events of the week:

- Tues: EHOP Pastor Brian Flewelling
- Friday: Night of Worship
- Saturday night: Prayer

Website for times of prayer at church

Booklet

Closing

I would like to give you two resources: "My utmost for his Highest" and "Celebrations on spiritual disciplines"

So you do have permission to ask people about their wait this year.

I guess there is only one question left to ask you Petra? Who wants to gain some wait this week?