Welcome all

Thank you to Roger for stepping in on Wednesday

Invite all to Wednesday & Sunday nights service

New Feb. S.O.A.P Bible Study Plan at Welcome Center

Prayer: Kristina. Those sick,

Thrive in 2025 Series

Pt. 3 Thriving Through Fasting & Prayer

Matt. 4:4 / Gal 5:16 / Ezra 8:23

1/17/25

So far we’ve learned that in order to thrive in Christ in 2025 we need to seek God 1st, have a repentant heart, and develop a humble heart! Today we’re going to continue in the foundational steps we need to take in order to no longer survive our walk in Christ, but to Thrive in it!

A couple weeks ago we those of us who choose too, partook in a week of fasting and prayer.

**Definition of Fasting**

Fasting refers to **abstinence from some or all foods (including liquids), according to Merriam Webster’s dictionary. It is the act of denying oneself the pleasures of food for a specified period.**

* Matt 4:4 - ... ***People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God***
* Gal. 5:16 - *So, I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves.*
* Ezra 8:23 - *So, we fasted and earnestly prayed that our God would take care of us, and he heard our prayer.*

There are many powerful benefits of fasting and prayer listed in Scripture! The miracles through fasting and prayer that we see in God’s Word really blow my mind.

These are just a few of the benefits of fasting Bible verses

* Jesus said we would fast (Matthew 9:14-15).
* Fasting can bring clarity and direction from God (Daniel 9:3 and then in Daniel 10:3).
* When there are hard issues, fasting brings specific answers from God and help (Nehemiah 1: 1-4).
* Fasting can cure Spiritual dryness (Matthew 4:1-11; Matthew 5:6; Acts 14:23; Isaiah 58:11)
* A fast is effective when you need protection from Spiritual warfare (Matthew 17:21; Ezra 8:21-23; Ester 4:16).
* The power of fasting and prayer are great tools to break the ties of habitual sin in your life (1 Kings 21:25-27; Joel 2:12 ; Jonah 3:5-9; 2 Samuel 12:15-17).

**What is Fasting Biblically?**

A fast is simply **making a choice to give up something you seek for satisfaction in order to seek God for satisfaction.**

The Biblical benefits of fasting and prayer are mainly about nearness. Fasting brings you near God like nothing else. When you deny yourself something for a time and draw near to God, He really does draw near to you. Even if you start with fasting one meal fasting and prayer for breakthrough you will see change!

Fasting takes our focus and dependence from the item were fasting, to God.

Know this, the devil will come at you right away for that which you are fasting from...

* Jesus fasted 40 days and what was the 1st thing he came at Jesus with...Bread

**What Do You Give Up in a Fast/ Types of Spiritual Fasting?**

Only you will know what makes sense to fast from, but these are a few suggestions.

* **Food**

If you are in good health, fasting from a meal is a very straightforward way to begin to fast.

During the time you would have prepared and eaten the meal you spend time with God in Bible reading, prayer, and solitude.

If you are NOT in Good health, consider another form of fasting or talk with your doctor before you begin.

* **Media/Time**

TV, the internet, social media, and the like are time-consuming.

Most of us turn to entertainment from media for satisfaction. For most of us, it would be very effective to give up one or all forms for part or all of a day.

* **Spending**

This was a new way to fast that surprised me but it’s true that shopping brings satisfaction.

Can you go a day or a week without shopping? This can be a great way to focus on God.

* **Other Things**

The Bible gives examples of other things that we seek for satisfaction that can be part of a time of fasting

Oils and certain foods like in the Daniel Fast (Daniel 10:3; Daniel 9:3)

* **Sex**

1 Corinthians 7:5 - *Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won’t be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

Spiritual fasting is not about the body. Yes, there are physical benefits of fasting and prayer over time, but there is also a danger. It is easy to turn a time of fasting into a diet. Resist the urge. The healthier benefits of fasting and prayer will be seen in Spiritual satisfaction and nearness to God rather than weight loss.

**What fasting IS NOT**

We don’t fast to change God; we fast to change US; to make us more like Jesus and cleanse us from things that would hold us back or cause us to stumble.

Fasting prepares your heart for God’s answer, no matter what it might be. We may not get the answer we want but we can rest assured God is working all things for our good. If He says, “No”, we can trust Him that He knows what is best, He can see down the road!

Davids Example of Fasting and NOT getting the answer wanted:

* 2 Samuel 12:16-17

*6 David begged God to spare the child. He went without food and lay all night on the bare ground. 17 The elders of his household pleaded with him to get up and eat with them, but he refused.*

David was a man of war, a mighty man of valor but he was also repentant and always readily admitted his sin. He was humble and petitioned for the life of his son even though this child would be a continual reminder of his sin! He knew HE was the reason for the Lord’s displeasure and so he humbled himself with prayer and fasting in the hope that the Lord might change His mind. And, surely, he even felt it was his DUTY to petition on behalf of his son.

* v. 18-23

*18 Then on the seventh day the child died. David’s advisers were afraid to tell him. “He wouldn’t listen to reason while the child was ill,” they said. “What drastic thing will he do when we tell him the child is dead?” 19 When David saw them whispering, he realized what had happened. “Is the child dead?” he asked. “Yes,” they replied, “he is dead.” 20 Then David got up from the ground, washed himself, put on lotions, and changed his clothes. He went to the Tabernacle and worshiped the Lord. After that, he returned to the palace and was served food and ate. 21 His advisers were amazed. “We don’t understand you,” they told him. “While the child was still living, you wept and refused to eat. But now that the child is dead, you have stopped your mourning and are eating again.” 22 David replied, “I fasted and wept while the child was alive, for I said, ‘Perhaps the Lord will be gracious to me and let the child live.’ 23 But why should I fast when he is dead? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him one day, but he cannot return to me.”*

The members of David’s household were confused and told him so. David replied that he was hoping the Lord would be gracious, that He would spare the child’s life, yet it was not to be. There was no need to fast once he was gone. David realized that God has the last say, and His will is perfect! David was realigned with who God was and who he was in God!

Let’s be real, some of us have been taught that if we need God to move, just pray and fast for it. With that I would ask you remember again what I mentioned earlier... **Fasting changes us...not God.**

Obviously, we looked at David’s mistake, his sin that cost him, big time and maybe your prayer may not have anything to do with your actions, yet God’s answer is not what you wanted to hear. Much like David, we want things our way and we pray senseless prayers when God has already spoken or we know how He is leading. We try to convince God to change His mind to give us what WE want and sometime do this through fasting...**Remember this if nothing else today...Fasting changes us...not God.**

So be encouraged today, if your prayer isn’t answered the way you preferred, it doesn’t mean God doesn’t love you, in fact it means HE DOES LOVE YOU, He is protecting you, covering you, leading you and He knows that His answer is the best answer. And you will too, one day soon.

But let’s be real, some of us have been taught that if we need God to move, just pray and fast for it. Truth is there are many times when the things we have prayed for don’t come into fruition. We pray and pray, and that thing does not happen. We want it our way, but God simply says no. Many refer to it as unanswered prayer, but I believe the absence of that thing is definitely God saying no. Whether God explicitly says no or denies you without what you think is a clear reply, what do you do in those situations?

Much like David, we want things our way. We definitely did not go to David’s lengths of having Uriah killed to cover up his impregnating Bathsheba, but we pray senseless prayers when God has already spoken. We try to convince God to change His mind to give us what WE want.

**How You Can Thrive through Fasting and Prayer?**

Fasting prepares your heart for God’s answer, no matter what it might be. We may not get the answer we want but we can rest assured God is working all things for our good. If He says, “No”, we can trust Him that He knows what is best, He can see down the road!

Is there something you have been praying over for a long time? Something urgent that you need God to answer now? Fasting slows you down long enough to hear God’s voice. We saw that when we looked at the benefits of fasting and prayer in the Bible verses above. When you fast in obedience to Jesus’ Words you find:

* Clarity
* Direction from God.
* Answers
* Help from unexpected places
* Protection
* Breakthrough
* Release from habitual sin
* Redirection from God
* Fasting can cure Spiritual dryness.

**Closing:**

Let me just conclude by saying fasting can be second nature for us and not only that, by doing so you will experience a significant growth in your walk with the Lord. It has been done throughout biblical history by both men and women, young and old alike, with testimonies of God’s greatness in their lives and even today, that greatness is still being seen as men and women of prayer all around the world today are seeking the Lord through the act of prayer and fasting. I encourage us today to become a people of Prayer, taking that extra step with prayer and fasting unto the Lord. As you do so, the divine encounter you have been waiting for, you shall receive as you allow the Lord to take you higher in your prayer life.