

God goes so far as to say that even the bridegroom and bride should interrupt their wedding in order to participate in prayer and fasting (Joel 2:16).

D. Fasting with prayer is a way of seeking God

8. Why did the people of Judah come together as recorded in 2Chron. 20:3-4 and what did they do?

People have found that fasting with prayer allows them to concentrate on their praying, especially in times when they seeking God in regard to a major decision that needs to be made.

E. Fasting with prayer strengthens self-discipline

Normal praying requires self-discipline. Most of us need a lot of exercise in the area of self-discipline. Setting aside time to pray and fast will strengthen our self-discipline. We are not to be under the control of any desire, especially the desire for food.

9. What is the theme of what Paul is saying in 1Corinthians 9:24-27?

Fasting is something that Christ taught His disciples, and He therefore expected that His disciples would fast (Mat. 6:16). The early church obviously practiced fasting as we have seen in the Book of Acts. Fasting was abused, between the third and fifth centuries in particular, by people who became known as "ascetics". They believed that their bodies were evil and needed to be punished in several ways, including fasting. Some have rejected fasting as a Christian discipline because they can not equate it with God's grace. But fasting has to do with discipline, not salvation. Let's pray and fast, not pray fast!

Amen.

LIVING DIFFERENTLY

Part Two

This second series of studies on the remainder of the Beatitudes is designed to show us how Christ expects us to live. We have already seen that if the world lived by the standards of Christ, our societies would be radically different. While our societies may not corporately change, we as individuals can. This is what Christ expects. He not only prescribes how we should change, but He also gives us the supernatural power to do so.

CONNECTING WITH GOD

Read Matthew 6:16-18



When King George II was faced with the threat of invasion by the French in 1756, he called for a day of prayer and fasting. The people responded by packing out every available church in London and solemnly seeking God. The result? John Wesley wrote in his journal of the event- "Humility was turned into national rejoicing for the threatened invasion by the French was averted." (Nicky Gumble, pg. 157).

History bears out the remarkable results of prayer combined with fasting. The Jews had long used fasting to show off their levels of spirituality. But the greatest faster of all, Jesus Christ, of whom it is recorded that on one occasion He fasted for 40 days, taught His disciples how to fast the proper way.

On April 26 1877, Govenor J.S. Pillsbury proclaimed a day of prayer and fasting for the people of Minnesota to plead with God to prevent an impending locust plague that would have meant ruin to thousands of families. Four days later a "sudden climatic change at dusk flicked a blanket of frost across the entire area where the locusts waited for the dawn and take off. Most were killed right where they crouched...God wonderfully responded."

FASTING

Fasting is going without food for a specific period of time for spiritual reasons. It is different to a hunger strike, or a diet.

1. What does Matthew 4:2 record Christ doing?

2. Based on Matthew 6:16, what did Jesus expect the disciples to do?

Fasting seems to sharpen our sensitivity toward God. The Christians of the fourth century fasted two days a week. The Reformers, Luther, Calvin, and Knox all practiced prayer with fasting and claimed extra prayer power as a result.

3. Why were the elders at Antioch fasting? (Acts 13:2-3)

4. How did Paul and Barnabas make the decision to appoint, then commission elders in the churches they had started?

“...some have exalted religious fasting beyond all Scripture and reason; and others have utterly disregarded it”

John Wesley

John Wesley insisted that ministers fast two days a week at least until 4:00PM. Whenever Jonathan Edwards felt things had gone evangelistically stale, he enter into a three day and night fast. He saw staggering results. He was later described as “*extraordinarily empowered by the Spirit and it showed in the visible results of his evangelistic ministry.*” (Nicky Gumble, pg. 160) Yonggi Cho, the pastor of the world’s largest church, attributes fasting as one the major reasons for his church’s astonishing growth.

“Fasting helps to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, to sacrifice ourselves, to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God.”

Andrew Murray

WHY FAST?

Fasting with prayer gives us a hungry spirit. It announces that we are serious about our requests, and that we are prepared to make desperate sacrifices to see our requests granted. This is a humbling experience.

- A. Fasting with prayer increases our earnestness**
5. What did the Ninevites do along side fasting in Jonah 3:5, 10? Why did they do this? What was the result?

- B. Fasting with prayer increases our results**

Waymon Rogers, pastor of Christian Life Centre in Louisville, Kentucky, and his congregation prayed constantly for two years. Their church grew from 200 to 2,000. But when 200 of the church began to fast once a week, the power of God dramatically increased. After two years they had 10,000 in their church, 4,600 people were saved, people were delivered from demonic possession, and others were miraculously healed. The only problems they had were the traffic jams!

- C. Fasting with prayer is an act of humility**

6. How did the Psalmist humble himself? (Psalm. 35:13)

There are times when God considers it extremely urgent for His people to repent, pray, and fast.

7. What situation does Joel 1:13 symbolically describe as the need for the leaders of God’s people to fast and proclaim a fast for the people (verse 14)?
