



Study 2

PRAYER, FASTING SEEKING, TARRYING

In a society where we have become used to the instant and patience is now the rarest virtue, the concept of tarrying in prayer seems completely foreign. F.W. Boreham tells the story of a man long ago who loved nature. He would come back from a walk in the woods and tell the others in magnificent language of the wonderful creatures he had observed on these walks. Someone responded that they had just completed the same walk and saw none of the creatures that he had described. *“Oh you have to wait and be very still”*, he replied. *“I did stop and look around, but I still saw nothing”*, said the dubious. *“Then you didn’t wait long enough. This morning it took four hours of waiting behind a bush before I saw my first animal.”*

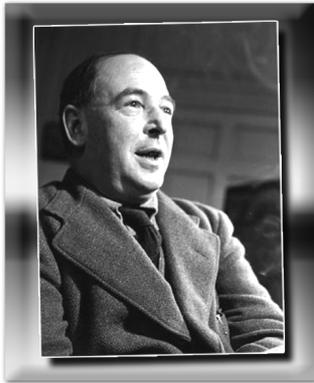
1. How long did the first believers have to wait from the time Christ ascended to the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit? (note Acts 1:6-8, 2:1-4)
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2. What was John the Baptist and his followers renowned for according to Luke 5:33?
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PRAYER

3. How would you respond to the person who says- *“I tried praying. Prayer doesn’t work!”*?
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C.S. Lewis
(1898 - 1963)

C.S. Lewis had written a very popular book on the subject of suffering. Then he met Joy Greshem. They fell in love. She contracted bone cancer and was given months to live. Lewis became angry with God. But his anger drove deeper into prayer. His pastor who frequently saw him praying alone in the chapel asked him whether he thought his prayers were changing God. *“Changing God?”* Lewis gasped. *“I’m not praying to change God –I’m praying for God to change me!”*

4. According to Matthew 6:33, what is one of the main goals of prayer?
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5. Based on Hebrews 11:6 what is one way we can be rewarded by God?
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6. How would you respond to the person who says that it is wrong to trouble God with our petty troubles and requests?
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7. What encouragement does Philippians 4:6 give us? (Note also 1John 5:15)
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8. In what way is prayer *conversational*?
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FASTING

Prayer, and especially fasting, is not “magical”. That is, we don’t pray or fast so that God *must* do something. The idea that we can do *anything* and then *cause* God to comply with our wishes is more akin to superstition than Christianity! Any answer to an appealing prayer is an act of God’s grace. With this in mind we need to correctly understand the place of fasting in the New Covenant.

9. Some people teach that Christians should not fast. How would the following passages support this idea? Matthew 6:16-18; 9:15 -
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Fasting was regularly practiced by the early Christians. While preaching in Europe some years ago I met a pastor who was proud that he never fasted. He was brashly declaring that he lived in the New Covenant not the Old. This rather large preacher boasted that he didn’t need to pray and fast, in fact, he announced, he *prayed fast!*

Just because a Christian does fast though, doesn’t mean that they are a superior Christian (note Luke 18:12).

10. What role did fasting play in the early Church according to Acts 13:2?
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Acts 13:3 -

Acts 14:23 -



The Early Church practised fasting. They fasted for clarity and wisdom. They fasted so that they could more fully devote their time and energy to seeking God and His will. Their fasting was never a spiritual hunger-strike.

SEEKING

11. How should we seek the Lord according to Deuteronomy 4:29?
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12. Based on 1Chronicles 10:14, why did God take the Kingdom away from King Saul and give it to David?
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First Chronicles 16:11 is found in the Old Testament but is clearly the sentiment of the New Covenant. As we apply this verse we are seeking to know God (note John 17:3), His ways, His will and His Word. This is why we should pray for illumination every time we read God's Word. As we seek God and commit our ways to Him we may not hear an audible voice but we will nevertheless sense His direction and guidance.

13. How does Matthew 7:7 assure us of this? (Note Psalm 34:10)
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May we be a Psalm 24:6 church!

TARRYING

There will be some things that you and I will pray for (or about) that might take decades to be answered. There will be times when we have to *tarry*. This may mean that we have to turn off the TV and pray instead. It might mean that instead of having noise continually blaring, we wait on God in silence. It might mean that our prayer meetings go longer-much longer- than the scheduled time.

14. Have you ever tarried in prayer? How could we as a church learn to tarry in prayer?
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Amen.