

THE POWER OF PRAYER & FASTING

Jesus' Teaching

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus addresses a number of important spiritual practices including giving (6:1-4), praying (6:5-15), and fasting (6:16-18)

“When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. **“When you pray**, don't babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! Matt. 6:5-8 (NLT)

When you pray. Not if you pray

“When you fast, do not look sullen like the hypocrites, for they make their faces unattractive so that people will see them fasting. I tell you the truth, they have their reward! **When you fast**, anoint your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others when you are fasting, but only to your Father who is in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you. Matt. 6:16-18 (NET)

When you fast...implying we should. The Bible clearly tells us that spiritual fasting intensifies prayer. Jesus himself fasted for 40 days at the beginning of His ministry. The Apostle Paul points to fasting as a vital part of his life in (2 Cor.6 and 11:27 – in fasting often.

What is Fasting?

Fasting is voluntarily abstaining from food and or drink for a specified period of time.

Purpose of Fasting

A way to seek God by denying the physical in order to focus on the spiritual...for this reason prayer and fasting must always go together (or it does no good spiritually).

Spiritual Benefits of Fasting

Fasting can...

1. Help initiate revival and spiritual growth (Joel 2:12; Jonah 3:5-10)
2. Help us receive clear revelation and direction from God (Acts 13:2)
3. Help free people from spiritual bondages (Isa. 58:6 'loose the bands')
4. Helps lift burdens (Isa. 58:6 "undo heavy burdens")
5. Helps conquer mental and emotional problems (Isa. 58:6 "break every yoke")
6. Can bring clarity to situations (Isa. 58:8 "light break forth")
7. Can bring about positive health changes (Isa. 58:8 "your health shall spring forth speedily")
8. Brings about protection (Isa. 58: 8b "glory of the LORD will protect you from behind")
9. Help us navigate the journey ahead with confidence (Ezra 8:21-23)
10. Help deepen our intimacy with Jesus (Matt. 9:14-15)