

CONCORD COMMUNITY CHURCH

March 6, 2022

FASTING-a means of preparing for Christ's return.

Matthew 6:16-18 and Matthew 9:14-15

In the Bible, fasting refers to the discipline of abstaining from eating & drinking for a limited time in order to give greater attention to spiritual matters.

Although it is often linked with prayer, it can be a spiritual exercise at its own. In fact, fasting can be called “Prayer without words”, in which case our time without food should be an intense time of listening to God, trying to gain a sense of His direction and meditating on His word (i.e., pondering its principles over and over, to consider how they apply to specific situations in our lives).

There are three main forms of fasting presented in the Bible.

- (a) *THE NORMAL FAST*: this is abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, but not from water (Luke 4:2 specifically says “He ate nothing”).
- (b) *THE ABSOLUTE FAST*: abstaining from both food and water (Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9). Normally this kind of fast should not be for more than three days because the body then begins to dehydrate. (Because of certain physical reasons, some people cannot endure such an extreme fast; anyone who intends to go on an extended fast would be wise to seek direction from someone, who is knowledgeable in this area, such as a doctor/physician). Moses and Elijah experienced the absolute fast for 40 days, but only under supernatural conditions (Exodus 34:28; Deut 9:9 & 18; 1-kings 19:8).
- (c) *THE PARTIAL FAST*: a restricted diet rather than complete abstinence from food (Dan 10:3).

Christ Himself practiced fasting (Luke 4:2) and taught that it should be a part of Christian devotion and an act of preparation for His return (Matt9:15). In the book of Acts, we see that the Church practiced fasting (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23; 27:33).

Fasting with prayer has several purposes:

- (1) To honor God Matt 6:16-18; Zech 7:5; Luke 2:37; Acts 13:2).
- (2) To humble ourselves and put spiritual concerns above our own desires (Ezra 8:21; Ps 69:10; Isa 58:3) so that we may experience more of God's Power (1-Peter 5:5) and presence (Isa 57:15; 58:6-9).
- (3) To mourn over personal sin and failure (1-Samuel 7:6; Nehemiah 9:1-2).
- (4) To mourn over the sins of the church, nation and world (1-Sam 7:5 and Nehemiah 9:1-2).
- (5) To seek grace—God's undeserved favor and blessing—for a new task and to reaffirm our devotion to God.
- (6) To deepen our relationship with God and strengthen our resistance against spiritual forces of evil (Judges 20:26; Ezra 8:21,23,31; Jeremiah 29:12-14; Joel 2:12; Luke 18:3 and Acts 9:10-19).
- (7) To show repentance (i.e., remorse for sin, readiness to turn from our own way and surrender to God)—both for ourselves and for God's people as a whole.
- (8) To gain spiritual insight and wisdom concerning God's will (Isa 58:5-6,11; Dan 9:3, 21-22; Acts 13:2-3).
- (9) To open the way for the Holy Spirit to operate powerfully among God's people as He prepares them for Christ's return.

So, in light of what we have learned from the purposes of FASTING and looking deeper in the language & selection of words in Matthew 9:15, it is clear that JESUS expected His followers to fast, after He had gone. We are now living in the time of the "bridegroom's" absence (i.e., the period between His ascension into heaven and His return). The Church (i.e., Christ's "bride"—Rev 19:7 & 22:17) awaits and looks forward to the Lord's return (Matthew 25:6 & John 14:3).

For this reason,

fasting is also: (1) A sign of a Christian's longing to be united with Christ at His return (2) A means of preparing for Christ's coming (3) A way of mourning Christ's absence and (4) A sign of sorrow for the sin and spiritual decay of the World.

May God bless you with His Word today.....Amen & Amen.