

Forty Days of Prayer with Fasting

I. What are the “Weapons of our Warfare”?

How do we go about fulfilling our role as agents of God’s kingdom?

Paul Heibert and the problem of “the excluded middle”...

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 “Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for ***the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds.*** We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God...”

II. What is Fasting?

Why do people sometimes fast as part of their praying?

In the Old Testament, fasting was often associated with repentance.

But fasting also had other purposes...

2 Chronicles 20:1-30 - Under Attack!

Ezra 8:21-23, Nehemiah 1 and 9 – Time to Rebuild!

Esther 4 – A Reversal of Fortunes!

Some Christians don’t believe that fasting is something that we are to embrace. They look at passages like Colossians 2:20-23 as a warning against ascetic practices like fasting. Indeed, there are strong teachings in both testaments that condemn fasting with the wrong understanding and motives (Isaiah 58, Matthew 6).

But, please note well, in the New Testament it’s assumed that we will fast!

Matthew 6:16 says, “***When you fast...***” not “***If you fast...***”

Matthew 9:15 “The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and ***then they will fast.***”

Jesus fasted (Matthew 4, Luke 4)

Paul and the early church fasted (Acts 13:1-3; Acts 14:21-23)

III. Why are we fasting? What are we fasting for?

So what are we fasting for? The first thing I hope you understand is that what we are asking for right now is different from the past! In year's past, we have asked our membership to fast during Lent as a spiritual discipline, as a way of preparing for Easter. But this call to fasting is different. It's a call to us as a body, to a corporate fast because there are some things that we are longing for from God...

Joel 2:12-15, 28-29

¹² Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, **with fasting**, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³ rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. ¹⁴ Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD, your God? ¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion; **sanctify a fast...** ²⁸ Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.

²⁹ Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit.

“Almost all are agreed that a visitation of the Spirit upon the Church is desperately needed. Are we to believe the promise to Joel has nothing to say to this situation?... Did the events at Pentecost exhaust the Joel prophecy? Obviously not, or the would have been no further outpourings... If however we believe this wonderful promise is for us – is in fact God's answer to the present need – it is vital that we fulfill the conditions as well as plead the promise. Three times Joel sounds a clarion call, in view of the imminence of the Day of the Lord, to return to God with fasting (Joel 1:14; 2:12, 15). Then he seems to see in vision God's response: 'The the Lord became jealous for his land, and had pity on this people' (v. 18).” Arthur Wallis, **God's Chosen Fast**, pp. 131-132.

IV. How can you participate?

There are various kinds of fast from food:

- (1) Limit to liquids
- (2) Daniel fast – vegetables
- (3) Rotating food groups
- (4) One day first week, two days second week, on increasing basis

Three points of counsel:

- (1) Seek God for His leading in how to participate.
- (2) Don't be afraid of failure. It's not about willpower – it's about seeking God in prayer and receiving power from God.
- (3) Be honest with others about what you're doing. We're not trying to impress each other; we're trying to encourage each other and do something together as a community that we believe God will honor.