

Fasting – Getting Back Your Edge

Happiness is the pursuit of every person. It is the object around which our government was organized. Yet, it seems the more one focuses on happiness, the more it alludes us. Jesus came teaching a different pursuit-seeking first the kingdom of God. In doing so He promised that security & fulfillment would find us. Jesus called us to be His disciples.

Disciple One: First I am one. Then, I help one.

The primary charge of a disciple of Christ is to deny self in order to more fully follow Christ. Our sinful nature is hostile to discipleship. We lust for what our eyes are drawn toward and what satisfies the cravings of our flesh. Our pride prevents us from fully trusting Christ to lead us into the blessed life we desire.

Periodic seasons of fasting and prayer help us refocus on our primary calling- following Christ. Christ promised abundant life to his followers. We must learn to trust the path upon which He leads us. **Luke 9:23-25**--Then He said to them all, " If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? The self-denial of fasting is necessary and rewarding.

Joel 2:12-17

Why fast?

- **Matthew 6:3,5,16-18** "When you ..."
 - Giving, praying & fasting help us enter the blessed life Jesus promised us
 - Some suggest this blessed life is an automatic result of being saved by grace
 - If so, why then did Jesus teach us to live in ways that will transform us? Following Christ and His teaching is the calling on our lives.
 - Giving, praying & fasting all do something in us that allows us to appropriate the promised abundant life.
- **Mark 4:20**
 - 30-60-100 = giving-praying-fasting
 - Disciples have certain disciplines to follow. Many will join the Financial Peace Wednesday night Disciple Group in January. As followers (disciples) of Dave Ramsey's methods, there will be certain disciplines that will lead to financial peace.
 - As followers of Christ there are disciplines that lead to the abundant (blessed) life, which Christ promised.
 - To neglect one discipline (giving, praying, fasting) may handicap us as much as 1/3.
 - I believe we owe it to ourselves to seriously consider Christ's teaching.

What is fasting?

- Fasting is to deny self of specific food and/or drink for a specific number of days for a time of focused prayer
- Fasting, prayer and Bible reading go together

- Fasting Journal
- Go To Scriptures
- Study Guide
- Daily Chapel
- ???
- Fast and **pray** with focus
 - Your future (specifically God's will)
 - Areas of responsibility (family, job, ministry)
 - **Cornerstone Church (pastors, unity, direction, worship services-Glorify God & transform lives)**
 - People who need to receive Christ. Make a list.
 - Pray together in you Disciple Groups.
 - Organize prayer meetings.
 - Gather in the sanctuary to pray before the service.

How do we fast?

- **Write down a plan and make a verbal commitment to the Lord.**
- Types of fasts
 - Full fast--liquids only
 - Daniel fast--no meat, sweets or bread; juice, fruit, vegetables & nuts
 - Partial fast--from sunup to sundown; abstain from certain food or drink; give up one meal every day
 - May want to begin with a 1-3 day full fast, then continue with a Daniel or partial fast?
- Make a decision and stick with it.
- There may be a medical, work or family commitment (birthday, anniversary, scheduled trip) reason to modify your fasting. Ultimately this is between you and the Lord.
- **Fasting is not a requirement. Fasting is a choice. We choose to break our normal routine in order to draw ourselves closer to God. We are choosing to honor God with the first fruit of our year--Matthew 6:33**
- FOCUS night, organize your own prayer meetings (early morning or lunch time), come in a pray in the sanctuary before Sunday worship services

Getting our edge back

- **Lumberjack contest**
- Many of us have lost our edge in life, in our marriage or spiritually.
- Many are going through the motions in praise and worship, making it dull and lifeless.

I WANT MY EDGE BACK!

I want to enter every corporate worship service expecting God to transform lives, heal bodies and minds, to fix brokenness and to restore joy and peace. I long for all of us to receive rich revelation from God's word. I expect us to operate freeing in spiritual gifts.

WE NEED OUR EDGE BACK!

The Plan

1. Make up your mind
2. Confess that you need to regain your edge
3. Take action today
4. Make yourself accountable to someone

Joel 2:18-32

What I see, believe and desire above all else is to experience a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit on our church.

- Sons & daughter declaring the glorious works of Christ
- Old men still dreaming
- Young men being inspired with new visions
- Many people being genuinely converted to the Lord
- Expectation of miraculous events-provision, deliverance, healing, life transformation

Next Sunday: I Predict!

Discussions Guide

Primary Text: Joel 2: 12-17

Theologian, Kim Fabricius stated, “Faith cannot be reduced to a checklist where churches tick the boxes. Which leads to the question: Do you think of Christian unity primarily in terms of consensus to be reached, or communion to be received and witness to be shared? If the former, it would not be surprising if you were indifferent to unity among the church world wide – indeed you would be right to be so: unity-as-consensus is always but a hair’s breadth from a kind of works righteousness. We are called not to agree with each other but to love one another.” When we recognize the lack and poverty in our lives, we can look at those who are different than we are and accept them with love.

Questions

What is the difference between uniformity and unity, and what does that mean for the church?

Why does recognizing our own poverty and limits help us accept other people for who they are?