

## LESSON 8: FASTING AND GOOD WORKS

### DAY 50

1. What is fasting? (Exodus 34:28, Jonah 3:5-7, Matthew 4:1-2, Luke 4:1-2)

{fasting}

FASTING MEANS TO GO WITHOUT FOOD, OR TO GO WITHOUT FOOD AND WATER.

2. According to Jesus, what role does fasting play in ministry? (Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:17-29)
3. Did Jesus expect His disciples to fast after His death, resurrection and ascension into heaven? (Matthew 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:33-35)

**P2P:** Based on Jesus' expectations that His disciples would fast, are you setting aside time to fast?

4. Did Jesus give us any instructions about how to fast? (Matthew 6:16-18)

**P2P:** What is the approach Jesus wants you to take when you fast? How do you apply this in your life?

5. Read Acts 10:1-48 to answer the following questions.
  - a. What was happening to Cornelius' prayers and alms as he was fasting?
  - b. How did God work with both Peter and Cornelius as a result of their fasting?
  
6. Read Daniel 9:1-27 to answer the following questions about how Daniel used prayer and fasting together.

- a. As this day of fasting is described, how was Daniel using his time?

{sackcloth and ashes}

SACKCLOTH IS CLOTHING MADE FROM THE HAIR OF BLACK GOATS AND IS VERY COARSE MATERIAL. IT IS USED TO DESCRIBE HOW BLACK THE SUN WILL BE IN REVELATION 6:12. THE WEARING OF SACKCLOTH IS A SIGN OF MOURNING, DEEP SADNESS AND HUMILITY.

- b. What was Daniel's attitude before God? What were his desires in seeking God?

ASHES AND DUST WERE EITHER PUT ON THE HEAD OR ONE MIGHT SIT IN THEM AS ANOTHER FORM OF HUMBLING ONESELF. THESE ITEMS ARE AN ADDITIONAL SIGN OF MOURNING, SADNESS, HUMILITY AND REPENTANCE. IT INDICATES AN UNDERSTANDING THAT FROM DUST YOU ARE AND TO DUST YOU SHALL RETURN (GENESIS 3:19).

- c. What were the results of Daniel seeking God?

**PRAY** Thank God for the powerful spiritual tool of fasting and for providing specific instruction on fasting in His word. Ask Him for a deep conviction to more highly value the role of fasting in your life.

**FAST** Set aside one day this week to fast unto God.

### **DAY 51**

7. Read Ezra 8:21-23 to answer the following questions.
  - a. What is the purpose of fasting?
  - b. What were the specific reasons a fast was proclaimed?
  - c. What was God's response to their fasting?
  
8. How is fasting used in relation to repentance, faith and prayer? (Joel 2:12-17)

**P2P:** How much time are you taking to fast when God brings you through similar circumstances and calls you to repentance?

9. How did God say He responds to their fasting, prayer and repentance? (Joel 2:18-27)

**P2P:** God is not looking *to break us*, but desirous that *we would break ourselves* so that He may build us up and glorify us. Meditate on Luke 20:17-18 in this regard. What steps are you taking *to break yourself*?

10. Read Jonah 3:1-10 to answer the following questions.

- a. Why did the people of Ninevah proclaim a fast?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. How and when can you apply this example in your own life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. What specifically did they do when they proclaimed a fast?

d. How did God respond?

11. Read 1 Kings 21:25-29 to answer the following questions.

- a. Can God be moved by someone practicing evil if he turns and humbles himself?
- b. Even though Ahab was a very evil king and let Jezebel practice evil, how did the Lord respond to him when he fasted and sought God?

12. Read 1 Samuel 7:3-6 and Ezra 9:1-10:6 to answer the following questions.

- a. How does fasting play a role in the realization and confession of sin?
- b. What was Ezra's approach to their sin? How did it impact the people of Israel when he fasted and prayed?

**PRAY** Ask God for more understanding about the relationship between fasting, prayer, repentance and faith. Confess your brokenness before God, knowing He will listen to a repentant heart. Thank God for His compassion on even the most evil of people who turn to Him.

**DAY 52**

13. Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 to answer the following questions.

- a. What did Paul instruct married believers to abstain from when they are fasting, and why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. How does it relate to the instructions in Isaiah 58:3?

14. What affect does fasting have on your body? (Psalm 109:21-27)

15. Is it good to feel weak? (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

16. What are the primary lessons we should be learning from fasting? (Matthew 4:1-4; Luke 4:1-4)

**P2P:** Consider the importance of food in your life. How dependent are you upon food to live? How much more dependent are you upon the word of God to have life? Fasting helps teach you this dependence.

When you eat, you are feeding your flesh and giving it what it desires and needs. When you fast, you go to the front line in your battle against your greatest fleshly desire and you tell your flesh *no*. In your battle against your flesh, you must be disciplined in telling your flesh *no* and telling the Holy Spirit *yes*. Galatians 5:16 says, “Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

This battle against our flesh is important for humbling us before God, helping us to realize our own weakness and dependence, teaching us to see that – in weakness – He is truly our only hope, and showing that – in our humility and faith toward God – He is strong.

### {hunger in fasting}

WHEN YOU FAST AND START TO FEEL HUNGRY, GO TO GOD AND ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR WEAKNESS AND YOUR NEED FOR FOOD. ASK HIM TO FILL YOU AND GIVE YOU STRENGTH. ASK HIM TO FEED YOU FROM HIS WORD AND TO SUPPLY EVERY NEED FOR YOUR BODY. LOOK TO HIM TO GIVE YOU STRENGTH IN YOUR WEAKNESS.

### PRAY

Ask God to convict you about your total dependence upon Him. Confess your physical weakness when fasting unto Him and ask for strength to endure. Pray for protection from the enemy.

**DAY 53**

17. What are other purposes for fasting?

- a. When seeking God on behalf of others (For whom was David fasting and seeking God?)

Psalm 35:11-14

2 Samuel 12:15-23

- b. When mourning

2 Samuel 1:1-12

1 Chronicles 10:6-12

- c. When appointing and ordaining for service

Acts 13:1-3

Acts 14:21-23

18. Read Isaiah 58:1-4 to answer the following questions.

- a. What was the reason their fasting and seeking of God was not acceptable to God?

- b. What does this tell you about what not to do when fasting and seeking God?



19. What must we do to be effective in our relationship with God? (Compare Isaiah 58:1-4 with 1 John 4:20-21)

20. Read Isaiah 58:5-12 to answer the following questions.

a. What does God say is the fast He has chosen? List out the things God said to do.

b. Compare this fast with the effect the Spirit of the Lord has upon believers. (Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:16-19)

c. What are the similarities between the acceptable fast and the effects of the Spirit of the Lord?

**P2P:** In what ways do you see this manifest in your own life?

**MEDITATE** The acceptable fast to God is one where we walk in the Spirit and do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. As a result of our humility and faith in Him, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and we live a new life, not subject to the desires of the flesh, but subject to the desires of God in heaven. This is the impact of fasting and the acceptable fast that should be on display in our lives daily.

**PRAY** Ask God to bless your fasting on behalf of others. Pray for God to reveal specific works of service in connection with your fasting. Thank God for the Holy Spirit so you are able to walk in the Spirit.

## DAY 54

21. What was Jesus' food? (John 4:31-38)

**P2P:** In what ways are you eating of Jesus' food?

22. Read 1 John 3:16-24 and Romans 12:1-21 to answer the following questions.

a. Having received the gift of life through Jesus' death, what does He want us to do in response to his sacrifice?

b. What do these verses tell us about how God wants us to demonstrate love to others?

23. For what purpose did God free us from the flesh and its sinful nature? (Ephesians 2:8-10)

**P2P:** Have you thought about the fact that you were created for good works? How does this impact your life and the reasons for which you are alive?

24. How do these verses in Galatians relate to the fast that God has chosen? (Galatians 5:13-15)

25. What can we learn about our calling, and the relationship between love and obedience to God's commandments, from Romans 13:8-10?

26. Read John 13:34-35, John 15:9-17 and 1 John 4:7-5:3 to answer the following questions.

a. What were we called to do as believers who know and believe the love of God?

b. What can we learn about love, in the way it is demonstrated in our lives, from these verses?

**PRAY**

Thank God for revealing so much of His will for us in Scripture. Ask for more passion and desire to do His will in your life. Praise God for giving you the privilege to participate in serving members of the church body and also reaping for Him. Ask God for a more committed heart to love others as Jesus loves you.

**DAY 55**

27. What are the characteristics of love? (1 Corinthians 13:1-13)

**P2P:** Meditate upon the specific attributes of love. Consider how your life is reflective of this love and also where your thoughts, words and actions are missing the mark.

28. Read Titus 2:11-14, Titus 3:8, 14 and Hebrews 10:23-25 to answer the following questions.

- a. What is the attitude of a Christian toward doing good works? Does God want us to be doing good works?

- b. How important is maintaining good works in our lives? How do these works differ from the works of the flesh? See also Galatians 5:19-21.

**P2P:** In what ways is maintaining good works similar to the fast God has chosen?

**PRAY** Confess any specific sin or weakness in light of the definition of love as found in 1 Corinthians 13. Pray for a godly attitude as you are performing good works unto others in Jesus' name. Ask God for humility as you live for Him.

## DAY 56

**MEDITATE & PRAY** Spend time further reflecting upon and praying about the parts of Lesson 8 that really inspired you. Thank God for the opportunity to fast and to perform good works.