

Fasting

When exercised with a pure heart and a right motive, fasting may provide us with a key to unlock doors where other keys have failed; a window opening up new horizons in the unseen world; a spiritual weapon of God's providing, "mighty, to the pulling down of strongholds."

Arthur Wallis - "God's Chosen Fast"

John Wesley (clergyman, theologian) and his co-workers fasted two days a week (until 3pm) for years. In early American history, Colonial governors and presidents occasionally called a day of national fasting – during war or in other times of need. Cornwall Church (Bellingham) has a fasting chain – people sign up to pray and fast for the needs/outreach of the church once a month. So what does this mean for us, right now in our lives with Christ? Is this a spiritual discipline that we should be practicing? Christians, since the time of Jesus, have employed the discipline of fasting to create hunger in their hearts for God. This means of grace is practiced less today but we should still desire this hunger for Christ through the discipline of fasting.

Scripture

Joel 2:12 "Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning."

Daniel 9:3 "So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes."

Acts 27:33 "Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. 'For the last fourteen days,' he said, 'you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food—you haven't eaten anything.'"

-Fasting in itself is of no spiritual value (Isaiah 58; Jeremiah 14:12; I Corinthians 8:8) – "that which is of the flesh is flesh," John 3:6 – but it is the attitude of a heart sincerely seeking Him to which God responds with blessing.

Discussion Questions

- What were some reasons people fasted in Biblical times?
 - Hearing from God
 - Strength and guidance for ministry
 - Healing – spiritually and physically, etc.
- What are some reasons we should fast now?
- Who were some of the people in the Bible that fasted?
 - Jesus, Daniel, Moses, Disciples, many more!
- What does fasting do to us spiritually?
 - Amongst other things...frees up time for focused and intense prayer!!!
- What does fasting do to us physically?
- Do you think Christ calls us to fast from things other than food? What could some of these other things be?

Life Application

- When might we want to call a time of fasting? When might individual
- Christians want to fast and pray? (A decision that needs to be made, sin that needs to be overcome, friend that needs God's work in their life)
- What concerns do you have about the campus, our nation or the world that
- could benefit from focused prayer?

Resources

Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* has lots of other great info.

Activities

- Encourage one another to try fasting one or two meals this week in order to concentrate on prayer for these things. Perhaps you could meet together for prayer.
- Look at your lives. Are there other things that Christ is calling you to give up?
- Get a sack lunch (fast this meal) from the dining hall with a friend. Take the lunch to a homeless person in Bellingham.
- Fast from TV for a week, see how you spend your time.