

Power in Prayer

Prayer and Fasting

I. What is fasting?

- Fasting is not God's idea of a hunger strike.
- "Biblical fasting is the freewill practice of abstaining from food and/or the pleasantries of life for the purpose of devoting oneself to God and concentrating on spiritual goals, particularly the goal of defeating spiritual enemies and overcoming the lusts of the flesh."
– *Way of Life Encyclopedia*
- "Fasting is abstaining from anything that hinders prayer" – Andrew Bonar
- Not once will you find in the Scriptures where God *commands* us to fast, yet by example and exhortation He *commends* fasting to us.

II. The Combination of Fasting and Prayer

- * Note – the following outline is from *Prayer: Asking and Receiving* by John R. Rice
- "Fasting means putting God first." – Matthew 22:36-37
 - It is a conscious decision to forsake the earthly for a season that we may fully embrace the heavenly.
- "Fasting means persistence in prayer." – Luke 18:1-8
 - We can devote our attentions and energies more fully to prayer.
- "Fasting is the deliberate clearing of the way for prayer, laying aside weights and hindrances." – Hebrews 12:1-2
 - It is not the laying aside sinful things (that is another matter), but it is the laying aside of the blessings from God (e.g., food, sleep, or relationships) to devote ourselves more fully to God.
- "To fast when we pray ought to be simply claiming the answer for our prayers." – Hebrews 11:6
 - Fasting requires and displays more faith than just saying a prayer.
- "Fasting is very properly an expression of mourning." – Jonah 3:5-7, etc.
 - It is a fitting response to sin as we repent of our failures before God.

III. Some Results of Fasting and Prayer

- Help in times of trouble – Ezra 8:21-23
- Divine guidance – Acts 13:1-3
- Victory over sin and temptation – Matthew 4:2
- Repentance – I Samuel 7:6
- Spiritual power – Matthew 17:21

IV. Warnings concerning Fasting

- Fasting is not Christian asceticism – Colossians 2:20-23
- Fasting is for the Lord to see and not men – Matthew 6:16-18
- God is more concerned with our heart than the act of fasting – Isaiah 58:3-7
- Fasting does not guarantee answered prayers – II Samuel 12:15-23