

Prayer & Fasting

Lesson for Sunday, October 13, 2024

INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ This is our last lesson in our series, “Teach Us to Pray.” Hopefully, this study has given you a deeper burden to pray and has helped you think about your prayer life differently.
- ⇒ Many times, in the Bible, we see the word “prayer” accompanied by the word “fasting.”
 - DISCUSS: What do you know about fasting? *Allow class members to contribute. Don't seek to correct; just collect information on what they know.*
- ⇒ ASK: Have you ever heard a Sunday School lesson on fasting? How about a sermon?
 - Most have not! But the topic of fasting is found 77 times in the Bible.
 - Don't you think we should know something about a topic that occurs 77 times? Today is your day!

BIBLE STUDY:

1. Fasting Expected
 - a. While fasting is not commanded in Scripture, it is assumed that believers will fast at times.
 - b. See Matthew 6:16-18
 - c. Notice that Jesus said, “when you fast,” and not, “if you fast.” This is a major point! Jesus assumed that His followers would fast.
 - d. Application: Have you ever attempted to fast? *This is not a discussion question! It is aimed to cause the class members to think to themselves.*
2. Fasting Explained
 - a. Fasting is a spiritual discipline.
 - b. The primary purpose of fasting is to seek God more intently and draw closer to Him. It is often paired with prayer and used to humble oneself before God. See Ezra 8:21-23 as an example.
 - c. There are various reasons to fast biblically, including:
 - i. To strengthen prayer and seek God's guidance (Acts 13:2-3)
 - ii. To express grief or repentance (1 Samuel 7:6)
 - iii. To seek God's deliverance or protection (2 Chronicles 20:3-4)
 - iv. To prepare for ministry or spiritual warfare (Matthew 4:1-2)
 - d. Fasting typically involves abstaining from food but can also include abstaining from other things to focus on God (1 Corinthians 7:5).
 - i. In today's times, you may hear of people fasting from things such as social media, television, etc.
 - ii. The point is not to simply go without something. Instead, we are to take the time we would do a certain activity and replace it with time spent with the Lord.
 - e. Ultimately, fasting expresses that our deepest hunger is for God Himself, more than physical food or other things that we may give up temporarily.

3. Fasting Enjoyed

- a. When done properly, private fasting can be a powerful spiritual discipline to draw near to God and grow in faith.
- b. Consider some of these examples from God's Word. *This would be great to assign a point to 1-2 people, give them a minute to work it out, and then report back to the class.*
 - i. Draws you closer to God and strengthens your relationship with Him (Ezra 8:21, Daniel 9:3)
 - ii. Helps humble yourself before God (Ezra 8:21, Psalm 35:13)
 - iii. Increases focus and effectiveness in prayer (Acts 13:2-3, Ezra 8:23)
 - iv. Aids in seeking God's guidance, wisdom and direction (Acts 14:23)
 - v. Helps overcome temptation and grow in self-control (Matthew 4:1-11)
 - vi. Expresses repentance and aids in turning back to God (Joel 2:12-13, Jonah 3:5-9)
 - vii. Prepares you for ministry and spiritual warfare (Matthew 4:1-2, Acts 13:2-3)
 - viii. Increases dependence on God rather than physical comforts (Daniel 9:3)
 - ix. Brings spiritual clarity and helps quiet your inner self (Matthew 6:16-18)
 - x. Can lead to greater joy in the Lord (Zechariah 8:19)
 - xi. Helps you gain power over physical desires and passions (Galatians 5:16, 24)
 - xii. Expresses grief and sorrow to God (2 Samuel 1:12, Nehemiah 1:4)
 - xiii. Aids in petitioning God for help, deliverance or protection (Esther 4:16, Ezra 8:21-23)

APPLICATION: What is keeping you from fasting?

- ⇒ Choose a time.
- ⇒ Choose how you will fast.
- ⇒ Plan how you will replace that activity with dedicated time with the Lord.
- ⇒ Go!

CONCLUSION:

In Matthew 17, the disciples were having problems casting out demons. When they asked Jesus what was limiting them, He replied, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." The implication is that there are some things that require not just prayer, but prayer AND fasting.

What are we missing in our lives because of our failure to fast and pray! Hopefully, as we end this series, you are committed to pray like you have never prayed before.