

LIVING IN THE FAST(ING) LANE

God's response to our fasting is based upon the way we fast, not on the *fact* that we fast.

KEY POINTS

- ❖ **Definition of fasting:** Fasting is the spiritual discipline of denying our physical bodies of food for a short period of time, in order to draw closer to God with our soul and spirit.
- ❖ When we fast, we quickly come to an acknowledgment of our physical frailty and of our basic, existential need for God.
- ❖ Fasting is a very personal experience. No one can put our body under subjection in this manner but ourselves.
- ❖ Isaiah gives us a significant exposition on fasting. His writings contain certain aspects we don't often consider. He shows us that fasting, in and of itself, is not a magic potion to cause God to act on our behalf.
- ❖ Let us break down both the positive and negative elements of fasting as Isaiah 58 presents them:
- ❖ Unacceptable fasting (vv. 3-5):
 - Exhibiting false humility
 - Serving our own selfish interests
 - Exploiting our employees
 - Engaging in quarrels and strife
 - Wickedly striking out at others
 - Falsely appearing to be penitent, contrite and holy
- ❖ In the above section, we see how important the way we *live* is to the success of our fasting. The list above is quite devastating and as we read it, it is no surprise that God ignores prayers from people who live that way.
- ❖ As Isaiah states, here are the results of unacceptable fasting (v. 4):
 - God will neither hear, nor respond to our prayers
 - (See Jeremiah 14:1 – 15:4 for another example of God rejecting fasting and prayer due to blatant and consistent sin.)
- ❖ Acceptable fasting (vv. 6-9):
 - Loose the chains of injustice
 - Undo heavy burdens and break yokes
 - Release people from oppression
 - Feed the hungry
 - Bring the homeless poor to our homes
 - Clothe the naked
 - Do good to our own relatives
- ❖ Results of acceptable fasting (vv. 58:8, 9a):
 - The light of God shines out from us
 - The Lord will guide us
 - He will give us water in the midst of drought

KEY SCRIPTURES:

Isaiah 58:1-12; Leviticus 23:27-32; Jeremiah 14:1 – 15:4; Mark 9:29; Acts 13:2-3

- He will give us physical strength
- We will re-build things that were broken down
- Our lives will be like beautiful gardens and refreshing streams of water
- We receive healing
- Our righteousness will be seen
- The glory of the Lord will protect us
- We will call and the Lord will answer. "He will say, 'Here I am.'"
- ❖ These practical 'acts' of fasting serve as a reminder that fasting is part of a balanced godly Christian life, not the *only* component, nor the single 'killer app' to access God's power.
- ❖ What then shall we do? Pray, fast, serve God, serve others, maintain humility, resist self-righteousness and be a light in dark places!
- ❖ We know that salvation is not dependent upon our good works. It is the free gift of the crucified Christ. However, it is clear that God is very concerned about our interactions with all people, and pays close attention to the condition of our hearts, our attitudes and our actions.
- ❖ Our times of fasting should be seen as opportune moments to serve others, not as times to display our own (self) righteousness!

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. Describe what your experience with fasting has been like. What are usually your top three reasons for fasting?
2. Discuss: what are the things that you succumb to when you are tired, angry, hungry or lonely? Have you considered 'fasting' from these seemingly 'harmless' destroyers of your spiritual life?
3. What challenges do you face when, and before deciding to fast? How do you overcome the challenges that your mind brings before you?

Prayer Time

Lord, help us to continually desire Your sweet and tangible presence. You have said that when we fast and pray You will answer our call. Thank You for being a faithful, prayer-answering God. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Start-up: What are the 3 things you give most of your time to? Are you content with this allocation, or would you make some changes?

WEEK OF SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2019

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

- ✓ (Reminds me/Confirms) 💡 (New idea) ☁️ (Think about)
- 📌 (Do this) ❤️ (Speaks to my heart) ↔️ (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS

Go deeper with your Life Group family.
CONNECT-REFLECT-DISSECT THE WORD
Your Life Group ~ Your Lifeline