

FASTING FOR GOD'S GLORY AND POWER!

Matthew 6:16-18

INTRODUCTION: In our nation we live to eat not eat to live. We have a fixation on food! The average American will eat 150,000 pounds of food by age seventy. We eat about a ton of food every year. Food is never very far from our minds and that is why what we are talking about today is so important because fasting from food is one thing that hardly ever enters our minds today. Matthew 6:1-4; Matthew 6:5-8; Matthew 6:16: Just as giving is normal for Christians and praying is normal for Christians so should fasting be a normal part of our lives.

I. GOD'S PURPOSE OF OUR FASTING!

Fasting is mentioned seventy-five times in our Bibles. That is more times than baptism or taking the Lord's Supper is mentioned. How could something like fasting clearly outlined in Scripture by example be so ignored by Christians today? Could it be because we live in a feasting not fasting mindset in our nation today? Fasting however is more than just going without food for a period of time. Fasting is refraining from food for a spiritual purpose. It is going without food so we can better focus on God and His Word for spiritual benefits. Matthew 6:16-17: the Pharisees would make their faces look pale and put ashes on their heads to get personal attention that they were fasting. Matthew 6:18. We fast not to get more stuff but to allow our God to get more of us and to draw closer to our God! Fasting is more about focus than it is about food. Psalm 109:22-28. Fasting is not so much of saying no to the body as it is saying yes to the Spirit of God. Matthew 16:24; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. Fasting isn't just about going without, it is about looking within.

II. GOD'S POWER IN OUR FASTING!

What are some of the benefits of fasting? Fasting gives strength to my prayers! In the Bible fasting is always connected to prayer because it's not about food, it is about focus. Fasting is about being hungry for God! Fasting gives a shape edge to our prayers and gives passion to our prayers: Matthew 5:6. In times of great need we need to proclaim a fast: Ezra 8:21-23. Fasting feeds our spirit. Food is a gift from our God but Satan loves to take the good things of God and twist them to our destruction. Matthew 4:1-4. So, fasting becomes feasting on the good things of God. James 4:8. Fasting reveals my sin! Fasting shows us who we are before it shows us who our God is! Fasting helps us to feel our repentance: 1 Samuel 7:5-6; Joel 2:12-13. Fasting helps us overcome our sin: Matthew 17:14-21 KJV. Fasting awakens our compassion for others who are hungry every day.

III. GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR FASTING!

Fasting for a spiritual purpose doesn't just happen, it must be planned for. We must determine the time and length of our fast. We can fast from things other than food for the purpose of prayer also. We need to discern our spiritual reason for our fast. Fasting is about getting the heart of our God. Fasting may be about breaking some sinful habits in our lives or discerning God's will for our lives or about gaining clarity about what God desires for our lives. Remember, we are not trying to change God's will through fasting, we are trying to get in on what is right and glorifying to our Lord through our fasting and prayer. Fasting without prayer has no spiritual value. When we fast, it should be for our God's glory, our own holiness and our neighbors good.