

City Church Network - Tuesday Fellowship

January 14, 2020

Fasting and prayer: Awaken Nashville

facilitated by Wim Codington (cell: 423.505.6411; email: wimcodington@gmail.com)

Bible passages examined:

- **Matthew 4:1-4** (Christ hungered more for God than for food)
- **Matthew 6:16-18** (fast with a Godward heart not a manward heart)
- 2 Chronicles 7:14 (humble prayer turns God's heart toward His people)
- Joel 2:12-14 (Turn to God with all your heart)
- Luke 1:51-53 (God fills the hungry with good things)
- Philippians 2:5-9 (Christ emptied Himself)

Thoughts and ideas shared after reading the passages above:

- Why? The purpose of fasting is to be emptied of things we want and need so that we can be more deeply filled with God. Other reasons:
 - To "power up" the spirit
 - To remember to look ahead to the wedding feast of the Lamb
 - To access more grace (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)
 - To more fully experience our dependence on God
 - To feast on God
 - To cultivate a repentant spirit
 - To seek God's direction
 - To seek God's power and revival
 - To cry out to God in mourning
- What? Food only or other things?
 - Fasting from a "want" (like alcohol or technology) is not as powerful as fasting from a "need" (like food) because the absence of the "want" will be forgotten over time but the absence of the "need" will be felt with more and more intensity over time.
- How? Fast with a focus on seeing God rather than on being seen by men.
- Warnings and dangers of fasting:
 - Showmanship - deceiving others into thinking something about me that is not true. Characterized by talking eagerly and often about my fasting
 - Remedy - avoid talking about my fast; divert attention from it
 - Self-righteousness - deceiving myself into thinking something about myself that is not true. Characterized by believing I'm closer to God because of my actions
 - Remedy - repent often; remind myself of my present forgiveness, sonship, and God's sufficient grace



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Thoughts and ideas shared after reading the passages above (continued):

- Warnings and dangers of fasting (continued):
 - Self-indulgence - focusing so much on my hunger and unsatisfied desires that I find ways around the fast by over-indulging in other things that prevent me from receiving the true benefits of the fast
 - Remedy - turn my hunger into a prayer; wait on the Lord
 - Despair and self-condemnation - Allowing my hunger to overwhelm me and keep me from looking past it to God's grace
 - Remedy - Cry out to God; sing; imagine His face
 - Apathy - Numbing the pain of hunger and despair; despair unmitigated
 - Remedy - Repent; believe the truth; spend time with others
 - Other things to avoid: impatience, social and peer pressure

Resources:

- Read Isaiah 58 for further reflection on pitfalls to avoid
- Read *Revival Starts Here* by Dave Clayton for a very helpful introduction to fasting and its benefits. It includes practical ideas for fasting on your own, with your family, and with other believers.
- Tony Evans sermon series
- *Spiritual Disciplines* by Donald S. Whitney
- *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster
- *Hunger for God* by John Piper

Questions and quotes for reflection:

- Questions (taken from page 11 of *Revival Starts Here* book):
 - Have you ever sensed God inviting you to know Him more deeply? If so, what was that experience like?
 - What has your experience with prayer been like? Do you find it easy and enjoyable to pray? Or do you find it more challenging and dry?
 - Share about your experience (if any) with fasting. Is this something you have seen modeled? Or does it feel like a strange discipline to you?
- Quotes for reflection:
 - "Fasting is not ultimately about what we let go of but who we will let take hold of us" (from *Revival Starts Here*, p. 20)
 - "Fasting is a perfect quieting of all our impulses, fleshly and spiritual. Fasting is not meant to drag us down, but to still us. It is not meant to distract us from the real, but rather to silence us so that we can hear things as they most truly are." - St. Thomas Aquinas (quoted in *Revival Starts Here*, p. 24)

