

## *Fasting*

### I. UPCOMING CHURCH FAST

- A. **When:** Begins Sunday, March 5th and ends Sunday, March 12th after service (we will break together during small group).
- B. **Why:** Praying and fasting for God to release greater power to walk out our calling (prayer room, family, John 17 friendships, discipleship).
- C. **How:** Optional Fast, but **3 suggested options:**
  - 1. Liquid Fast - juice and water
  - 2. Daniel Fast - small portions of fruits and vegetables daily
  - 3. Benedictine Fast - one “healthy” meal per day
- D. **Phone/Media Fast and More Prayer:** Fasting doesn’t do anything if we don’t replace normal life with God-time. We are inviting you to fast from all media/social media and to limit phone usage to only necessary communication. Schedule a lot of prayer that week (jumping into UHOP’s hours and at your house).

### II. FASTING IS ALWAYS VOLUNTARY

- A. Fasting is always a personal and voluntary decision, it should never be forced. We simply ask that you consider joining in with the vision of our upcoming church fast.
- B. In fasting, we are not earning His love or power upon us but **POSITIONING** ourselves personally and as a corporate body to receive more of what God has for us in this season.
  - 1. There is a paradox in the Kingdom though; God does **GIVE MORE** to those who hunger after Him. And He **REVEALS MORE** to those who pursue Him.
- C. Exceptions to doing full/intense fasts from food: children, those who are sick or dealing with health problems, pregnant women, those with a current eating disorder.
- D. It is biblical to invite children into the storyline: *“Now... says the Lord, “Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.” So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the Lord your God... Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly, Gather the people... Gather the children and nursing babes.”* Joel 2:12-16
  - 1. As a family, discuss what and how the children could engage in fasting wisely.

### III. FASTING- DEUTERONOMY 8:2-3

*“And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart... So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord”*

- A. Similar to the Israelites in the wilderness, God can use fasting to humble us and cause us to know what is in our hearts. In Deut 8, I see two contrasts: **HUNGER** and being fed/**SATISFACTION!** When we position our hearts in hunger He is there to satisfy us. There really isn't a balance, this is just a Kingdom tension.
  - 1. "He allowed you to hunger"- physical **HUNGER**
  - 2. "and fed you with manna"- **SATISFACTION in Him**
  - 3. "Man doesn't live on bread alone"- physical **HUNGER**
  - 4. "Man lives on every word from God's mouth"- **SATISFACTION in Him**
- B. Physical hunger can lead you into finding and receiving supernatural satisfaction in His word that allows your body/life/spirit to be properly aligned with God's plans for your personal life and for where He is taking the corporate body.
- C. This is a good definition of fasting to me, hunger and satisfaction.
- D. Deut 6:5- God's announcement of the First Commandment- Within this same Moses/Israelite timeframe God is revealing His desire for a wholehearted people. It's not surprising to me that He uses the wilderness for them (and for us He can use fasting) to get us in alignment with Him and to get our hearts in love/intimacy with Him.
- E. Deut 6:23- "Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in..."
  - 1. We cannot be brought into the promised land any other way than the wilderness. He uses fasting to get us out of bondage into freedom and truth.

#### **IV. WHAT DOES FASTING DO?**

- A. Fasting is a revealer, a reality check. In my experience, fasting addresses what our internal reality is. God in his kindness shows us the real condition of our hearts when we ask Him too.
- B. Revelation 3- similar to the Laodicean church, who were poor blind and naked, but they didn't even know it.
  - 1. Deception masked their condition before Him. The prop of food and social media can mask your true condition to yourself. Fasting can strip all these props away. He is completely aware of the hindrances you have that get in His way, but He desires for you to ask the question of what is hindering you? He loves when we position ourselves before Him in fasting.
- C. Fasting doesn't make you angry, you already had that anger inside of you.
- D. Fasting exposes:

1. schedule problems
  2. food/health problems
  3. spiritual life/inner heart problems
  4. relational alignments that need to be made
- E. Fasting food then is not a drudgery or a chore or just a discipline, but fasting is a gift from God. If we can see fasting as a tool, a weapon, we can engage in it to get our hearts positioned back into prioritizing Him. As we respond, including longer times of prayer, He will address those things that are getting in the way of right relationship with Him.

## **V. WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A FAST**

- A. As we respond to Him and position ourselves in His light by giving up certain comforts and pleasures, He responds to our hunger and He will reveal Himself!
- B. There is a certain amount of delay and detox that is completely normal in a fast. The result should be a tenderizing of your heart. If you are unable to give Him extra time during a fast, this tenderizing will be harder to see.

## **VI. PREPARATION SUGGESTIONS**

- A. Consider and write down a vision now of what you will fast, and after you decide, write down a plan of how you'll prepare and how you'll do it, and then tell someone your plans.
- B. It's NEVER a sin to break a fast, but there is perseverance needed to keep going to the end. We use MB's coined phrase of the "push delete" and start again whenever you eat something you shouldn't.
- C. Start a few days earlier depending on what you are fasting! Start weaning off coffee/pop/sweets so your first few days aren't filled with headaches and tiredness.
1. Detox is REAL, and most people don't like fasting because of the detox symptoms.
  2. As an example, you could fast once a week starting this week so that you aren't just detoxing during the 7 day fast but actually able to engage.
- D. Expect turmoil and press in, refuse to quit. Be open with others in the church about struggles and ask for prayer if needed.