

Draw Near With Me, Go Far Together: *Building & Teaching a Close Walk With God*

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Fasting: Feasting on Doing God's Will

Biblical fasting is a means of humbling oneself before God in order to demonstrate repentance or as a way of approaching God in humble supplication and prayer.

In the Bible, fasting typically means to go without eating or drinking for a period of time.

Lev. 23:26 The Lord said to Moses, ²⁷ “The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present an offering made to the Lord by fire. ²⁸ Do no work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the Lord your God. ²⁹ Anyone who does not deny himself on that day must be cut off from his people. ³⁰ I will destroy from among his people anyone who does any work on that day. ³¹ You shall do no work at all. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. ³² It is a sabbath of rest for you, and you must deny yourselves. From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening you are to observe your sabbath.”

Yom Kippur is the only fast-day proscribed in the Torah (Lev 16:29-31; 23:27-29; Num 29:7). “Deny yourselves” is understood to mean “fasting.”

2 Sam 12 - David humbles himself because of his sin against Uriah and Bathsheba. He fasts and prays in the hopes of saving the life of his child who is dying as a consequence of David's sin.

Jonah - the Ninevites have a national fast (including livestock!) in order to show their repentance and humility before God and to beseech Him to spare them from impending destruction.

Acts 13:3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

Early Christian leaders were appointed for mission and leadership with prayer and fasting and laying on of hands of the commissioning body of leadership.

Matthew 6: Giving, Fasting and Prayer....conclusion, be spiritual, not materialistic

Mark 2:18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but *your disciples do not fast?*" 19 And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? **As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.** 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

Question: *Do we have the bridegroom with us now?*

John 4:34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

In Context

John 4:28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said

to the people, ²⁹ “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” ³⁰ They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

John 4:31 Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.”

John 4:32 But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”

John 4:33 Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?”

John 4:34 “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. ³⁶ Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. ³⁷ Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. ³⁸ I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”

Question: In context, what was the will and work that “fed” and sustained Jesus?

Isaiah 58 As Jesus told his disciples, true fasting is to do God’s will. Before you make a decision to fast, ask yourself if you are already doing God’s will. If the answer is “no,” it is better to repent and do God’s will than to abstain from food and drink.

Questions

- ◆ What is our motivation for fasting?
- ◆ What does it mean to do God’s will? To obey God’s commands? To obey everything Jesus commanded?
- ◆ Is Jesus with us and in us through his Holy Spirit? What are the implications

for fasting of the bridegroom being present with us?

- ◆ What does it mean to “humble yourself” before God?
- ◆ What are additional ways we can humble ourselves before God in addition to fasting and prayer?
- ◆ Why did Jesus tell his disciples that they could only drive a particular demon out of a boy by “fasting and prayer?” (*Hint*: look at how they were acting before Jesus arrived)
- ◆ What does it mean to deny yourself? If you are already denying yourself as a disciple of Jesus, what are you doing when you fast?
- ◆ What are the purposes of corporate fasting (i.e., fasting as a group) [cf., Jonah, Acts 13]? Should a (church, family group, Bible Talk, family, etc.) fast as a group? Why or why not?

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