

Prayer & Fasting (Joel 2:12-29 & Mt. 6:16-18)

June: MISSION (Missional Life); **July:** Whole Disciple; **Aug-Sept:** **GENERATIONS:** "Living Beyond your Lifetime: A Legacy for every Generation"

*Historic moment in the life of our church: **GENERATIONS INITIATIVE** (spiritual/financial) in line with the Mission of the WELL: '*All Generations worshipping God*'

-What we need more than space, money, buildings, new programs...**Is God's presence/provision**

-OUR Need is more of the Lord (*not* more **income**; more **vacation**; more **ease**; better **looks, neigh**

-Our Need is **Spiritual**: To Grow in the Lord (desperation) for the Lord: = **HEART ISSUE**

-Our Need is Spiritual **Stewardship** =Trusting the Lord with everything in our life...

-Our Calling is to **Engage** with the **Mission** of God at the WELL... =100% participation

-The Outcome of lives yielded to the Lord spiritually in His Mission is **WORSHIP** & Glory

Cycle of Grace for Israel: (**Blessing, apathy/idols, warning, jgmt, repentance, forgive, blessing**)

READ Joel 2:12-17-Israel has been rotten; rejected the Lord; He warned them; plagues fell...

"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "Return to Me with all your heart,

And with fasting, weeping, and mourning; ¹³ And tear your heart and not *merely* your

garments." Now return to the Lord your God, For God is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in mercy and relenting of catastrophe. ¹⁴ Who knows, He might turn and

relent, And leave a blessing behind Him, *Resulting in a grain offering and a drink offering* For the Lord your God. ¹⁵ Blow a trumpet in Zion, **Consecrate a fast**, proclaim a solemn assembly,

¹⁶ Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and the nursing infants. Have the groom come out of his room And the bride out of her bridal

chamber. ¹⁷ Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, Weep between the porch and the altar, And

let them say, "[s]pare Your people, Lord, And do not make Your inheritance a disgrace, With the nations jeering at them. Why should *those* among the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"

****Deliverance Promised** ¹⁸ Then the Lord [h]will be zealous for His land, And [i]will have compassion for His people.¹⁹ The Lord [i]will answer and say to His people, "Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine, and oil, And you will be satisfied *in full* with [k]them;

V. 26 You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied, And you will praise the name of the Lord your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; Then My people will never be put to shame. ²⁷ So you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, And that I am the Lord your God And there is no other; And My people will never be put to shame.

****The Promise of the Spirit in Restoration one day for Israel**

²⁸ "It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all [s]mankind;

And your sons and your daughters will prophesy, Your old men will have dreams,

Your young men will see visions. ²⁹ And even on the male and female servants

I will pour out My Spirit in those days." -**Pentecost**, the birth of the Church, the giving of Spirit (Acts 2)

*Prayer is the lifeblood of the Christian. **Prayer is like oil to an engine.** The engine cannot function without oil. So is the Christian life to prayer. Prayer is oxygen to our souls! **Starving?**

And the more serious we become in our spiritual life, the more we realize we need to "rid" ourselves of common distractions, temptations, & apathy which impede a serious prayer life.

IN FASTING: "The deepest purpose of fasting is to awaken a deeper hunger for God."

-Believers understand that they need more prayer in their life (simply talking/listening to God)
-**But** believers are mostly unfamiliar, inexperienced, fearful, & confused with the spiritual discipline of FASTING! "*Christian fasting, at its root, is the hunger of a homesickness for God.*"-Piper

Fasting – Can be described as any **voluntary** abstinence from necessary or normal functions of life for a spiritual purpose. Typically, fasting is seen as skipping day's worth of food, but truthfully it can be just specific foods, or specific meals, to even cutting out television, social media, video games, devices, or screentime. Choosing to refrain from something to give time to

-Fasting is a time set aside from a regular **activity** to *focus* on what and how God is reaching out to you. Seeking His presence, His voice, His heart, and His will for your life!

So, fasting is also a particular way of causing **neglect** in one area of our life that we are used to for the purpose of reminding us that in that particular area God is in control & we need Him.

-"Fasting is a way of saying: '*No' to the body because we have tasted something better.*"

-Psalm 34:8—"Taste and see that the Lord is good."

"Fasting is not an end in itself. It is a means of intensifying our expression of need for something greater—namely, God and His work in our lives."

The biblical purposes of fasting are many: (*NOT* a sp. achievement/'more' sp./righteous)
To demonstrate and remind our soul, body, mind, and strength -that we NEED God most (**desp**)
to strengthen our prayer life -cut out distractions or just routine to make more time for Him
to seek God's guidance, ask for Help, to seek His will for our lives
to ask God for something specific & necessary
to express grief, hurt, or lament
to seek deliverance from an addiction or problem,
to express repentance to God,
to humble ourselves before God,
to express concern for the work of God in one's life and community,
to minister to the needs of others,
to overcome temptation, evil, or the devil's attacks
to further dedicate one's self to God,
to simply express love and worship to God,
and to remind one's self that we need to be ultimately dependent (desperate for God) for all things. *Relevant Scripture: Judges 20:26, Matthew 4:1-11, Isaiah 41:10

Biblical Fasts: Biblical fasts involved abstaining from all food, but not water.

-A *Partial* fast is a fast of selected portions of food.

-An *Absolute* fast is the absence of all food and water – which is not recommended for more than a day (unless God supernaturally intervenes).

-A *Supernatural* fast requires God's supernatural interference into the bodily process.

-The Biblical mandate is that fasting is a **private** process between you and God only, not the public eye. Sometimes, it is necessary to tell your spouse or family for practical reasons.

-*Congregational* fasts are sometimes called for the body of believers to join together, fast, and seek God's wisdom & attention toward a specific need. **Vs.15:** "**Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,** ¹⁶ Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and the nursing infants. Have the groom come out of his room And the bride out

of her bridal chamber. ¹⁷ Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, Weep between the porch and the altar *Relevant Scripture: Luke 4:2, Ezra 10:6, Deuteronomy 9:9, Acts 13:2

-The **Goal** of fasting is that through your dependence on God, you become more fully satisfied in His presence and provision, and He is more glorified in your hunger for Him than food, or X

1. Fasting Is About Hungering for God More Than His Gifts

At its core, fasting is not primarily about abstaining from food; it is about intensifying our desire for God Himself. Every physical hunger pang becomes a reminder that our deepest need is not bread but the presence of God. Jesus said: "**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God**" (Matthew 4:4).

-Fasting trains the soul to say, "Lord, You are my greatest treasure." It is a practical declaration that communion with God is more satisfying than earthly comforts.

Application: Fasting reveals what controls us and reorders our loves so that Christ remains supreme. "**Fasting is God's testing ground—and healing ground—to expose the things we may love more than Him.**"

2. Fasting Humbles Us Before God

Throughout Scripture, fasting is often connected with humility, repentance, and dependence. When God's people fasted, they were acknowledging their weakness and God's sufficiency. David wrote: "**I humbled my soul with fasting**" (Psalm 35:13).

Fasting strips away the illusion of self-sufficiency. It reminds us that we are creatures, dependent on God for everything, for our next breath, our next meal, our very life.

Application: The true danger of the discipline of fasting can either kill pride in us (revealing our full dependence on the Lord); OR it can cause grotesque pride in us if we think that we are more spiritual than others (**pharisees**)

3. Fasting Intensifies our Spiritual Focus and prepares us uniquely for God's ministry

In Scripture, fasting frequently accompanies seasons of earnest prayer, seeking God's direction, interceding for others, or preparing for significant ministry.

- Moses fasted before receiving the Law.
- Esther called for a fast before approaching the king.
- Daniel fasted while seeking understanding.
- Jesus fasted before beginning His public ministry.
- The church in Acts fasted before calling deacons & sending missionaries.

Application: Fasting removes distractions and creates space for concentrated communion with God.

4. Fasting Points Us Toward Our Ultimate Hope in Christ =puts action to our **LONGING**

Jesus taught that His disciples would fast after His departure: "**The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast**" (Matthew 9:15).

=Christian fasting carries an element of longing. We fast because the world is not yet what it should be. Sin remains. Suffering remains. The kingdom has come, but not yet in its fullness.

Every fast becomes a declaration: "Lord Jesus, we long for Your return.**"

*****One day fasting will cease because faith will become sight and the people of God will sit down at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.**

Application: Fasting cultivates holy longing for Christ & anticipation of His coming kingdom.

Fasting is not a way to earn God's favor—it is a response to God's grace. It is the cry of a soul that says, "Lord, **You are my deepest need, my greatest treasure, and my only hope.**"

(God wants you to trust Him enough to give up good things/necessary things for Him)

"Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." (Matthew 6:16-18)

"The weakness of our hunger for God is not because He is unsavory, but because we keep ourselves stuffed with other things." "If you don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world." "The greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison, but apple pie." -Piper

A man decides to fast for a day and is shocked—not by hunger for food, but by how often he instinctively reaches for his phone. Every notification, every scroll, every glance becomes “mini-meal” for his attention. By midday he realizes something unsettling: he isn’t primarily addicted to food... he is addicted to *input, information, distraction, and affirmation.*

Fasting exposes what food often hides—our deeper appetites.

*Momma told you: No snacks before meals... Not because the meal was bad—but because he filled himself with lesser things.

Firefighters sit down to a meal: Fire alarm call: They skip the meal—not because food is unimportant, but because the mission is more urgent & immediate. Lives are on the line!

Questions for Community Group

1. What is your idea of a fast? Have you ever fasted?
2. What is something that can be given up in your life for a fast?
3. Can we be successful in our faith without fasting?
4. How long should you fast?
5. Why are we often more tempted to focus on appearances rather than heart transformation?
6. What stands out to you most about God's invitation in Joel 2:12?
7. According to both Joel and Jesus, what should be the primary purpose of fasting?

****Will your family and your community Group commit to fasting weekly with your church Body? Will you commit to praying and fasting for God’s renewal of our church Body spiritually? For the Lost to be saved in our community? That we would be the answer to our own prayer and share the gospel faithfully and regularly with those in our neighborhood, our workplace, and marketplace? That God would provide miraculously for the needs and growth of our church in this next season of spiritual and numerical growth at the WELL?**