Session One -Fasting from Food

If we are honest fasting is probably the last thing we want to do. If we had a study on the miraculous power of prayer or understanding the sayings of Jesus we would be all in, but fasting really now. At one time fasting was part of the Christian life it was the norm. Read in the Acts of the Apostles how the early church fasted “While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” (Acts 13:3). In Acts 10:30 we read

“ And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing.”

Fasting was a means to come in sync with the will of God. It cleared the air waves and opened the hearts of the prayers. Fasting had power; it brought God’s grace to His people. Sadly this practice of fasting has faded away, like Sunday dinner with the family. It was a quaint practice back in the day, but not very practical today. Maybe we no longer yearn to see God move in our life in a powerful way. Maybe we fall into the wrong assumption that God no longer acts in that way. Not so, I believe the Spirit still prompts us to not only pray but to fast. And God will reveal himself to us in a way that we have not imagined. Fasting remains relevant for all of God’s people not just the select few. If health permits all Christians should discover its benefits and put fasting in their spiritual discipline, especially during Lent.

St Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274) doctor of the church states this about fasting: “I respond, an action is virtuous due to its being directed by reason to a noble good. And this is true of fasting. For we fast for three purposes: (1) to restrain the desires of the flesh; (2) to raise the mind to contemplate sublime things; (3) to make satisfaction for our sins. These are good and noble things, and so fasting is virtuous.”

Fasting has a spiritual force that one cannot attain on one’s own. God blesses those who seek him intently. If we are willing to lose weight so we can look good in our swim suit or at a family reunion, what is stopping us from fasting to seek God in a deeper way? Yes there is a discomfort but nothing we cannot endure and offer up. You may want to start slow skip a meal or two and gradually try a day or two. I would suggest that you do not go beyond that. Always make sure you are healthy to do it. You may want to check with your doctor. Get a fasting partner so you both can encourage and support one another. It is always easier when you join with another. It keeps one accountable. “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them” Matthew (18:20)

Begin in prayer and be open to the spirit and discern if God is inviting you to fast. It won’t be easy but nothing worthwhile ever is. “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13

Questions for Sharing

What was the longest you have gone without eating?

Is there a food you can’t live without?

What is keeping you from fasting?

Why does it appear that fasting is more powerful than just praying?

If you knew that fasting would bring about an answer to your prayer, for what would you ask?

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