Session 4 Fasting in Prayer

Time is money. We don‘t want to waste time. Not only that we also want to be productive, we want to get things done. Most importantly we want to have something to show for our time. Maybe you are the type who makes a to do list and you achieve great satisfaction in checking things off. How frustrating it is to come to the end of the day and feel like you did not get anything done. I believe that is one of the challenges to prayer. What do you have to show for it? Prayer is okay before meals, or even before you go to sleep at night but to spend considerable amount of time in prayer just seems to be not the best use of one’s time. At the end of a prayer session what can you point to?

We probably have never have thought of it this way but prayer is a type of fasting. We give up “productive time” to be with God. For many it seems like a waste of time. There is so much more that we can do with the time, so much more that we can accomplish. If nothing else one could be sleeping. Sacrificing time for prayer is not easy especially if you are the active or restless sort. We admire people who are hard workers who are busy and getting things done. Sitting alone in quiet does not rank high on the scale of importance. God thinks differently God is delighted when we choose to be in his company. It is never a waste of time. When you give God substantial time in prayer,30, 60 minutes or more you have spent time with the divine. You may not have anything to show for it but grace is working in your life. “Virtues are formed by prayer. Prayer preserves temperance. Prayer suppresses anger. Prayer prevents emotions of pride and envy. Prayer draws into the soul the Holy Spirit, and raises man to Heaven.”St. Ephraem of Syria.

Admittedly prayer isn’t always that exciting. Oh we may have the occasional “God was close to me” feeling but that is few and far between. The very fact that we stick to it without any recompense shows our commitment to be close to the Lord. It is our fast not only of our time but of our sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. We are there only to please God and be attentive to Him.

We have as our model Jesus himself. Imagine all that He had to do and He still made prayer a priority. He needed to spend time with his Father. It was his habit and custom to be alone with His Father in prayer. “But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.” Luke 5:16.He did it often. The miracles, the teaching, the people could wait. His time in prayer was a must.

So if you wrestle with finding time for prayer and feel you can get more things done by working you are kidding yourself. The more time you need to get things done the more you need to spend time in prayer. Give God your time and God will give you the time that you need. Whatever you give God comes back to you.

See your prayer time as fasting. You may have to wake up earlier to schedule your time for prayer. That is part of the fast. In prayer you are fasting from production, from busyness, and from the sense of accomplishment. You surrender your control of your agenda and give it to God and God will bless it.

Questions for Sharing

What do you do when you just want to unwind?

How much time can you comfortably spend in prayer?

When do you feel most productive?

If tithing is 10% of one’s income can you tithe in prayer the hours you are awake?

If you met Jesus at Starbucks what would you talk about?