

Fasting is Worth It – Bible Study Lesson

Isaiah 58:6-9 (MSG)

“This is the kind of fast day I’m after: to break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace, free the oppressed, cancel debts.

What I’m interested in seeing you do is, sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families.

Do this and the lights will turn on, and your lives will turn around at once. Your righteousness will pave your way. The God of glory will secure your passage. Then when you pray, God will answer. You’ll call out for help and I’ll say, ‘Here I am.’

If you have been at New Church of Faith for any number of years, we usually begin the year with a **corporate covenant fast**. Those are three churchy words that simply mean, we all get together, abstain for a time from food or certain foods, in order to become more sensitive to the voice and the things of God.

What is Biblical Fasting?

“Biblical fasting is refraining from food for the spiritual purpose of bringing yourself into a deeper, more intimate and powerful relationship with the Lord.” – Pastor Jentezen Franklin

John 6:16-21 (NLT)

16 That evening Jesus’ disciples went down to the shore to wait for him.

17 But as darkness fell and Jesus still hadn’t come back, they got into the boat and headed across the lake toward Capernaum.

18 Soon a gale swept down upon them, and the sea grew very rough.

19 They had rowed three or four miles when suddenly they saw Jesus walking on the water toward the boat. They were terrified,

20 but he called out to them, “Don’t be afraid. I am here!”

21 Then they were eager to let him in the boat, and immediately they arrived at their destination!

In the scripture we just read, the disciples were waiting for Jesus. Like many of us, they became impatient. So, they left the shore and started rowing without Jesus. Soon things got very rough. **Isn't it just like God that even though we leave Him, He never forgets about us?** The Bible records that in the middle of all that, Jesus comes to them, walking on the water. At first, the disciples were afraid. When they found out it was Jesus, they were eager to let him on the boat. As soon as they did, **IMMEDIATELY they arrived at their destination.**

Somebody asked, "Why are we fasting?" The answer is quite simple; to recognize more readily when Jesus is on our boat. With this in mind, let's examine: **Fasting is Worth It.**

Luke 9:23-24 (NASB)

23 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

24 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

Denying oneself temporary gratitude for eternal fulfillment has been the secret of success to countless victorious people. If we really want to win, we can't do or have everything we want all the time. Boxers, body-builders, brides to be, students, and people with good credit have learned: **WE CAN HAVE SOME RIGHT NOW OR HAVE IT ALL FOREVER.**

1. Fasting sets you up for victory.

Hebrews 12:11 (NLT)

11 No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

A fast doesn't last forever. But the payoff does. If we fast for 21 days and hear just one instruction from God, the 3 weeks will soon be over. However, that one instruction, if followed will have altered the course of our lives and

accelerated the timetable of our destiny. **GET READY FOR THE BIG PAYBACK.**

2. Fasting is temporary. The benefits are lasting.

Romans 8:6-8 (NASB)

6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,

8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

We are spirits. We possess souls. We live in bodies. The one we listen to, impacts greatly our success or failure. When we fast, we silence the voice of our flesh (senses) and open ourselves up to hear more clearly the voice of the spirit (Holy Spirit). **Our success or failure will be determined by whose word we choose to honor.**

3. Fasting silences one voice, in favor of another.

Acts 13:2 (NASB)

2 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."

The Bible says, "while they were fasting, the Holy Spirit said, the Holy Spirit said, the Holy Spirit said ..." The Holy Spirit is always talking. The problem is, we're not always in a position to hear. **FOR 21-DAYS WE ARE POSITIONING OURSELVES TO HEAR FROM GOD!** He's bringing clarity to our assignments, even now. Ask yourself, what is God saying to me?

4. Fasting brings clarity to our assignment.

Matthew 17:19-21 (NASB)

19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?"

20 And He *said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will

say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

21 But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

There are certain issues and challenges that have plagued many of us for years. The young man in the scripture had been tormented from a child. After one encounter with Jesus, everything changed. Jesus told his disciples, “This kind only comes out if you’re willing to fast and pray.” **WE ARE CLOSER THAN WE KNOW FROM COMPLETE DELIVERANCE.**

5. Fasting is the only way to break certain strongholds.

Somebody asked, “Why are we fasting?” The answer is quite simple; to recognize more readily when Jesus is on our boat. Don’t quit: Fasting is Worth It.