

Four Pillars: Prayer 4 - Prayer & Fasting

The 4 Pillars

Acts 2:42 - They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to **prayer**.

Definition of Prayer

The basic definition of prayer is simply "communication with God."

What is communication? This comes from the Latin word "communicare," which means "to share." It means a sharing of information, ideas, feelings, and news. It is a two-way process.

Exodus 33:11 - The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.

Prayer is an uncomplicated, conversation with God. No need for fancy words or phrases, just open, honest, two-way communion with God...

The Call To Pray...And Fast

Matt 6:5 - And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

Matt 6:16-18 - When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Just as Jesus expected his followers to pray, He also expected that we would make fasting a regular part of life...

Humbling Our Souls & Killing Our Flesh

Rom 8:13 - For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,

Rom 8:7-8 - the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Luke 9:23 - Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Our normal, natural way of doing things is known as "carnal" and "sinful." We are instructed over and over in scripture to deny our "flesh" or nature, and submit to God...

Ezra 8:21 - Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict [**humble**] ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

Ps 35:13 - But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I **humbled my soul with fasting**; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

Ps 69:10 - When I wept, and **chastened my soul with fasting**, that was to my reproach.

These verses show us that one way to humble ourselves and get our natural (carnal) self under control of the Spirit is to fast...

The Impact of Fasting

Dan 9:3 - So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

Acts 10:30 - Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me

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.

Fasting is constantly added to prayer to augment/magnify prayer and tear down the flesh so we can hear the voice of God more clearly. Prayer & fasting were part of finding the will of God, appointing elders/leaders, and many other things...

Isa 58:6-9 - "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? 8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. 9 **Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.**

How To Fast

OT:6684 - tsuwm (tsoom); a primitive root; to cover over (the mouth), i.e. to fast: KJV - at all, fast.

OT:6685 - tsowm (tsoome); or tsom (tsoome); from from OT:6684; a fast: KJV - fast (-ing).

NT:3522 - nesteuo (nace-tyoo'-o); from NT:3523; to abstain from food (religiously): KJV - fast.

NT:3523 - nestis (nace-'tis); from the insep. negative particle ne- (not) and NT:2068; not eating, i.e. abstinent from food (religiously): KJV - fasting.

The words for "fast" in scripture are very basic, and mean, primarily, to abstain from food...Below are some types:

Regular Fast: abstaining from food based on the basic translation of the words from scripture

Partial Fast: abstaining from certain foods/liquids, but not necessarily all (i.e. the "Daniel's fast")

Dan 10:2-3 - At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. 3 I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.

Full (or Total) Fast: abstaining from any food or liquid

Est 4:16 - Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.

In addition to food/liquid, we can extend fasting to abstain from other things (i.e. entertainment)...

Action Items

Make Fasting a Regular Practice

- 1) Let's begin to add fasting to our regular prayer life
- 2) It's good to develop a weekly fast day, and/or begin to set aside times of multi-day fasting

Grow Into Fasting

- 1) Unless God has moved on us to do so, it's wisest to begin fasting in steps
- 2) If you've never fasted, start with one meal, or 1/2 day, and work into longer periods of fasting

A Lifestyle of Fasting

- 1) In addition to regular abstinence of food, liquid, entertainment, etc..., we should live a life of balance
- 2) It's best not to overindulge in anything, even good things such as food, work, or rest
- 3) By living a balanced lifestyle, we can avoid living in the flesh, and be able to fast easier