

"Fasting and the Kingdom Coming Among Us"

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"Forward Fasting" (from David Mathis article)

...Fasting needs to be understood and observed from more than the "food-denial" level.

...Fasting has 2 Patterns in Scripture: (1) "Routine/Regular Fasting" (it was part of life's calendar, like the Sabbath & Festivals; (2) Unique Moments

...Fasting is often found in Scripture in unique moments of kingdom conflict or kingdom advance. This simple observation should make its own impact on our lives.

?? - What's Your "Spiritual Reflexes" as you Approach a "Big" or "Significant Moment" in Your Life?

Matt 4:1-2 ¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

...The world knows no greater mission ever than the one that is taking its first steps in Matt. 4!!

...How does Jesus proceed in taking these steps? ...Prayer & Fasting!

...Similar 'kingdom coming' moments...

(1) Daniel's Moment of Meaningful Intercession!

Context: Dan 9 = 539BC ...ie, we're at the END of the 70 years! ...God is about to do the next thing in His Grand Sovereign Purpose! ...the people He has sent into Exile are now being awakened to RETURN!!

Dan 9:1-3

...Note the "Ministry of the Word"

...Note the "Engagement of the Moment"!! ...the details of this moment will need to be received by the Ministry of the Spirit

Dan 9:3-5 ³ Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. ⁴ I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁵ we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.

... **"THEN I turned my face to the Lord God"** ...this is NOT a 'Typical Moment', it is a special moment ...This kind of seeking God is NOT your everyday practice or responsibility! ...this is a Unique Moment ...I might need to develop my own "Unique Moment Theology" for unusual times as well. Consider times like:

- Getting Married ...working through marriage problems
- Choosing a job ...choosing a house ...choosing to relocate
- Choosing a church

... "Seeking him..." ...His 'posture' is "NEED" followed by "DISCOVERY"
[“Unsure/Unclear” = Normal! ...Having to “Search for God” = Normal!]

Context: Dan 10 = 536BC (So, 3 yrs later)

Dan 10:1-14

... "Details of Daniel's fasting" ...

- v. 12 ...fasting = a form of "humbling yourself" ...it is an act of "diminishing" and "reducing" yourself--Here it is reduced 'delicacies & lotions'

... **there's INTENSITY & LONGEVITY!!** ...21 days of prayer & fasting ...AND... Significant Spiritual Warfare!!!

- The Length of Time on Earth COINCIDES with an Unknown Heavenly Time Frame!
- There's some communication from heaven that needs some form of "special pursuit"! ...This is NOT Daniel's everyday practice!

Dan 6:10 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

(2) Ezra's Movement Moment

...the 2nd Wave of Exiles Return ...458 BC

...Here the people of God are facing a significant transition. They are leaving the familiar and crossing a danger zone and returning to a setting that will greet them with disrepair and hostilities.

Ezra 8:21-23 ²¹ Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods. ²² For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on our way, since we had told the king, "The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him, and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him." ²³ So we fasted and implored our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty.

- **"THEN I proclaimed a fast there"** ...there are moments that call for/need/require fasting.

...Things that are clearly the will of God (remember, Jeremiah's already prophesied that they would return after 70 years), are impacted by prayer and fasting!

- **Fasting is part of "SEEKING" something from God** ...v.21, 23
- **Sovereign Truths don't make fasting obsolete or unfit or unnecessary--** "*The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him, and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him.*" (v.22)
- **"Humble ourselves before our God"** ...it is frequent that the Bible relates fasting and humbling

Deut 8:2-3 ² And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. ³ And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

"Fasting, ... throughout Scripture, is temporarily abstaining from food for a spiritual purpose. One might abstain from other habits that are otherwise good, but fasting from *food* is especially fitting. Food is vital for life, and yet God has equipped humans with the ability (unpleasant as the experience may be) to go without food for days on end, even as long as three weeks. (By contrast, we can go without breathing only for a few minutes, and without water for a few days.)

"Fasting is an act of self-humbling by declaring our need, and also by showing us afresh how weak we really are."

Just as God designed our bodies for food, he also designed them for fasting. But fasting is not the normal state. It is a temporary and occasional measure for seeking God in some special way. Fasting declares, "God, you are even more important than something so basic as daily bread—with which I'm going without in view of this special need for more of you."

Fasting is an act of self-humbling by declaring our need to God, and by showing us afresh how weak we really are — as we experience the anxiety and irritability that come with an empty stomach." **David Mathis**, "Humble Yourself and Fast", desiringgod.org

(3) Nehemiah's Rebuilding Moment

...The 3rd Wave Returns ...445BC

Nehemiah 1:4-11 ⁴ As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. ⁵ And I said, "O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶ let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. ⁷ We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. ⁸ Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, ⁹ but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.' ¹⁰ They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. ¹¹ O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

...In All These Examples—The Kingdom of Heaven is Coming into the Realm of Earth! ...God's prophetically revealed timeframe is "coming" ...Spiritual forces of resistance are being engaged and overcome! ...earthly hostilities and unknowns and difficulties and fears are being encountered!

—Prayer & FASTING are Always on the Scene!!

"This kind CANNOT..."

Mark 9:17-18, 25-29 ¹⁷ And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. ¹⁸ And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." ...²⁵ And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." ²⁶ And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. ²⁸ And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁹ And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer (some manuscripts add 'and fasting')."

EXERCISE

- Do you have a prayer and a prayer/fasting strategy that is part of your life practice?
- What kinds of "moments" exist in your life and your world that might need prayer & fasting at an unusual level?

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