

Soul Business - Fasting

Introduction:

In many places in scripture, we see fasting as a practice of prayer. Simply put in a biblical framework, fasting means abstaining from food for the purpose of connecting with God in prayer. This is contrary to a modern cultural understanding of fasting as a diet or means of weight loss or some sort of bodily reset. In the biblical context, people fasted in the midst of their sin, sorrow, and difficult situations to seek God and his wisdom and guidance. Some examples from scripture include Moses fasting before meeting God on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:28), Esther calling the people of God to fast in preparation to seek deliverance from certain destruction (Ether 4:16), or Saul of Tarsus who fasted for three days after meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:9).

As people of faith, we too might feel called to fast in order that we might direct our full attention toward God in prayer. It is important to note that fasting is not a means by which we achieve salvation. Salvation comes from faith in Christ and his saving work on the cross. A fast is not necessary to earn anything from God, yet this form of self-denial may be a means by which a person is able to align heart and mind with the will of God. Fasting should only be done when a person is healthy and able. It is typically done for a day, from sunup to sundown, where no food is eaten. Water is usually consumed. As seen with Daniel, partial fasts (where some food is eaten) are also a biblical practice and may be an option for those unable to abstain from consuming food and water. Whatever a fast looks like, it should not be done out of pride or self-interest, but instead to be reminded of Jesus' words, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Read Your Bible

Daniel 10:2-6

Matt 4:1-4

Apply God's Word to Your Life:

1. What foods do you avoid and why?
2. How does a fast differ from a diet or cleanse?
3. Read the Daniel passage again. What does Daniel abstain from? Why?
4. Jesus fasts in Matthew. Where does he direct Satan when he tempts him? What does this teach us?
5. In what ways could a fast be dangerous?
6. What might we gain by fasting? How might God use a fast to speak to us?

Reflecting on the text:

1. What have you learned about God?
2. What have you learned about the world?
3. What have you learned about yourself?

Pray

Lord of Life, you alone are the one who feeds us. Remove from us the things that distract us from you. Direct our full attention to your leading and call us to live our lives for you. In Jesus' name. Amen.