

## MIDWEEK SERVICE

02/6/2008

Tyrone Knight

Greater Baltimore Church of Christ

### **Introduction:**

What a great blessing it is to be able to worship together tonight - I have been tasked with the responsibility to share a brief devotion with you, on a subject matter that is seemingly losing its place in the lives of God's people. I pray that God will use this time to transform our minds and hearts by using the keys he has given us that we might live a victorious life in His Kingdom.

### **Read Scripture: Ps: 78 1-7**

#### **Prayer:**

When Jesus becomes our Lord, we are automatically transformed from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. **(COL: 1:12-13)** *Giving thanks to the father, who has qualified you to share in the kingdom of light.13 for he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.*

**Now that we have a new king and live in a new kingdom, we must understand "Kingdom Principles" if we are to be victorious Disciples.**

**We cannot overcome until we have the keys that unlock the Kingdom of heaven. Jesus never meant for us to wait until we die to experience heaven but purposed for us to bring heaven to the earth through the power of His spirit. **(LUK: 12:32)** *"Do not be afraid, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"***

**We are unable to receive God's healing, provision and blessing if we do not know the keys Jesus have given us to accomplish kingdom living.**

**Keys represent authority in the kingdom of God, and authority is gained by using them.**

The Bible makes available for us to experience God's power in our lives through many - Spiritual Disciplines. Some of those disciplines are as follows: Prayer, Praise, Worship, Intercession and travail.

Tonight I want to look at the next spiritual Discipline. This Discipline is not usually discussed in the modern churches today - and it is practiced even less. I am talking about the discipline of fasting.

### **Question: How would you define fasting?**

Fasting is the voluntary abstinence from food for greater dedication to and concentration on a spiritual purpose.

Fasting is a sacrifice of the personal will" and a time to "humble your soul.

To begin let's look at the types of fasting:

### The Types of "Fasting"

1. **The Normal fast:** Involves the total abstinence of food. (**LUK: 4:2**) reveals that Jesus ate nothing, afterwards he was hungry, according to the text it appears that Jesus abstain from food but not from water.
2. **Absolute Fast:** The abstinence from both food and water. (**ACTS: 9:9**) for 3 days He" neither eat nor drink." The abstinence from both food and water seems to have lasted no more than 3 days. (**EZRA 10:6**)
3. **The Partial Fast:** In this type of fast, the emphasis is placed on restriction of diet; rather from than abstaining from completely from eating (**DAN: 10:3**) *I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips. (Although the word fast is-, abstaining from food in the Bible and does not reefer to giving up thing. During a fast a person if he so chooses can practice abstinence from the other pleasures as well, such as entertainment, T.V. Hobbies and intimacy between a husband and wife, (1 COR; 7:1-5)*
4. **Corporate Fast:** A Church or a family group come together under the leading of God's spirit for them to fast together for a certain period of time.

*Disclaimer:* If after listening to this devotion and you feel the need to proclaim a fast, please be very careful about the methods and duration of any fast that is undertaken. I am not a Doctor nor am I offering medical advice- I'm merely attempting to show some of the purposes and benefits of this spiritual practice.

So the types of fasting we see in the Bible all have to do with abstaining from some or all foods for a certain amount of time amen.

### Fasting in the Bible:

In the OT, fasting was voluntarily done in response to times of individual or national distress, calamity or spiritual crisis (**1 Sam. 7:6, 2 Sam: 1:12-22, Ezra: 8:21; Neh. 1:4, Dan: 9:3-4**).

It was a way of humbling one self before God, in order to seek his favor. In Isaiah's day, the people were fasting on different days, but it was only shame penitence. They neglected the practical application of the law's directives in helping others. (**ISA: 58:6-7**)

In the New Testament age, the Pharisees observed many days of fasting, some even fasted twice a week (**LK: 18:12**). Along with the Pharisees, John the Baptist's disciples regularly fasted.

(**LUK: 5:33**). In the book of (**Acts-13: 2**) we see that the Church there fasted when it came time to appoint Paul and Barnabas as missionaries to go preach the Gospel.

**(ACTS: 14:23)** When it came to choosing the Leadership in the Church fasting and prayer was observed.

How much more effective would our churches be, if we fasted and prayed before ordaining our ministers? For anyone who is considering entering the ministry, or believes that they have heard the call from God to preach, should earnestly consider fasting as well as praying, so that they can receive confirmation.

There are numerous teachings in regards to fasting in the New Testament, some say that it is of no use, it has no spiritual significance, it was only given to the Israelites under the levitical law, some goes on to say that the only command given to fasting was for the Jews on their special feast day, The Day of Atonement, Some believed that since Jesus fulfill the law and we are living in the dispensation of grace, we no longer have to participate in the Mosaic law, etc...

What are your thoughts on fasting is it still relevant for in the life of a Disciple? What scriptural proof would you use to support your position on this Spiritual practice?

#### **FASTING IN THE LIFE OF A DISCIPLE:**

Lets look at some specific examples of fasting, and their spiritual purposes:

*(Ezra: 8:23) So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.*

Ezra is a great figure in the OT. He is honorable because he set his heart to seek the Lord. Is it any wonder that this great man of God employed fasting?

Notice that in this example, the purpose of the fast was to seek the lord immediately. Divine guidance and direction can be gleaned from fasting.

Often times we are face with major decisions and we have no idea which way to go, or what to do. Fasting and prayer can provide a way to hear the voice of God much clearer, amen

When king Jeshosphat found he in dire straits and surrounded by the enemy, he had no battle plan left. So what better strategy to use but fast and pray for God's protection?

*(2 Chronicles: 20:1-3). After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunities came to make war on Jehoshaphat.2. Some men came and told Jehoshaphat a vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the sea. It is already in Hazazon Tamar (that is EnGedi) 3. Alarmed Jehoshapat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.*

Through this act of fasting and prayer, God fought the battle for Israel. Q: Wouldn't you much rather has the Lord fight for you that to fight yourself?

The Apostle Paul obviously lived a lifestyle of fasting and prayer. It is evident from his writings to the church in Corinth. Many folks preach that the Christian life is

one of luxury, and that the Christian life is all about blessings and prosperity, and there are no troubles been a Christian. I don't know which Bible there is reading- **2Corinthians: 6:5** *in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watching, in fasting.*

**2Corinthians: 11:27.** *I have labored and toiled and have often known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food I have been cold and naked*

**Matt: 6:16** 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 there reward in full. I put special emphasis on the phrase” when you fast” – note that it doesn't say, “If you fast”. From reading the text it would seem that Jesus taught fasting was indeed a part of our lives and should be normative experience rather than a super-special event.

Note that Jesus put special emphasis on the way we should conduct ourselves during a fast.

We 're not to try to draw attention to ourselves, or to appear holier-than thou.

What God sees in secret, he's more than willing to reward us openly.

JESUS Himself also gave reference to the fact that His Disciples would be expected to fast once His resurrection had taken place.

Was fasting a spiritual practice in the days of Jesus?

**(Matt 9:14-15)**

**(Mark: 2:18 –20)** It is apparent that fasting was indeed a spiritual practice in the days of Jesus, because the people were amazed (and possibly offended) that Jesus' weren't fasting in those days. If you notice in v-20. *Jesus put all their fears to rest – V: 20 –But the time will come when the bride groom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast”.*

*Jesus put all their fears to rest.*

*Closing: Luke: 4:14. And Jesus returned in the power of the spirit into Galilee Just as Jesus returned in the power of the spirit, it is my sincere desire and prayer that as we fast and seek the face of God, that we will indeed feel the presence and the power of the spirit in our lives.*

*God bless as you study his word.*