

## Soul-Fattening Fasting

### I. Slide1 **Announce:**

- A. Slide2-5 *AP*: Winter Camp. Rise Up Camp. Sent w/Love. Art of Marriage.
- B. Slide6 Baby Dedication 3rd. *Carson Josiah Fernandes Gilliam*. Parents: Aaron & Juliana
- C. Slide7 Introduce Sahar/Bridges Study. 8 session, how to share w/your muslim neighbors. Starts this Thurs 6:30 rm 211 lower campus.
- D. Slide8 Divorce Care & DC4K & Teen Program: 13 week. Starts Mon, Feb 22nd. Rick & Lorrain in info booth today.
- E. Slide9 City Serve: Time to sign up [thecityservice.com](http://thecityservice.com). Tee Shirts \$10. We have 18 projects we need 1400 people. March 5th & 6th. Still need assistants for the project leaders (Leaders need to meet after 3rd for next 3 Sun's). [shirts]
  - 1. Choose which **city** you want to work in. Choose which **project**. Fill out info.
- F. Slide10 Wed Night start new book...*Ecclesiastes* [futile emptiness trying to b happy apart frm God]

### II. Slide11 **Intro: Soul-Fattening Fasting** [the Puritans name for fasting]

- A. Now our 3rd area of worship that Jesus mentions... *fasting*. (giving, prayer)
  - 1. **Fasting**, like *praying* and *giving*, is a legitimate spiritual discipline to be practiced *in private* between a Christian & the Lord.
  - 2. **How often we practice it is not prescribed, *because* that too is between the believer & Christ.**
    - a) When we desire to seek God's face more than we want dinner, that will be the **proper time** to fast.
- B. Slide12 The bible describes 3 main forms of fasting:
  - 1. **The Normal fast**, abstinence from **food**.
  - 2. **The Absolute fast**, abstinence from both **food** and **water**.
  - 3. **The Partial fast**, a **restriction of diet** *rather than* complete abstinence.

### III. Slide13 **FASTING (6:16-18)**

- A. **Fasting** = νηστεύω/nesteuo *To abstain from eating*.
  - 1. A *voluntary* abstinence from food as a religious exercise.

B. You may fast & be discovered doing it; **but** let it not be the *intent of your heart* that you *appear to men to be fasting*.

1. So when you fast, **fast** from *vainglory, ambition, pride, & self-glorification*.

C. There is only 1 commanded in Scripture to Fast...on *the Day of Atonement*.

1. **Slide14a** Lev. 23:27 *you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the Lord.* [*Afflict your souls* is equivalent to *fasting* in the Pentateuch]

2. By the NT time the **Jews** had turned this into **twice a week** (tax collector & the Pharisee)

3. **Muslims** do for a whole **month**, **Ramadan**, sun up to sundown (this year in June)

D. Since the Day of Atonement has been fulfilled in *Jesus*...should we still fast? *Yes*

1. **Slide15** Lk.5:33-35 *One day some people said to Jesus, John the Baptist's disciples fast and pray regularly, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees. Why are your disciples always eating and drinking? 34 Jesus responded, Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. 35 But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.*

a) *Is Jesus taken away?* yes. *Should we fast?* yes. *In heaven do we fast?* Nope, *Feast!* :)

E. **Slide16** Some of the reasons for fasting:

1. **War, or threat of it** - Philistine war at Mizpah. 1 Sam.7

2. **Sickness** - David's son.

3. **Mourning** - Men of Jabesh-Gilead for 7 days over Saul's death.

4. **Safety in Travel** - Ezra 8:21-23, when Israel was out of captivity. **Fasted for themselves, their lil ones, & their possessions.**

5. **Repentance** - Ezra & the people from the captivity. Neh.9:1-3

6. **Impending danger** - Esther & Mordecai before she went to the king.

7. **Calamities** - Burning of the Temple, Jer.52:12,13

F. **Slide17a** Disciplining our flesh

1. Bonhoeffer, *Fasting helps to discipline the self-indulgent & slothful will which is so reluctant to serve the Lord, & it helps to humiliate & chasten the flesh.*

2. There is a need for daily Self-Discipline.

- a) Remember it'll always be true (while in the flesh) *The **spirit** is willing but the **flesh** is weak.*
3. Slide17b Any objection that **fasting** isn't necessary & all that we need is **faith** has missed the point...it's not talking about **salvation** but **sanctification**.
4. It shows...we **depend** on God alone. It shows...we have **self-control**.  
It shows...we **draw** all our **strength** & **resources** on God.  
It shows...we are totally **focused** on Him, when seeking **guidance** or **help**.  
It shows...we are **earnest** in our request. *from J.I.Packer quote*
5. Maybe it's high time again for us to launch a **full scale assault** upon our flesh, & prepare for **better service** by **fasting** & **prayer**.
- a) **Anna did** Lk.2:36,37 *There was also a prophetess, Anna...she never left the temple but worshipped night and day, **fasting** and praying.*
- b) **Jesus did** Mt.4 *After **fasting** for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.*
- c) **Married Couples** can fast from sexual intimacy, **yet** only for a short time, & is to be **accompanied w/prayer & fasting**. 1Cor.7:5
- d) **Spiritual Attacks** Mrk.9:29 *This kind can come out by nothing but prayer & **fasting***
6. Saying **No** to our **physical appetites** helps us to say **No** to other **temptations** which hassle us.
- a) Control your **Flesh** and yield to the **Spirit**.
- b) **Self-Discipline** is when your **conscience** tells you something & you don't talk back.

#### IV. Slide18 **ISAIAH HOLDS THE SECRETS (Isaiah 58)**

##### A. Slide19 **THE CAMOUFLAGE CHRISTIAN** (1-5)

B. They were doing their daily devotions(2a); they delighted in knowing Gods ways(2b); they asked God for just decisions(2c); they delighted in approaching God(drawing near) (2d); they even fasted & afflicted themselves(3-5).

1. **How does this happen?** It happens when we stop coming to truly **worship God**, **but** come to enjoy the **atmosphere created by worship**.
- a) Thus we open ourselves to hypocrisy. *But don't worry you still look great on the outside :)*

C. (3b-5) **If your fasting leaves you:** self-indulgent in other areas (3b); harsh toward your employees (3c); it causes you to quarrel or even get angry enough to hit somebody (4a)... **then** you can be sure, *your fasting is not acceptable to the God.*

1. **How you treat people at work or home on Monday, is the supreme test of acceptable worship from Sunday.**
2. If you're going to attack someone **attack your own sin.** [*Fasting* is to starve **sin**, not **us**]

D. **Slide20 THE 7-POINT FAST** (6-10a)

1. **To loose the bonds of wickedness/injustice, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? (6)**
  - a) We need to live to **free** people, **not** to burden them.
  - b) Acts 15:10 **Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?**
2. **To share your bread with the hungry (7a)**
  - a) This means, **take away food from your own mouth & put it in the mouth of the poor**
  - b) Fasting is meant to awaken us to the **hunger of the world, not just our own hunger.**
3. **To bring to your house the poor (7b)**
  - a) Don't hold to the mindset *doesn't government has programs for this sort of thing.*
  - b) The good Samaritan **didn't** say, *one interrupted day will make very little difference in the problem of chronic violence in this region. He saw this one need & did something.*
  - c) **Bring to your house** – That doesn't mean that *any care short of that* is hypocritical. **But often, all-or-nothing** paralyzes us.
4. **To clothe the naked (7c)**
5. **To not hide yourself from your own flesh (7d)**
  - a) This means be *sympathetic*, **feel** what others **feel** because we have *the same flesh they do.* Heb.13:3 **Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the body also.**
  - b) **I remember a trip to Mumbai** (largest city in India 18.5 mill) that'll do more to change your values & priorities **than** many statistics.
6. **To not point the finger or speak wickedness (9b)**

- a) *Put away gestures & words that show raw contempt for other people.* Piper
- b) Literally *the sending/or letting loose* of the finger...maybe closer to our crude gesture of the middle finger, **than** merely pointing at them. [yep, Gk's & Romans used]

## 7. To extend our soul/ourselves to the hungry (10)

- a) **Not just give food, but give ourselves...our souls.**  
 Not just satisfy the **stomach** of the afflicted, **but** the **soul** of the afflicted.  
 It's not just giving **things**, **but** giving **self**.  
 It's not just **relief**, **but** **relationship**.

## E. Slide21a THE 7-POINT PROMISE (10b-14)

F. There are rewards for fasting. Mt.6:18 your Father who sees in secret will *reward* you openly

1. **Yet**, don't dishonor God by turning His **free grace** into a *business transaction*.

G. God is committed to **rewarding** these acts of the human heart that signify human helplessness & **hope** in God.

H. Slide21b What will **happen** in our lives, & in our churches, & in our community if we prescribe this 7-point fast?

1. **Your light shall break forth** (8a) **also** (10b) **your light shall dawn in the darkness**
  - a) We'll have **light** instead of *darkness*.
2. **Your healing shall spring forth** (8b) **also** (11) **strength to your bones**.
  - a) We have **healing** instead of *disease*.
  - b) So this is **not** a **job description** **but** a *doctor's prescription*.
3. **The glory** of the Lord will be our rear guard (8c) **also** (9) **He will be there when we call**. [*i.e.* It will be **glory** instead of *disgrace*]
4. **The Lord will guide** you continually (11a)
  - a) Don't miss the word *continually* – He is our *perpetual guide* [*r u looking for guidance?* Fast!]
5. **The Lord will satisfy** you (11b)
6. **The Lord will make you like a watered garden** (11c)
  - a) **Life** becomes a **watered garden** **instead** of a *dismal swamp*.
7. **The Lord will restore ruins** (12)

- a) How many **ruined things/lives/relationships/years** may be repaired by the **fasting of God's people**?
- b) Look at the *miserias, dysfunctions, violations, afflictions, oppressions* that could be healed & restored **by** the **beautiful fasting** given to us here, by our friend Isaiah.

I. **Slide22** There's nothing magical about fasting. It's just one way of telling God that **your priority** at that moment is to be alone with Him, sorting out whatever is necessary, and you have canceled the meal, party, concert, or whatever else you had planned to do in order to fulfill that priority. When friends need to be together, they will cancel all other activities in order to make that possible.

J. **Prayer:** Lord, help us not to have a *religion of habit* but a *religion of the heart*. Lord, turn some of our *religious fasts* into *righteous feasts*.

K. **Communion:**

1. **Bread** -
2. **Cup** -

L. \*\*\*\*\*

M. For three days **Jonathan Edwards** had **not eaten a mouthful of food**: for three nights he had not closed his eyes in sleep. Over and over again, he had been saying to God, **"Give me New England! Give me New England!"** and when he arose from his knees, and made his way into the pulpit they say that he looked as if he had been gazing straight into the face of God. They say that before he opened his lips to speak, conviction fell upon his audience.

N. "It is sobering to realize that the very first statement Jesus made about fasting dealt with the question of motive. To use good things to our own ends is always the sign of false religion...Fasting must forever center on God. It must be God-initiated and God-ordained...Fasting reminds us that we are sustained by 'every word that proceeds from the mouth of God' (Matt. 4:4)...Therefore, in experiences of fasting we are not so much abstaining from food as we are feasting on the word of God. Fasting is feasting!" Richard