

“Why bother fasting?”

Why bother fasting? It is a major inconvenience, especially in this part of the world where we regularly get to eat at least 3 meals a day...and then there are snacks. My answer begins with asking you and myself, how hungry are we for God? Just fasting for the sake of some sense of duty or religious merit-earning will leave us feeling it a burden and empty. But, if we are desperate for a deeper relationship with God, or spiritual transformation, or insight into His purposes for us, or asking for a need to be met, fasting can be a means of grace.

To help us focus on seeking the face of God:

It is clear that Jesus practiced this means of grace when He spent 40 days fasting before He began His ministry. He also implied that we could use it when He said, **“When you fast...” (Mt.6:16)**. I think the biggest reason for it is to help us focus on seeking the face of God, to know Him and become one with Him. At times I have fasted hoping for a spectacular experience of some kind, but what I have ended up with is a deeper knowing of God and a deeper knowing of myself with my entanglement in fleshly desires. It also led to an increased sensitivity to the leading of His Spirit in the days that followed. While Jesus was with His disciples they did not need to seek His presence in that way, but He told them that afterwards they would: **“when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.” (Mt.9:15)**.

To help humble our proud and rebellious hearts:

Another reason for fasting is that it helps humble our flesh that wants to rule us. It is a way for us to take our cravings by the scruff of the neck and tell them that they must submit to our desire to please God. This is particularly helpful when we are confronting a sinful attitude or behaviour we have become aware of and we are having trouble overcoming. God told His people to return to Him, **“with fasting and weeping and mourning” (Joel 2:12)**. That sounds a lot like what James said: **“Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.” (Jm.4:8-10)**.

To help receive guidance from the Lord:

As Daniel was fasting, praying and seeking God for understanding of the times they were in, an angel was sent to tell him: **“Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.” (Dn.10:12)**. This story is very encouraging to me because it reveals that it means something to God when we get earnest in our prayers. I think that was what happened when the church leaders in Antioch **“were worshiping the Lord and fasting”**. It was then that **“the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’.” (Ac.13:2)**. And that guidance changed the world.

To help us receive answers to our prayers:

When the Jews in exile in Persia were threatened with extinction because of the wicked scheming of the king’s right-hand man, Queen Esther fasted and asked the Jews to fast with her, as she went before the king to seek mercy **(Est.6:15,16)**. The word prayer was not used in the whole of the Book

of Esther, but it was implied and God heard their fasting-prayer and delivered them from this evil plot. We need the Lord's help as a family of churches this coming year as we seek to be renewed and bear much fruit in our world that is increasingly becoming anti-Christ.

How should we fast and pray?

This is something that is very personal and can take many forms. I know people who have done 40 day fasts, some who have done Daniel fasts (21 days without eating meat, choice foods, drinking stimulants), some who have done 7 day fasts with only vegetable juices, some who have done 3 day fasts of no food or water, and some that chose not to drink coffee. What we are encouraging ourselves to do as we begin a new year and look forward to our spring General Conference is to choose some meaningful fast so that you can focus on praying for our family of churches, including your own church, and the communities and nation we serve in. Whatever you chose to do, do it for the Lord, as you feel lead of Him. During that time, you can focus your prayers on:

- Log on to the kick-off Zoom event that Bishop Cliff is leading on Sunday, Jan.7/24, at 6pm EDT [Click here to access the Zoom call](#) Meeting ID: 885 3284 1873 Passcode: 105833
- Searching your heart to see if there is anything that needs to be repented of as David did in Psalm 51. There will be daily devotionals sent out, via social media and posted on our webpage, each day focusing on different parts of this prayer.
- Praying for different dimensions of the ministry of the FMCIC. These themes are posted as well.
- Join in the daily "Prayer for Revival at Noon Eastern" prayer meetings that are online at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88532841873?pwd=SEtnSWdSK3FTTC9JUZFlaEpvTHI6Zz09> (check webpage for phone numbers).

By Pastor Ken Roth (NPT lead)