

The Spiritual Disciplines of David

Fasting and Prayer

Fasting

- **Psalm 69:10** When I wept *and chastened* my soul with fasting, that became my reproach.

Prayer

- **Psalm 5:2-3** Give heed to the voice of my cry, My King and my God, For to You I will pray. ³ My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; In the morning I will direct *it* to You, And I will look up.

You can pray without fasting, but you cannot fast without prayer.

- **Acts 13:3** Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away.
- **Acts 14:23** So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

When you pray... When you fast...

Sermon on the Mount

- **Matthew 6:5-7** "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. ⁷ And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

- **Matthew 6:16-18** “Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ¹⁷ But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.
- There is an applied command. Jesus says when, not if. He is assuming you will pray and fast.
- Both the do’s and the don’ts of prayer and fasting have something in common – and it’s the main focus of what Jesus is saying here – No pride.
 - Don’t pray loudly to be seen
 - Do pray in secret
 - Don’t use vain repetitions
 - Pray like the model prayer
 - Don’t be obvious that you are fasting
 - Bathe

If these are the basic instructions that Jesus gives concerning prayer and fasting, then both prayer and fasting must have something to do with humility – the opposite of pride.

Prayer is simply communication with God. But pride will hinder that communication. Because within prayer is the idea that we are dependent on God. Dependent on Him for our healing, our daily needs, our intercession for others, our hope, etc...

David continually throughout the Psalms praises God for His faithfulness in caring for him and protecting him and providing for him. Psalm 23 is a great example of that.

Fasting is not eating for a specified period of time. The purpose is to humble yourself and deny your physical flesh for the purpose of elevating God.

Humility is the essential posture to getting prayers answered

- **Philippians 2:5-9** Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.
- **James 4:10** Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.
- **James 4:6** But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "*God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.*"

There is no "God, look at what I have done. I deserve..." or "this person I am praying for is such a great person. Look how faithful they are..."

- Compared to God our good works are like filthy rags.
- **Isaiah 64:6** But we are all like an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Prayer

Matthew 6:8-13 "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. ⁹ In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as *it is* in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. ¹³ And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

- In June and July of last year we looked at this model prayer for 5 weeks. So, if you want more on that, I would refer you to look at those messages.
- But essentially, prayer is communication. Jesus encourages us to approach God based on our relationship with Him as our Father. This is our primary relationship with God. As Father. Not as judge, or Creator, or King, but Father.
- We praise Him. We declare His holiness, or His greatness. Note this position of humility that starts us off in.
- We pray for His Kingdom to come and His will be done. Again, humility. His will, not ours. His Kingdom, not our culture.
- We ask for our needs. Reliance on Him. Humility.
- We ask for forgiveness, and we forgive others. Both places of humility. Humble before God that we have sinned. Humble towards others that we won't hold their sins against them.
- We ask for protection from temptation – reliance on Him, not our willpower.
- Deliverance from the enemy – His power, not ours. Any authority we have, and we do have authority, is only delegated power.
- End in worship. Worship is acknowledging that He is superior to us.

Humility should define our attitude in prayer.

Fasting

Reasons for fasting:

To increase humility

- **Psalm 35:13** But as for me, when they were sick, My clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; And my prayer would return to my own heart.
- **Ezra 8:21-23** Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the

right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. ²² **For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, "The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him."** ²³ So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.

- Corporate fast
- Do we take the carnal way or the spiritual way? Ezra faced a real security issue, but he had to put his money where his mouth was.
- Because of the severity of this decision, they fasted and prayed.
 - Fasting to humble themselves so the decision was not made in arrogance or pride.

God's Judgement

- **1 Kings 21:25-29** But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up. ²⁶ And he behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all *that* the Amorites had done, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. ²⁷ So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning. ²⁸ And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ²⁹ "See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house."
 - Even the most evil king was spared when he repented through fasting.
- **Jonah 3:5-10** So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. ⁶ Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes. ⁷ And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published throughout

Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. ⁸ But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹ Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish? ¹⁰ Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

- **2 Chronicles 7:14** if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.
- Humble themselves – they would have taken this to mean fast.

Hearing from God

- **Acts 13:1-3** Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away.
- **Acts 14:21-23** And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." ²³ So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Disconnect from the world, Connect to God

Matthew 17:14-21 And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, ¹⁵ "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶ So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him."

¹⁷ Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me." ¹⁸ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?"

²⁰ So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. ²¹ **However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.**"

Faithless – apistos – unbeliever

- Actually a word usually translated as unbeliever. Or without Christian faith. Heathen.
- This is a form of the word for apostasy
- Essentially Jesus is saying there is a disconnect from God. Or that the disciples are not connected to God.

Perverse - diastrephō - Corrupt, perverse.

- Philippians 2:15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,
- Perverse meaning something not of God, but of that which is corruptible and perishing. The world.

- Essentially Jesus is saying they are connected to the world.

Prayer is connection with God.

Fasting is denying our flesh – disconnecting from the world.