

Lesson 3:
Prayer & Fasting

Objectives

1. To develop intimacy with God through Prayer and Fasting.
2. To have a deeper understanding on Prayer and Fasting.
3. To be a Person of Prayer.

Introduction



Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

- MATTHEW 7:7 NIV

Just like you, I also have favorite characters in the Bible. One of them is Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus. There were a few recorded instances with Mary in the Bible (e.g. sitting at Jesus' feet; washing Jesus' feet with expensive oil and wiping them with her hair; mourning at Lazarus' death). With these 3 instances, she had shown how her ways had touched Jesus' heart and I was intrigued by it. Several times I've asked Jesus these questions:

- What was it with Mary that when Martha complained to You about Mary's lack of help, You immediately replied to her by saying " She had chosen the right thing."
- What was it with Mary that when she had washed Your feet with expensive perfume and had wiped them with her hair, Your response to the disciple who had questioned this act was " I tell you the truth, whenever this Gospel is preached throughout the world, what Mary has done will also be told, in memory of her."
- What was it with Mary that when You heard her say "If you had been here, my brother would not have died," You were deeply moved and You even wept?

Was it because of her gift? (Remember both Mary and Martha have Gift of Service or Hospitality). Was it because of the emotions or the words that she expressed? (Martha had stated the same words in John 11 : 21, 32). Then God has made me realized valuable lessons from Mary's life and example. Mary had discovered ONE thing, the BEST thing worth being concerned about. Being with God, talking and listening to Him, enjoying His presence over and above anything and anyone else. He desires something astounding with you: INTIMACY. There is nothing more important to God than that. Jeremiah 31 : 3 says, " I have loved you with an everlasting love." He wants you – not part of you but all of you, every day and all the time. There is no one He would rather spend time with than you. If intimacy with God is what she had then, I would like to catch it. I would like to develop it. How do we acquire this intimacy? Praying and fasting is a point of intimacy with God.



✚ Lesson Proper

A. PRAYER

1. Prayer is a Principle for God's Working:

- Prayer is the union of the believer's thoughts with the will of God. In other words, declaring what the will of God is. It is the license that we give God to do His will on earth (Miles Munroe in his book, *The Purpose & Power of Prayer*). Matthew 18 :18 says, "*Verily I say unto you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*". Earth must bind first before heaven will bind, and earth must loose first before heaven will loose. However, God never does anything against His will. It is NOT because the earth has bound something that God is then forced to bind that which He has not wished to bind. Not so. He binds and looses in heaven what has been bound / loosed on earth simply because that has been His Original will. Prayer is necessary if we want to carry on God's work properly.
- Effective preaching / teaching / worship leading or any form of service in the church cannot take place without effective praying.

Acts 6: 1 – 7 The Greek – speaking Christians complained that their widows were being unfairly treated. This favoritism was probably not intentional but was more likely caused by language barriers. To correct the situation, the disciples have selected seven men from them who were filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom. But they added this important statement: " We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word (Acts 6 : 4). They surely realized that the success of the Word and the progress of the church were dependent on prayer. Their priorities were correct. The ministry of the Word should never be neglected because of administrative burdens. Pastors should not try, or be expected to try, to do everything.

2. Prayer is the best offensive weapon against Satan.

- Our wrestling is not "*against flesh and blood*" (Eph. 6 : 12) In our prayers, we should bind Satan and render him powerless in the Name of Jesus. In that way, our victory is assured. Use '*authoritative prayer*'. It is standing upon the heavenly position Christ has given us and using authority to resist all the works of Satan by commanding that whatever God has commanded must be done.
- Satan's tactic is to wear us out (Daniel 7 : 25). Church activities may make us so busy that they hinder praying. According to E.M. Bounds in his book *The Weapon of Prayer*, "It is better to let the work go by default than to let the praying go by neglect. Nothing is done well without prayer for the simple reason that it leaves God out of the work.
- We must ask God to open our eyes so that we may discern how Satan desires to wear us out and how we should combat this tactic.

3. Praying men and women are necessity in carrying out God's Will on earth.

- God's purpose is for us to be filled with His will that we forget our own interests. He calls us to work together with Him to accomplish His will. God will impress ONLY



to the People of prayer His desires (Romans 8 :26) When we pray according to this kind of burden, we will have a sense that we are divulging the very will of God. When we catch God's burden and pray according to His will, something astounding will happen.

- People of prayer are the only people who can, and do represent God in this world. They are the only people who have influence with God, the only people to whom God commits Himself and His Gospel. Praying people are the only people in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, for the Holy Spirit and prayer go hand and hand. The Holy Spirit never descends upon prayerless people. He never fills them. He never empowers them. The Holy Spirit dwells only in an atmosphere of prayer.

B. FASTING

A conscious, intentional decision to abstain for a time from the pleasure of eating in order to gain vital spiritual benefits.

God expects us to pray and fast. Matthew 6 : 5-6, Jesus said, "*When you pray...* In vv. 16-17, He said, "*When you fast...* It's like saying, if you love ME, you will pray and fast. Fasting illustrates our self – denial. The first privilege that God granted Adam was food. Fasting, therefore, signifies a denial of man's first legal right. When prayer and fasting are joined, faith will instantly be sparked. And with faith comes authority.

True fasting involves the following:

- Seeking God
- Putting God First
- Creating an Environment for Prayer
- Interceding for Others

Those who fast benefit from their obedience in fasting. However, the main purpose for fasting is to benefit others. When we fast, we hear from God and we receive the fullness of His power.

C. THE PRAYING MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

- He rules the church – through prayer.

When the church is in condition of prayer, God's cause always flourishes, and His Kingdom on earth always triumphs. His will and His glory are bound up in prayer.

- Failure to pray is failure in the church

It is failure of duty, service and spiritual progress. It is only by prayer that God can help people. How we place prayer is how we place God. To give prayer a secondary place is to make God secondary in the church. If the members do not pray, they rob the church of God's help.

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- Pray until the burden is discharged.

In prayer meetings, we should not allow our prayer to jump around from one matter to another before the first one is thoroughly prayed through. The burden for each matter must first be discharged before moving on to another issue. This is the secret of success in prayer meetings.

Conclusion:

- God’s power is unlimited but the manifestation of His power is dependent on how much we pray and how often we fast.

Life Application:

- Get a prayer partner. Discuss some personal prayer items and God’s promises. Pray together and enforce God’s will to the life of your prayer partner.