



Word Notes: Sunday 3rd March 2019

Tony Hodge – Fasting

Key Text: Isaiah 58:3-9

Fasting is a biblical way to humble ourselves before God which helps us with intercession, strengthens our petitions to God by demonstrating our commitment and self-denial and can bring revelation and spiritual growth. *"Fasting helps to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice everything, [even] ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God."* (Andrew Murray(1828 – 1917). It may seem like an old-fashioned thing to do but Jesus expected us to fast (Matthew 6:2,5,16). There are three main types of fast:

- Normal Fast. Going without food for a defined period of time. EG Jesus in Matthew 4.
- Partial (or Daniel) Fast. Fasting from some foods (or other things) but not all. Can be a good introduction to the Normal Fast, is easy to revert back to your usual diet and can be sustained for longer. EG Daniel 1.
- Absolute Fast. Total abstinence of Food and Drink. EG Esther 4:16, Paul in Acts 9:9. NB – this is a sever kind of fasting, must be no more than 3 days and with full medical advice.

In all cases if you have any medical conditions or are taking regular medicines you should consult your medical practitioner.

If you've never fasted before don't set a wild target. Pray it through and see how you believe the HS is leading you to fast – and talk it over with someone you're close to – a spouse or prayer partner. A partial fast is a good place to start, decide how that will work and for how long. The same goes for a normal fast.

Study & Application

Read all of Isaiah 58 then discuss these questions

What are your immediate thoughts from this passage on how the people of Israel were treating God at this time?

In regard to fasting, what were they doing that made their sacrifice unacceptable to God? How might we make similar mistakes?

What kind of offering does God actually want?

Jesus fasted in preparation for facing temptation by the Devil (Matthew 4). What example does this set for you? Did Jesus "need" to fast and why? Why then should we fast?

Prayer

Pray for each other as we enter this time of Prayer and Fasting. Review this weeks prayer notes form Clare sent out by separate email and encourage each other to pray – both to petition God and to hear from Him.