

Prayer And Fasting

Matthew 6:5-8,16-18; 17:14-21

Faith Portal Church

ADULT

Unit 4 Lesson 6

Supplemental Texts

Matthew 6:9-15

Focus Verse

“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” –

Matthew 6:6

Introduction

Prayer is another example of an act of righteousness. Just as with almsgiving, there is a right and a wrong way of offering prayer. This is also true with fasting. Prayer and fasting are crucial and show our devotion to God; however, it is possible to make a show of these righteous acts in the presence of other people in order to receive their praises and admirations.

Deeper Look

Do Not Be Like The Hypocrites – Matt 6:5-8,16-18

We know we must pray, but we are instructed not to pray as the hypocrites, who pray only to show the world how devoted they are. Their focus is not on the prayer but on the praises they will receive from people around. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day were the guilty party (Matt 23:14; Luke 18:11). If we fail to pray, we fail to live dependently on God. The original word used for “closet” refers to inner chamber or secret room. A closet represents a place we pray to God with no interruption or distraction. Our heart shuts out the affairs of life. It is crucial to know that we can offer prayer anyway as the situation dictates, and if not driven by an ostentatious spirit. Jesus enjoins us to avoid “vain repetitions” because we are not heard for our many words, and we cannot impress God with our many words.

Fasting is to be heeded with no intent to let the world know we are fasting. Fasting is a total abstinence from food for a certain time. It is between a person and God. “Anoint thine head, and wash thy face” means to let your countenance remain normal and appear as usual.

This Kind Does Not Go Out But By Prayer And Fasting – Matt 17:14-21

We see the inability of Jesus’ disciples to heal a demon-possessed child who suffered from epilepsy (compare Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-42). As Jesus said, His disciples could not heal the child because of unbelief—lack of faith. Faith in Jesus is essential to seeing the power of God at work. Prayer and fasting strengthen our faith and devotion to God.

Questions

1. Who was Jesus referring to as hypocrites? Why? What drives hypocrites to do what they do? Can and should hypocrites be found among the people of God?
2. What does “closet” mean as used in the text? What does it mean to “enter” into your closet and “shut” your door? What did Jesus intend for His audience to grasp? What does Jesus want us to understand today?
3. Describe what it means to use “vain repetitions” in our prayer. Why did Jesus address this issue in His teaching? Does the use of vain repetitions demonstrate our faith in God?
4. How do you feel knowing that God in heaven knows everything you need before you ask Him? Why should you still ask of Him?
5. Biblically, fasting goes together with prayer. What role does fasting play when we pray? Why should we avoid the wrong way of fasting? Explain.
6. How effective is prayer and fasting in your own experience? Provide at least one biblical example where prayer and fasting was employed? Was the outcome an expected one?
7. How does God view prayer and fasting? What should prompt us to prayer and fasting?

Personal Meditation

Prayer and fasting are crucial in a Christian's life. We must pray, and we should fast. We can pray without fasting, but we cannot fast without praying. Through prayer, we communicate with God to strengthen our devotion to Him, and, by fasting, we yearn for a deeper devotion. Prayer and fasting build up our faith greatly. With faith, we can expect answers to our prayers. It does not seem that Jesus' disciples had no faith at all, but that they lacked the faith necessary for the miracle to be done, that is, casting of the demon out of the boy. We should know that answers to some prayers would be realized when we are deeper in our faith and devotion to God.

Prayer and fasting are to be taken seriously, not hypocritically. The reward for praying and fasting will be lost if we do them only to be seen by others (Matt 6:5,16), and we miss the chance of improving our spiritual standing. Conversely, our reward will be great if we let God be at the center of our prayer and fasting (Matt 6:6,18). We must take Jesus' advice to heart. Let us nurture an attitude that seeks to please our heavenly Father, and Him alone.

DAILY STUDY

Monday	Matt 6:5-6
Tuesday	Matt 6:7-8
Wednesday	Matt 6:16-18
Thursday	Matt 17:14-16
Friday	Matt 17:17-18
Saturday	Matt 17:19-21



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