



North Fort Myers Church of the Nazarene Messenger

January, 2019, Volume 9, Issue 9

Fasting and Feasting

The New Year is upon us, and our church has undergone some wonderful changes in this last year. Primary among them is the fact that when we look around, our face has changed. We have welcomed many new people and embraced many new friends in our congregation in 2018. It is a delight to see new people being welcomed into the hearts and homes of one another, and true fellowship happening among our folks. It must delight the Lord when we open our hearts to make room for new friends. It does not happen accidentally, but is definitely purposeful and happens only with intent.

It is important for believers to create space in our lives for fellowship; the benefits of which are typically very clear: encouragement, mutual instruction, comfort in times of need, accountability, opportunities to serve, growth in patience and forgiveness – the list of benefits is long. But those who seek out the sweetness of fellowship are often those whose lives are the fullest and most content. However, none of those benefits are enjoyed if time is not purposefully set aside in order to see it happen.

Our church has begun what we hope will become a new tradition this year. We have chosen to begin the New Year with 21 days of prayer and fasting. We have all been challenged to give up something in order to focus our attention on drawing closer to GOD. As well, we are asking our folks to gather together each of these first 21 days of 2019, from 8 AM to noon to pray. Why?

Fasting is just one aspect of the discipline of self-control; it's a way of acknowledging our utter dependence upon GOD, and is a way of being reminded that we draw all our strength and resources from Him. It is a way of displaying an earnestness and a deep desire to receive help, guidance and answers to all our difficulties. It is also a way to confess our sins, and demonstrate our sorrow and repentance and fall upon the mercy of GOD.

However, oftentimes, we avoid fasting, because we tend to look at it from the standpoint of what we are giving up rather than what we are getting. Christian fasting is abstaining from something for the sake of some very specific spiritual purpose, or it is not truly Christian.

Therefore, in the same way we must purposefully make room in our hearts for new relationships with people, we also purposefully make room in our lives for a deeper walk with GOD. When fellowship needs to happen, we forego all other activities in order to make that possible. When we need to hear from GOD and need to make certain we are making Him the center of our lives – as individuals AND as a congregation, we forego the frivolous and unnecessary in order to seek the highest and most important.

There is nothing mysterious about fasting. It is just one way of showing that our priority is to be alone with GOD, hearing from Him in order for Him to help sort out whatever needs to happen in order for us to draw closer to Him. So, we cancel the meal, the party, the concert, the TV, whatever else is the everyday norm, in order to make the priority of our life Him.

We so often quote II 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 I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

But, how often do we really place ourselves in that picture? **We** are His people, so this promise from GOD is for **us**. It is the very specific promise that He will forgive our sin and heal our land – **your** sin and **my** sin, and **our** country's sin, which clearly stand in the way of His healing. However, it contains that sticky little word that we so often want to ignore in scripture – “*if*.” That little word contains within it our instructions for receiving that promise – **humility, prayer, seeking His Face, and turning from our wickedness.**

We all speak of revival. We say we long for holiness. But just what are we willing to do to see wholeness and fire from on High happen? Are we willing to purposefully set aside a few days and a few meals, or a few hours in front of the TV or computer screen in order to have what we claim we need so desperately? It could just be that these few days may begin with fasting, but will end seeing us feasting on Him. Becky

Birthdays & Anniversaries

- 1 – Devon Kiser
- 3 – Carl Baxter
- 7 – Betty Predko
- 19 – Grace Bolling
- 20 – Laurel & Dorothy Chapman
- 23 – Dan & Diane Bowker
- 26 – Dave Peck
- 27 – Jerry Pickett
- 29 – Susi Friedman



January Calendar

- 1 – HAPPY NEW YEAR!
- 9 – Food Distribution
- 10 – Board Meeting
- 11 – Dominoes Night!
- 26 – Open Mic Night
- 27 – Hyssongs in Concert

Prayer Needs:

Dick & Janet VanSkyver
 Mark Woodby
 Michael Romano
 Paul & Grace Boling
 Orion Predko
 Sheryl Colie & Family
 Ernie Rybold
 Kenny & Gail Goodman
 Annie Krapu
 Steven Leo
 Sandy Reedy
 Marlene Ryan
 House of James Ministries

Laurel Chapman
 Patrick Lindsey
 Ryan Woodby
 Matthew Morgan
 Phoebe Barr
 Joseph Groves
 Regina Williams
 Bonnie Rose
 Ken Vandeline
 Janice O'Lynn
 Pearl Buchkoski
 Kitty Baxter
 Unsaved Loved Ones

Carl Baxter
 Craig Smith
 Nick Kiser
 Ida Chaplow
 Beth Kurland
 Eileen Massett
 Alice Daugherty
 Eileen Jennings
 Cody Church
 Jeff Werling
 Jerry & Deane Werling
 A Youth Pastor
 Our military, our leaders & our nation

Jerry Parker & Family
 Dorothy Chapman
 Dan Bowker
 Ardyth Eldridge
 Mark & Kim Barr
 Louis Perez
 Phyllis Obney
 Vanessa Hinckley
 Country of Ukraine
 Betty Retter
 The Nation of Israel
 Our Church Leaders

Dominoes Game Night

Fri., Jan. 11

6:30 – 9:00 P.M.

Bring your pips and a snack.

If you know the game, come play.

If you don't know the game, come learn and play



We need volunteers to help with the distribution on Wednesday, January 9, from 4:00 to 6:00 PM, to help with a variety of tasks. Please spread the word to anyone you think could benefit from this special outreach and join us as we partner to help those in need. Thank you for being the hands and feet of Jesus in North Fort Myers.



Harry Chapin Food Bank
 OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
Fighting Hunger, Feeding Hope

The Hyssongs

in Concert

Sunday, January 27

10:45 A.M.



Prayer and Fasting - A Definition

Prayer and fasting is defined as voluntarily going without food (and more recently, abstaining from other pleasures and comforts) in order to focus on prayer and fellowship with God. Prayer and fasting often go hand in hand, but this is not always the case. You can pray without fasting, and fast without prayer. It is when these two activities are combined and dedicated to GOD's glory that they reach their full effectiveness. Having a dedicated time of prayer and fasting is not a way of manipulating God into doing what you desire. Rather, it is simply forcing yourself to focus and rely on God for the strength, provision, and wisdom you need.

Prayer and Fasting - What the Bible Says

The Old Testament law specifically *required* prayer and fasting for only one occasion, which was the Day of Atonement. This custom became known as "the day of fasting" (Jeremiah 36:6) or "the Fast" (Acts 27:9). Moses fasted during the 40 days and 40 nights he was on Mount Sinai receiving the law from God (Exodus 34:28). King Jehoshaphat called for a fast in all Israel when they were about to be attacked by the Moabites and Ammonites (2 Chronicles 20:3). In response to Jonah's preaching, the men of Nineveh fasted and put on sackcloth (Jonah 3:5). Prayer and fasting was often done in times of distress or trouble. David fasted when he learned that Saul and Jonathan had been killed (2 Samuel 1:12). Nehemiah had a time of prayer and fasting upon learning that Jerusalem was still in ruins (Nehemiah 1:4). Darius, the king of Persia, fasted all night after he was forced to put Daniel in the den of lions (Daniel 6:18). And more recently, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a National day of prayer and fasting, March 30, 1863, "*devoutly recognizing the Supreme Authority and just Government of Almighty God, in all the affairs of men and of nations.*"

Prayer and fasting also occurs in the New Testament. Anna "*worshipped night and day, fasting and praying*" at the Temple (Luke 2:37). John the Baptist taught his disciples to fast (Mark 2:18). Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights before His temptation by Satan (Matthew 4:2). The church of Antioch fasted (Acts 13:2) and sent Paul and Barnabas off on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:3). Paul and Barnabas spent time in prayer and fasting for the appointment of elders in the churches (Acts 14:23).

Prayer and Fasting - Required or Recommended?

The Word of GOD does not specifically command believers to spend time in prayer and fasting. At the same time, prayer and fasting is definitely something we should be doing. Far too often, though, the focus of prayer and fasting is on abstaining from food. Instead, the purpose of Christian fasting should be to take our eyes off the things of this world and focus our thoughts on GOD. Fasting should always be limited to a set time because not eating for extended periods can be damaging to the body. Fasting is not a method of punishing our bodies and it is not to be used as a "dieting method" either. We are not to spend time in prayer and fasting in order to lose weight, but rather to gain a deeper fellowship with GOD.

By taking our eyes off the things of this world through prayer and biblical fasting, we can focus better on Christ. Matthew 6:16-18 declares, "*When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*"

Prayer and Fasting - What Does it Accomplish?

Spending time in prayer and fasting is not automatically effective in accomplishing the desires of those who fast. Fasting or no fasting, GOD only promises to answer our prayers when we ask according to His will. 1 John 5:14-15 tells us, "*This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of him.*" In the prophet Isaiah's time, the people grumbled that they had fasted, yet GOD did not answer in the way they wanted (Isaiah 58:3-4). Isaiah responded by proclaiming that the external show of fasting and prayer, without the proper heart attitude, was futile (Isaiah 58:5-9).

How can you know if you are praying and fasting according to GOD's will? Are you praying and fasting for things that honor and glorify God? If we are asking for something that is not honoring to God or not God's will for our lives, GOD will not give what we ask, whether we fast or not. How can we know GOD's will? GOD promises to give us wisdom when we ask. James 1:5 tells us, "*If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*" Let us dedicate these 21 days to Him – asking Him for strength and wisdom to do what pleases Him and to live in a way that leads us to lives of holiness and purity in His sight.

Making Mistakes

“I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes. Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're doing something.

So that's my wish for you, and all of us, and my wish for myself. Make New Mistakes. Make glorious, amazing mistakes. Make mistakes nobody's ever made before. Don't freeze, don't stop, don't worry that it isn't good enough, or it isn't perfect, whatever it is: art, or love, or work or family or life.

Whatever it is you're scared of doing, Do it. Make your mistakes, next year and forever.” — Neil Gaiman

It is not in our nature to want to make mistakes. We want to be perfect. We want our lives to be perfect, our families, our jobs, our personalities, our friends, our mates. But we all know that no one is perfect. Everyone makes mistakes. The key is to learn whatever we can from every mistake we make.

When Walt Disney was 16, he dropped out of school to join the Army but was rejected for being underage. Instead, he joined the Red Cross and was sent to France for a year to drive an ambulance. Disney found a way. Did you know he was also fired from his first job as a cartoonist?

Many may know that Thomas Edison made over 900 light bulb filaments before he made one that worked.

Henry Ford said: “Failure is only the opportunity to begin again more intelligently.”

How To Learn From Mistakes or Failure

1. Take The Risk And Pay the Price

Nothing ventured, nothing gained. You have to be willing to take the risk and venture beyond your comfort zone, regardless of what area you are in, to gain some form of success. Think about the entrepreneurs, scientists, leaders, and businesses that took the path less trodden and how they were rewarded handsomely.

If you are willing to pay the price with the risk you take, then the returns may just surprise you. “But what if I fail?” you ask.

2. Know It's OK To Fail, Really

The adage we learn from failure is true. Be open with your mind, eyes and ears. The lessons are there for you to understand and do better next time. Think about what you have done right, what you can do better and what you should stop doing. That is one of the easiest ways to analyze how to learn from failure.

3. Realize Experience Is the Best Teacher

Think about this, if you do not fail in any of your endeavors, how do you learn to be better? How do you become wiser? People say experience is the best teacher. If you accept that to be true, then you need to accept failure as one of the many lessons you gain from experience. So, you get to learn from failure. It's that simple. Think about failure as lessons paid in the journey of life.

4. Allow Yourself the Freedom to Fail

When you are too cautious, you do not allow yourself to take any risks. If you are safe all the time, then you are not giving yourself the opportunity to learn from failure. Give yourself the freedom to fail, and see how the lessons of success open up for you.

5. Let the Fear of Failure Help You Succeed

The fear of failure may not necessarily be a bad thing, since it can propel you to succeed. Some people use it as a motivating factor to ensure they succeed. As long as you do not get paralyzed into inaction and limit your appetite for taking risk, the fear of failure as a propelling factor can be of good use.

6. Welcome Failure

There can be no success without failure. If you welcome failure as an opportunity to learn, you will learn from failure. The fees for learning from failure may seem too high sometimes, but in the long run you will somehow discover it a worthwhile price to pay. It is also good to remember that Jesus said... *“and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* Matthew 28:20b

We do not have to go through our mistakes and failures alone. When we trust in the Lord, He will be there to help show us a way to correct and improve our mistakes.

Jump into 2019 full force! You will make a difference! Blessings in the New Year, Pastor Van

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