

Equip
Session 8

Building the
Kingdom
Through
Prayer

Updated: June, 2013

BUILDING THE KINGDOM THROUGH PRAYER

Introduction: Learning to function in all the dimensions of prayer is so vital for both the Kingdom of God and for our own lives as we walk with Jesus.

What is the condition of your prayer life?

God wants fellowship with you each day, to walk with you and have continuous contact with you (pray without ceasing)

To learn to pray, we must PRAY!!

- * We will not learn much just by listening to lectures
 - Unless you actually pray, gaining information about praying will not do much good
- * We only learn as we roll up our sleeves and begin to work at it
- * “Full Life in Christ” seeks to help you practice:
 - meeting God “Heart to heart” each day
 - praying in the Spirit
 - offering the sacrifice of praise
 - building and using your prayer list

In this session we are going to explore Intercessory Prayer. We will learn how to use prayer as a major weapon in Building the Kingdom.

- * Read James 5: 16

Intercessory Prayer Moves the Hand of God

- * Intercessory prayer accomplishes much and allows things to happen in the Kingdom
- * Every great move of God’s Spirit upon the earth has been birthed and carried out by Intercession

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INTERCESSION

Definition: “Coming to the Lord on behalf of others” is a major weapon in building the Kingdom of God.

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avail much.—James 5:16b

Intercessory prayer _____ **moves the hand of God** _____

Individuals, families, churches and whole communities have been drastically altered by persistent, believing prayer. Even history has been changed time after time by men and women who knew how to pray.

WE BECOME **PARTNERS WITH GOD** ON THIS EARTH AS WE PRAY FOR:

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men. I Timothy 2:1

1. **Government Leaders**
for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. I Timothy 2:2
2. **Members of the Body**
Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. James 5:16
3. **Church Leaders**
Pastors, elders, deacons, teachers.
4. **Other Christian leaders**
Especially those who have prominent ministries.
5. **Missionaries**
We build God’s Kingdom around the world through his servants who are at work in the many different countries and ministries.

THROUGH INTECESSION, WE BECOME **PARTNERS WITH GOD** ON THIS EARTH

Why has God structured it this way?

- * He could have used legions of angels; instead He has invited us to be His partners
- * He has chosen prayer!

How can I possibly make a difference in this world? I am just one person! What is the most effective way for me to contribute something good to the lives of the people I care about? The answer to these questions is simple: we can pray. Through prayer we are able to touch the world around us in far greater depth than we ever dreamed possible.

The best place to start as an intercessor (one who pleads with God on behalf of another) is to pray first for the ones closest to us – then, people in our community, leaders in our state and nation, and ultimately people and situations we are aware of around the world. But we often stop praying long before we ever get that far because we believe that the world is too big for our tiny prayers to make much of a difference. But when we see things from God’s perspective, we understand that although our prayers may be small in relation to the problems in the world around us, our God is big. Nothing is impossible for Him.

With God there are no time or space limitations. That means we can pray for someone on the other side of the world, and our prayers will be just as powerful as if that person were sitting right next to us.

The point of all this is to encourage you to think of yourself as a person who is able to profoundly affect the world around you. The less you underestimate the power of your prayers, the greater their impact will be. In fact, your sphere of influence will be as broad as your prayer list is long.

Stormie Omartian, “The Power of a Praying Wife”

Dutch Sheets’ book “Intercessory Prayer” is also a great resource

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I Timothy 2:1 - 2

1. Pray for **Government Leaders**

- * I get convicted because I talk about our leaders, complain about them, and wish things were different
- * God says, “don’t complain, PRAY!” so that an atmosphere will be produced in which God can work

2. Pray for **Members of the Body**

- * Support in prayer those in your FLC Group and others with whom you have fellowship within the Body
- * During worship write down 3 or 4 names as the Lord lays them on your heart. Ask them in person or call them on the phone: “what can I join you in prayer about?”

3. Pray for **Church Leaders**

- * Pray for those God has put over you in the spiritual realm
 - Pastor John and I count on several hundred people praying for us each week

4. Pray for **Other Christian Leaders**

- * Satan loves to shoot down key leaders upon whom lots of public attention is focused
- * We must undergird these men and women and build a “prayer hedge” around them

5. Pray for **Missionaries**

“Intercessory Prayer is our spiritual IBM” – Derek Prince

From right there in your home you have the privilege, as God’s partner, to expand your horizons and to reach out across the miles and the oceans to intercede for many peoples, and thus to help build the Kingdom all over the world.

I pray for the needs and ministry of a different indigenous group in some country each day with the help of Christian Aid’s “Prayerline” which I receive free each month

“Prayerline,” P.O. Box 9037, Charlottesville, VA 22906, USA

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Here are some illustrations of typical “Prayerline” requests. What a thrill to partner in prayer with faithful servants like these as they build the Kingdom in their own spheres of opportunity:

- * There are only 200 known Tibetan Christians worldwide. TPF has started the first all Tibetan fellowship with 15 members
- * Forty people in Zimbabwe came to the Lord when a man who had been bleeding for many years was healed. FIF has 10 crusade teams preaching the Word throughout southern Africa
- * At the age of 5 children cannot stay with their mothers who are prison inmates. PCI has taken 50 little ones (35 in Delhi alone) into its children’s home. Food, clothing and toys are needed
- * Many parents in Cambodia abandon their children when they leave to seek employment, never to return. KFC has been helping over 300 children who are at - risk for trafficking. They are praying for a dormitory to better house the children

There are other organizations which put out prayer information as well

6. Pray for **People Who Need to Find the Lord**

- * Each of you should be praying regularly for 5 or 10 specific people whom the Lord has placed upon your heart.
 - uncommitted spouses
 - relatives
 - neighbors
 - co-workers
- * You can participate in the harvest if only you will be partners with God in breaking the power of the enemy, which is binding and blinding, and keeps people in slavery to sin

Ask God to release a great harvest all around you. He has ordained in heaven that there are many whom you should have a part in bringing into His Kingdom.

If you give Him your time and your heart, the Lord will burden you to pray for certain people as well as for strategic activities in the on-going work of building His Kingdom.

6. ____ People who need the Lord_____
 —uncommitted spouses of church members.
 —Families, neighbors and associates.

If we can break the power of the enemy that is binding and blinding, keeping them in slavery to sin, there is a great harvest to be reaped all around us.

FOUR CHARACTERISTIC OF EFFECTIVE INTERCESSORY PRAYER

1. ____ **Build** ____ a prayer list.
2. Make ____ **specific** ____ and ____ **definite** ____ requests.
- Learn to make sharp, to the point requests rather than praying in meaningless generalities.
- Name and need—vs— “Bless them all.”

3. ____ **Believe** ____ when you pray.
- Seek to know God’s will before you pray.

Listen to discern His voice.

Saturate your life with His word.

God wants us to ask what His will is:

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.—James 1:5

—If you have no real sense of God’s will in a specific instance, then just give the situation to Him for accomplishing what He knows best.

—Claim what you know to be God’s will.

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, 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 the petitions that we have asked of Him. I John 5:14-15

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE INTERCESSARY PRAYER**Build a prayer list**

- * On pages 60-61 in the pupil's manual, there is a place provided to list prayer requests, answers and dates
- * Keeping a Prayer List will be a great up-builder for your faith
 - Many people ask and God answers, but they have either forgotten about it or are unaware when the answer comes
- * As you look back over the list, you will see how some answers were immediate, while others took six months or even several years
 - This gives you encouragement to believe that He is still going to answer those requests which you have been holding up before Him for a number of years
- * Your prayer list will grow, so divide it and rotate the requests onto different days when it becomes unwieldy
 - You know what your time limits are and can adjust accordingly
- * Let the list be your servant, not your master
 - It is better to pray in a focused and sincere way once or twice a week than to just quickly run down a list every day

Make specific and definite requests

- * This is another way in which your "Prayer List" helps you a lot
 - "Bless them all" prayers do not accomplish much. As you focus in on specific people and situations – "names and needs" – your prayer is much more effective
- * Give a demonstration of what it would be like for you to pray specifically for one person or need in this way (as I did on the DVD or CD of this teaching)
- * Your ability to pray specifically, definitely and effectively will grow:
 - (1) as it is fueled by your love for the people. Come to know them. Spend time thinking about them. Investigate what is going on with them
 - (2) as God supernaturally directs you in "what" and "how" to pray; keep alert for His voice

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CHARACTERISTIC OF EFFECTIVE INTERCESSORY PRAYER, continued

Believe when you pray

Listen

- * Take time to find out God's will, rather than cushioning your prayer with "if it be Your will"
- * Jesus's prayers were powerful; He always knew what God wanted to do
- * Seek to grow in this ability

Saturate in the Word

- * If we don't know the Word well enough to be aware of the general principles, and even sometimes the specific directions which it contains for our lives, then how can be sure we are praying according to His will?
- * Signs and wonders will not make up for our laziness. God is not going to give us private revelation when it is already in His Word. So, soak up the Word.
- * The deeper our knowledge of the Word, the more effective our Intercessory prayer will be
- * Let the Word be the basis for our praying. Learn what we "should not" pray for as well as what we should be praying for.
- * Some of the prayers which Paul offered for the saints are great examples: Ephesians 3:18, I Corinthians 10: 13
- * As you search the Word you can find admonitions, calls for obedience, and blessings to pray over people
- * Pray something out of the Word for one person each day during the next week

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Ask

- * God wants us to ask what His will is (James 1:5)
- * Don't pray the first thing that comes into your head; sometimes there is pressure to do this
- * It is more effective to spend 25 minutes sensing His will and 2 minutes praying for it rather than pray for 30 minutes out of our own thoughts but miss His will

If you don't sense God's will

- * We are not omnipotent and we are not Jesus
- * Don't fake it; rather pray like this:

“Lord, you have a will. I don't know what it is. I give it into your hands to accomplish that will.” That may be humbling, but it is real and more effective than just praying whatever we are thinking

Illustration: Our Prayer Teams having to learn this lesson

- * Use your prayer language
 - the Spirit knows the mind of God
 - it's helpful for me to intersperse the prayer language with my own prayers when praying for my children and grandchildren; then I know God is hearing and answering

I John 5:14 - 15

What a Promise! Claim what you know or sense is His will

- * Immature faith tries to manipulate God, but true prayer is not persuading God or forcing our will on Him. True prayer is finding and coming into agreement with God's will (verse 14)
- * We ask according to His will, then we stand in faith, confident that God hears us and that what we ask for is already ours (verse 15)

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BUILDING A PRAYER LIST

REQUESTS	DATE	ANSWERS	DATE

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Pray in Faith

James 1: 6 - 8 Ask in faith and then believe He's going to answer

* You were “feeding” yourself from Philippians 4 where it says, “*Don't forget to thank me for the answer.*”

- That's praying in faith

- Contrast this to a “begging” prayer when we ask over and over again, which can become a vain repetition

Illustration: Your kids ask you to build them a tree house. You reply that you will grant their request when you have some vacation and have received your tax return. It is real faith when instead of asking you again and again they respond as the weeks go by with:

I'll be glad when you are on vacation . . .

Have you gotten your income tax return yet . . .

I'm telling my friends that when you will build our tree house

* Faith doesn't yet have the bird in hand, but faith believes we are going to

Faith is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us, even though we cannot see it ahead.

Hebrews 1:1

* If we have it in hand, we don't need faith

Transition to (4.) “Persevere”

Most of the time we come in faith, with thanksgiving, and leave it to Him – waiting, trusting, believing the answer is going to come – that's believing prayer.

—Pray in faith

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.—James 1:6-8

Ask, and then thank him for it.

Be anxious about nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known.—Philippians 4:6

Avoid begging—don't get into vain repetition

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
—Hebrews 11:1*

4. Persevere in prayer.

—Learn to “pray through”—

sometimes without stopping until you have the guidance needed,
the victory you are seeking, or the assurance that the need will be met.

—Jesus encouraged persistence. Luke 11:5-10 and 18:1-8

So I say to you, ask and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.—Luke 11:9,10

Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”—Luke 18:6-8

—There is a price tag for the intercessor who is a partner with God.

This level of intercession is where a good deal of work of the kingdom of God is done. Satan has been able over the years to exclude the vast majority of Christians from this partnership with God. God is looking today for men and women who will bombard the gates of heaven for His work in their communities and around the world; who will take lost and unsaved families, friends and neighbors before Him in deep, heart-felt intercession day after day.

But, there are times when we must learn to **persevere in prayer**

* To persevere in prayer means to “pray through”

- sometimes day and night for years

Illustration: A woman who prayed 10 years for her husband

- I pray for my kids each day, reminding God that I know that “He is a rewarder of those who seek Him diligently” - so, I see it coming.
- sometimes praying through means all night long
- sometimes it is unceasingly, day after day, until the answer comes, or the burden is lifted, or the heart is at peace - keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking (Luke 11)

Luke 18: 1-8 (tell the beginning of the story)

* verse 6 - 7: *Then the Master said, “Do you hear what the judge, corrupt as he is, is saying? So what makes you think God won’t step in and work justice for His chosen people, who continue to cry out for help? Won’t He stick up for them? I assure you, He will. He will not drag His feet.*

* Only God knows why are there times when we must plead with Him day and night over a long period of time; maybe it is because:

- our faith needs to be strengthened
- the timing is not right yet
- there is spiritual warfare going on (bondage in the heavenlies to be broken)
- we need to learn patience

* God is far more responsive than an evil judge

* verse 8: *But how much of that kind of persistent faith will the Son of Man find on the earth when he returns?*

- not many are willing to pay the price true Intercessors sometimes have to pay
- staying up, often on their knees, weeping in their spirit over the needs of people

I want t to have that kind of faith, don’t you? I want to be one whom He can find when He returns – joining Him, pleading, seeing the work of the Father brought forth.

What a joy to join hands with the Lord and be His partner!

—Pray in faith

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Here are the lessons we have learned about believing, persevering prayer:

1. To pray with authority and receive answers to your prayers, make sure you ask according to His will. If you don't know His will, ask Him. (James 1:5)
2. Believe that God hears your petition and has already set the answer into motion.
3. Pray tenaciously and persistently until His will is accomplished.

This level of Intercessory Prayer is where a good deal of the work of the Kingdom of God is done. Satan has been able to exclude the vast majority of Christians from this partnership with God over the years.

Today God is looking for men and women

- who will bombard the gates of heaven for His work in their communities and around the world;
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The Discipline of Fasting

This final spiritual discipline is one which Jesus recommended and in which God's people have walked all throughout the centuries.

Note the Definition on p.63 – “Fasting is the practice of deliberately abstaining from food for spiritual purposes.”

The Benefits of Fasting

1. Fasting helps to deal with the excessive clutter in our lives both physically and spiritually

* Physically

- our bodies are cleansed as impurities are purged from the system, excess fat is burned off, organs are rejuvenated and the arteries are cleaned out
- because of improper nutrition, the polluted world in which we live, and the stress we put our bodies under, we often don't properly digest our food, which causes:
 - our system to become filled with toxins/poisons
 - our minds to become dull and our bodies sluggish.
 - disease to be promoted as our bodies begin to break down
- a regular discipline of fasting can cut into the midst of this and restore the proper flow of things in our bodies

* Spiritually

- the clutter is removed from our souls as our attention is taken from everything else and focused on the Lord.
- spiritually we often get overwhelmed; unimportant things become important
- we get too busy in trying to serve the Lord

THE DISCIPLINE OF FASTING

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- Spiritually the clutter is removed from our souls as our attention is taken from everything else and focused on the Lord.

2. Fasting deals with two great barriers to the work of the Holy Spirit which are erected in our carnal nature.

- The stubborn self-will of the soul.

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.—Galatians 5:16-17

- The insistent self-gratifying appetites of the body.

But I disciplined my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.—I Corinthians 9:27

Each time we fast we serve notice on our body
You are the servant here, and **“not the master.”**

THE PURPOSE OF FASTING— “To set the Lord before us.”

Fasting helps us focus our hearts upon God.

It interrupts our normal schedule and gives the Lord and the matter brought to Him first priority in our life.

Illustration—Daniel 10:2-5, 12

2. Not only does fasting help with the excessive clutter in our lives, but it aids in dealing with the two great barriers to the work of the Holy Spirit which are erected in our carnal nature

* The stubborn **self-will** of the soul.

“Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”

Galatians 5:16-17

* The insistent need for gratifying the **appetites** of the body

“ I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified”

1 Corinthians 9:27

All our other appetites are reflected in this main one - the desire to eat

- Each time we fast, we serve notice on our body that you are the servant here and **not the master**
- There was one minister who said, my stomach doesn't tell me when to eat, but I tell my stomach when to eat; if that is not true for you, maybe you need to learn to fast

In the early days of our marriage I had carefully planned for us to enjoy a picnic. My wife got hungry before we arrived at our location. Much to my consternation her portion of the lunch was all gone before we arrived! I was truly disappointed.

Today, my wife is the most disciplined person you can imagine. She has learned through the regular discipline of fasting how important it is that we dictate to our bodies rather than let our bodies dictate to us.

Rightly practiced, fasting brings both body and soul into subjection to the Holy Spirit

The Purpose of Fasting

* The purpose of fasting according to the scriptures is “to set the Lord before us”

- Fasting helps us **focus our hearts** upon God
- It interrupts our normal schedule and gives the Lord first priority

THE DISCIPLINE OF FASTING

Definition—Fasting is the practice of deliberately abstaining from food for spiritual purposes.

THE BENEFITS OF FASTING

1. Fasting helps deal with the excess clutter in our lives.

- Physically our bodies are cleansed as impurities are purged from the system, excess fat is burned off, organs are rejuvenated and the arteries are cleaned.
- Spiritually the clutter is removed from our souls as our attention is taken from everything else and focused on the Lord.

2. Fasting deals with two great barriers to the work of the Holy Spirit which are erected in our carnal nature.

- The stubborn self-will of the soul.

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.—Galatians 5:16-17

- The insistent self-gratifying appetites of the body.

But I disciplined my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.—I Corinthians 9:27

Each time we fast we serve notice on our body
You are the servant here, and **“not the master.”**

THE PURPOSE OF FASTING— “To set the Lord before us.”

Fasting helps us focus our hearts upon God.

It interrupts our normal schedule and gives the Lord and the matter brought to Him first priority in our life.

Illustration—Daniel 10:2-5, 12

Dr. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade For Christ, from *The Coming Revival*, page 28

“There is no doubt in my mind – gained from scripture, history and experience – that those who fast with pure motives will be drawn closer to the greater heart of God and experience a quality of life in the Holy Spirit that is not possible apart from fasting.”

Spiritual Background for Fasting

- * Fasting was to show sorrow, repentance, humility, spiritual hunger and desire for the Lord
- * Throughout the entire record of Scripture, and in secular history as well, fasting was practiced by many; however, it was not always pleasing to the Lord
- * In fact, God proclaimed to the people of Israel more than once, *“I hate your fast”*
- * Fasting will lose all of its power and effectiveness – in fact it will be obnoxious to the Lord – if it is just motivated from tradition or from the desire to make a show rather than as an honest expression of a heart that earnestly longs after the Lord and His ways
- * When fasting becomes an accurate picture of what is going on inside, then it is really pleasing in the sight of the Lord and very effective in the life of a Christian

Come, lie all night in sackcloth, you who minister to my God; consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the lands into the house of the Lord your God and cry out to the Lord. Joel 1:13-14

I humble my soul with fasting Psalm 35:13

I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting Psalm 69:10

- * In the near East, where Jesus lived, people are very demonstrative with their emotions
 - The Day of Atonement, for instance, was an occasion when they were to mourn for their sins, and they were called upon to fast at that time so that they might afflict their souls
- * Jesus fasted (Luke 4:1 - 15)
 - He condoned fasting and He Himself fasted
 - In the Sermon on the Mount, fasting is assumed as an expected spiritual discipline (Matthew 6:1-18) *“when you give, here is how you do it. When you fast, here is how you do it.”*
 - Jesus is saying don’t do it as a show; the emphasis is to be on the motive and the heart

Dr. Bill Bright

There is no doubt in my mind—gained from Scripture, history and experience—that those who fast with pure motives will be drawn closer to the greater heart of God and experience a quality of life in the Spirit that is not possible apart from fasting.

—The Coming Revival, p.28

However, fasting will lose all of its power and effectiveness—in fact it will be obnoxious to the Lord—if it is not an honest expression of a heart that earnestly longs after the Lord and His ways.

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND FOR FASTING

—A sign for sorrow

Joe1:13-14

Come, lie all night in sackcloth, you who minister to my God; consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the lands into the house of the Lord your God and cry out to the Lord.

Psalm 35:13

I humbled my soul with fasting.

Psalm 69:10

I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting.

—Luke 4:1-15—Jesus fasted.

—Matthew 6:1-18—Fasting is assumed as part of the spiritual walk.

“When you give...”

“When you pray...”

“When you fast...”

- * We are now living in the “days of fasting”

Then they came and said to Him, “Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them and then they will fast in those days.” Mark 2:18-20

- * Jesus was taken away and He hasn’t come back yet; now are the days for fasting
- * The early church fasted and prayed, and in that context the Holy Spirit spoke to them

- When they were sending out the first missionaries, they fasted.

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.” Then they fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. Acts 13: 2-3

- When they were appointing elders for the church, they fasted

So when they has appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting they commended them to the Lord. Acts 14:23

FASTING, LIKE PRAYER, HAS REGULAR AND SPECIAL SEASONS

- * The **Personal Fast** - Regular

- Fasting as an on-going discipline in one’s life, or for a season, or for a special situation as God directs
- The early church fasted three days a week, from sun up until 3 p.m.
- For years and years, my wife and I fasted one full day a week
- These are all personal fasts for personal reasons under the personal leading of the Holy Spirit

- * The **Proclaimed Fast** - Special

- When the body of Christ calls its members to observe a fast in times of emergency, or when extra power and presence from God is desired
- One instance of this is when Jesus talked about certain demonic presences

However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting

Matthew 17:21

—Mark 2:18-20—We are living now in the “days of fasting”

Then they came and said to Him, “Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, Your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they can not fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them and then they will fast in those days.

—The early Church fasted and prayed. In that context the Holy Spirit spoke to them. The outstanding, formative events in this young church were surrounded and undergirded with fasting and prayer.

Appointing and sending the first missionaries

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.” Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

—Acts 13:2-3

Appointing of elders in the various churches

So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting they commended them to the Lord.—Acts 14:23

FASTING, LIKE PRAYER, HAS REGULAR AND SPECIAL SEASONS

—The Personal Fast -regular

As God directs for an on-going discipline or in response to a special situation.

—The Proclaimed Fast -special

When the body of Christ calls its members to observe a fast in times of emergency or when extra power and presence of God is desired.

However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.
Matthew 17:21

Three Kinds of Fasting Reflected in the Scriptures

The Normal Fast: abstaining from certain foods or liquids for a specific period

- * this is what Daniel did on several occasions
- * this is what the early Christians did 3 days a week from dawn until 3 p.m.
- * this is what my wife and I did one day a week as we consumed only water for 24 hours

The Total Fast: Nothing to eat or drink except water, often for three days

- * Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus and he became blind. Then he fasted for three days until God healed him (Acts 9:9)
- * Esther in the Old Testament called for her handmaidens to fast with her before she went to the king (Esther 4:15-17)
- * Ezra (Ezra 8:15 and 21:23)
- * don't get legalistic about the method of your fasting; allow the Holy Spirit to lead you in whatever ways He directs

The Supernatural Fast: only to be attempted if one is definitely called into it by God

- * Jesus at the beginning of His ministry
- * Elijah in the Old Testament fasted for 40 days (1Kings 19:48)
- * Moses had two forty day fasts back-to-back (Deuteronomy 9:9 and 18)
 - Moses came down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments but the Israelites had sinned, so Moses went back up the mountain for another 40 days
 - How could he do that? He should have been dead, but God supernaturally enabled him
 - I've known people whom God has called to a forty day fast; their life and ministry has been deeply affected

Whenever you do an extended fast, it is really important that you be kind to your body. Ease yourself into the fast, then ease yourself out.

I know one man who destroyed his pancreas because he would eat a last large meal before his fast. Then he would eat a monstrous meal when he was finished fasting. It put too much stress on his body.

Prepare for the fast with a day or two of soft foods and liquids. Then when you are ready to eat again, never mind the chicken curry for a couple of days; have some good vegetable soup.

THREE KIND OF FASTING REFLECTED IN SCRIPTURE

1. **The Normal Fast**
 Abstaining from certain foods or liquids
 Daniel
 Jesus
 Early Christians (Mon., Wed.,
 and Fri. from dawn to 3 p.m.)

3. **The Supernatural Fast**
 (Called by God)

 Jesus
 Moses—Deuteronomy 9:9 and 18
 Two forty day fasts back to back.
 Elijah—I Kings 19:48. Forty Days

2. **The Total Fast**
 (often 3 days in duration).

 Paul—Acts 9:9
 Esther—Esther 4:15-17
 Ezra—Ezra 8:15 and 21:23

THE “FASTED LIFE”

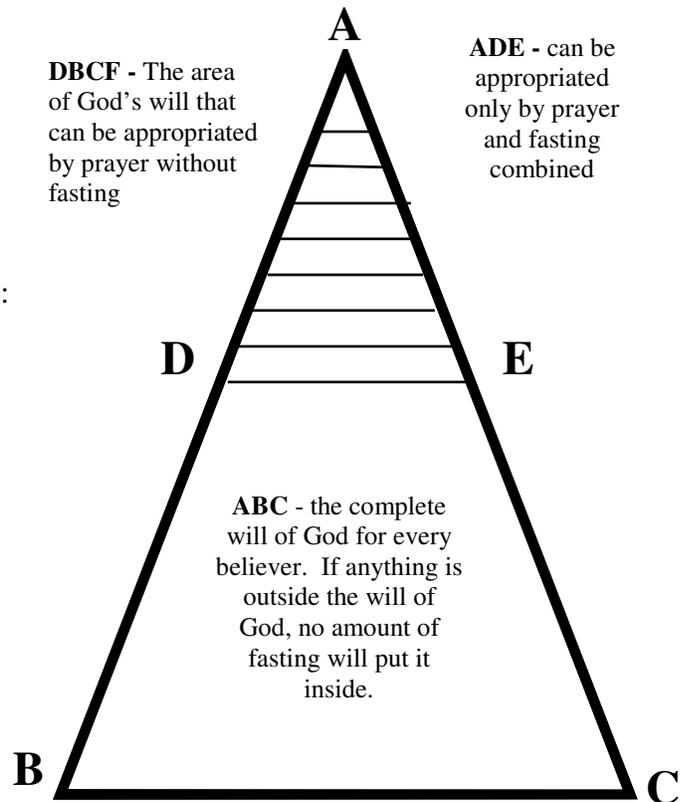
All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

—I Corinthians 6:12

—Fasting can break the cycle when anything begins to control us—is bigger in our life than it should be, is cluttering up our walk—so that we can’t concentrate and focus on our Lord as we should.

—Pastor James Beall offers this evaluation:

In my experience those who have learned the value of frequent exposure to God by fasting tend to be more spiritually balanced, more sensitive to God, and more eager in seeking to please Him.



The “Fasted Life” - The principle underlying this whole concept of fasting is this: fasting helps you to remove the clutter out of your life so that you might more clearly see the Lord.

Paul said:

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 1 Corinthians 6:12

* Fasting can break the cycle when anything begins to control you so that you can't concentrate and focus on our Lord as you should

ing - When something becomes bigger in your life than it should be, or when it is cluttering up your walk

* There was a time when God told me to fast the daily newspaper because it was taking precedence in my day over my time in God's Word.

- I didn't read the newspaper for an extended period of time

- on another occasion I fasted the late night news for a year or so because I couldn't seem to go to bed without watching it and God convicted me about it

* We have families in our church who have put their television sets in the attic because they were watching too much television

* I know women who have fasted the telephone because God convicted them that they were spending too much time on the phone

A well known evangelist had his airplane pilot's license. He loved flying. He subscribed to all the flying magazines. They were piled up by his bedside. God told him to get rid of the flying magazines because they had too big a place in his life.

God wants to remove the clutter that keeps you from focusing on Him. Consequently, fasting may often go beyond food and involve some of your activities as well.

THREE KIND OF FASTING REFLECTED IN SCRIPTURE

- 1. **The Normal Fast**
 Abstaining from certain foods or liquids
 Daniel
 Jesus
 Early Christians (Mon., Wed.,
 and Fri. from dawn to 3 p.m.)

- 3. **The Supernatural Fast**
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 Elijah—I Kings 19:48. Forty Days

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 Paul—Acts 9:9
 Esther—Esther 4:15-17
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THE “FASTED LIFE”

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—I Corinthians 6:12

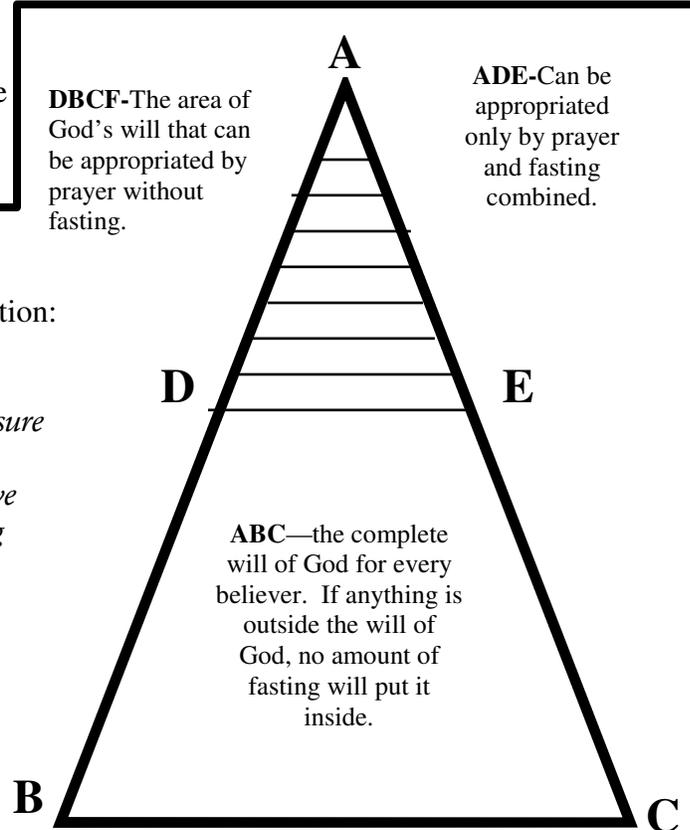
—Fasting can break the cycle when anything begins to control us—is bigger in our life than it should be, is cluttering up our walk—so that we can’t concentrate and focus on our Lord as we should.

DBCF-The area of God’s will that can be appropriated by prayer without fasting.

ADE-Can be appropriated only by prayer and fasting combined.

—Pastor James Beall offers this evaluation:

In my experience those who have learned the value of frequent exposure to God by fasting tend to be more spiritually balanced, more sensitive to God, and more eager in seeking to please Him.



Notice the diagram, page 66

All the things within that triangle represent God's will for your life

- * You can fast every day of the week for something you desire that is outside of His will, and God won't give it to you
- * You cannot twist His arm to get Him to do what is outside of His will by fasting
- * All that is in the bottom part of the diagram you can receive through regular prayer
- * However, the top part of the triangle, the very best part of God's will for you, comes only through prayer and fasting

Pastor James Beall from Detroit, Michigan offers this evaluation:

In my experience those who have learned the value of frequent exposure to God by fasting tend to be more spiritually balanced, more sensitive to God and more eager in seeking to please Him.

Lord, we have learned a lot of things today that will strengthen our spiritual growth and our communication with you. Help us not to just hear but to be able to receive and to do according to the leading of Your Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!

THREE KIND OF FASTING REFLECTED IN SCRIPTURE

- 1. **The Normal Fast**
 Abstaining from certain foods or liquids
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 Jesus
 Early Christians (Mon., Wed.,
 and Fri. from dawn to 3 p.m.)

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THE “FASTED LIFE”

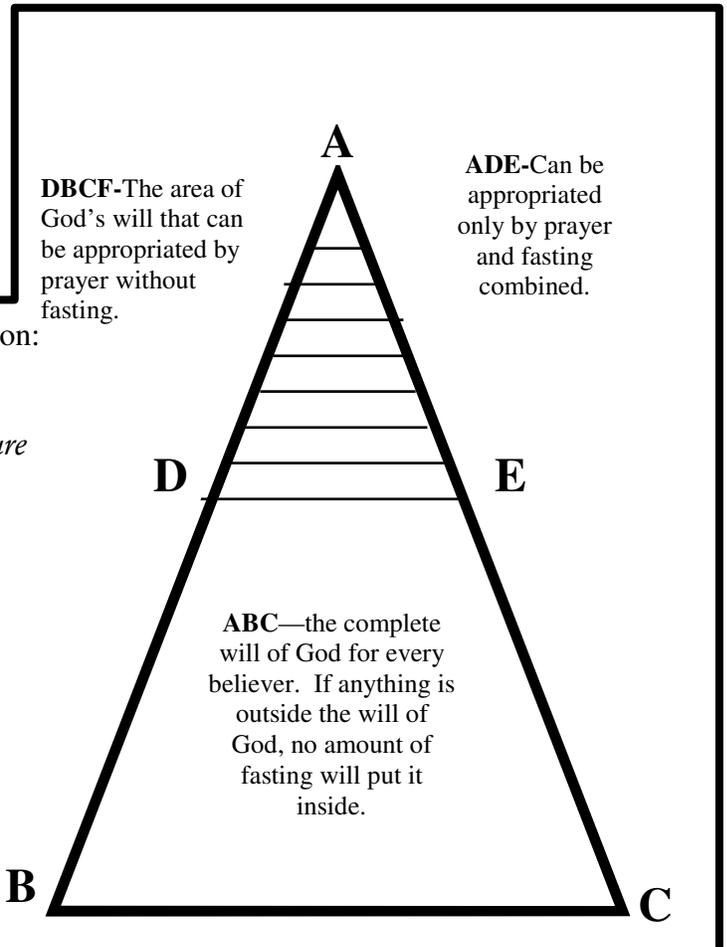
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—Fasting can break the cycle when anything begins to control us—is bigger in our life than it should be, is cluttering up our walk—so that we can’t concentrate and focus on our Lord as we should.

—Pastor James Beall offers this evaluation:

In my experience those who have learned the value of frequent exposure to God by fasting tend to be more spiritually balanced, more sensitive to God, and more eager in seeking to please Him.



FIRST

1. Let various group members share from the Scripture passages which they worked on this past week (Luke 11:1-13 and Romans 12:9-21).
2. Let various group members share from their journaling. Encourage the group to keep working at making journaling a regular part of their spiritual discipline.
3. Quickly go over the answers of Question Sheet #7. Collect the sheets.

THEN

1. Can your group identify some of the costs as well as the rewards of becoming “partners with God” through regular intercessory prayer?
2. Do they understand what “Praying in Faith” is and what it is not?
3. Let various group members share experiences of “persevering prayer.”

NOW

1. What new understanding did tonight's teaching give you in regard to fasting?
2. What obstacles do you see that might stand in the way of adding the disciplines of prayer and fasting to your life?

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT TIME

1. Begin building your “Prayer list.” Bring it with you next time.
2. Try missing one meal this week and use the time to pray.
3. Continue working in your journal; bring it with you to the next session.
4. “Eat” James 1:2 - 15.