

“Prayer with Fasting”

“But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth;
I afflicted myself with fasting: and I prayed with head bowed on my breast.

**I behaved as if grieving for my friend or my brother;
I bowed down in sorrow, as one who bewails his mother.”**

Psalm 35:13-14 (Amp)

Prepare your Heart with Prayer.

Ask the Lord to guide your study. Ask Him to open your heart to the needs of others. Ask Him to teach you to pray effectively for them. .

Prayer is the proving ground of our faith. It is as necessary to our spiritual life as breathing is to our physical life. Jesus teaches us that “fasting” is a desirable discipline when accompanied with prayer. Fasting intensifies prayer when prompted and directed by the Holy Spirit. Prayer with fasting is an effective tool in spiritual warfare, bringing deliverance and advancing the Kingdom of God.

On a 3x5 index-card copy Psalm 35:13-14. Read this passage aloud several times everyday until it is fixed in your memory.

Examine Psalm 35:13-14

1. David again pleads with the Lord for deliverance. He is surrounded by those who wish to kill him---“those who seek after his life” (Psalm 35:4) and by those who unjustly seek to do him harm---“they reward me evil for good” (Psalm 35:12).

*What does David choose to do in these circumstances?

*What is implied by the word **sick**?

*What is the significance of **sackcloth**?

*Even in these circumstances, David does not seek self-revenge, but rather demonstrates a concern for those who would do him harm. What phrases show his **heart attitude**?

*How do you think David was able to earnestly pray this way? See Psalm 35:9,10,28; Romans 12:19

How about you? Jesus tells us how He wants us to respond in similar situations. What does Jesus direct us to do in Matthew 5:43-44? How do you follow Jesus’ directive? What can you learn from David’s response that helps you obey Jesus? Be specific and practical.

Read Isaiah 58:6-14

2. The discipline of fasting is not a religious ritual nor superstitious exercise. It is not a means of earning God's favor, "twisting" His arm to make Him do what you want. This passage makes clear the true meaning of **fasting**—"the fast the Lord has chosen".

*What is **fasting**?

*What is the **purpose** of fasting? *What does that mean?*

Vs. 6 & Luke 4:18-19

Vs. 7 & Matthew 25:35-36

*What are some of the **conditions** that must be met? "*If*" clauses. *Explain.*

Vs. 9

Vs. 10

Vs. 13

*What are the **results**? "*Then*" clauses. *What does that mean for you?*_

Vs. 8

Vs. 9

Vs. 10-12

Vs. 14_

Read Isaiah 58:6-14 again and summarize what you have learned about "fasting".

Read Matthew 6:16-18

3. God's thoughts are not our thoughts. The religious leaders of Jesus' day took great pride in their religious rituals, one of which was fasting. Luke 18:12. Jesus brings a strong warning to His followers in this regard.

*What is His warning?

*Why did He bring it?

What timeless truth do you find in this teaching of Jesus? How will you apply it?

4. Read the following accounts and note the circumstances that called for fasting and note the results.

*2Chronicles 20:2-4

*Jonah 3:4-5

*Ezra 8:21, 23

*Esther 3:13; 4:3, 16; 9:30-31

*Acts 13:2-3

*Acts 14:23

*Matthew 4:1-2

*Luke 2:36-38

Apply these lessons to your own life. How were you challenged? What will you do about it?

Keep in mind that our Lord looks at the heart. He wants us to love Him with all our heart. Be sure that your heart motive in religious observances is to please the Lord and not to gain praise from others.

Practice time: “Doing Matthew 5:44”

- 1. Include into your daily prayer time a prayer for those whose actions and words show a hatred or strong dislike for you—a friend or relative who will not speak to you, a co-worker that is trying to get you fired, a boss that picks on you, a mother who is unkind to your child etc.**
- 2. Pray for them by name. Pray toward their need. Ask God to bless them.**
- 3. Seek the Lord for their welfare both spiritually and physically.**
- 4. Look for ways to do them good. “Overcome evil with good.”**

We are able to do all things through Christ, Who strengthens us!

What stood out to you from this lesson? How did God speak to you? Record your thoughts and reflect on this throughout the week.