

A CALL TO PRAY EARNESTLY

A. INTRODUCTION

- Welcome to our evening service, as we officially mark the start of our Lent season. I hope you guys had a good day and you are expectant.
- I am so privileged to speak to you this special evening as we enter the season of lent. A season that mimics our Lord's forty days and nights in the wilderness: ***"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit...was led by the Spirit in the wilderness (Luke 4:1); "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country"*** (Luke 4:14). Something had happened in the spiritual realm! Ofcourse many others in scripture did fast: Moses, Elijah, David, Esther, Nehemiah, Jehosophat, etc.
- A season in our church, when we deliberately slow down and listen very carefully from the Lord. When we also take stock of our lives and evaluate our walk with the lord.
- I hope that as we seek the Lord's face, He will point out some broken walls in our lives, families, ministries and nation, during this special season, when we dedicate much of our time to prayer.

B. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PRAY?

- John Wesley said, "It seems God is limited by our prayer life – that he can do nothing for humanity unless someone asks him." God is sovereign, He can do whatever He wishes, but He has chosen to work in response to the prayer of His people. John Wesley, after his conversion engaged in much prayer and fasting along with his brother, Charles, and George Whitefield. These men's lives and ministries radically affected their generations and have continued to affect generations since. We can confidently conclude that every great person of power in the Bible and in contemporary Christianity has been a person of prayer.
- Drawing from my own experience, I know that a prayer less life is produces an ineffective and powerless Christian walk.

- Our Lord Jesus Christ said in Matt 26:41, 'Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. That is one of the many benefits of prayer. If you are really a Christian, I believe that deep within you is a desire to pray. Your spirit is willing (Matt 26:41) but there are forces ranged against us, attempting to stop us praying.

C. THE POWER OF PRAYER & FASTING

- You could say that fasting and prayer are the atomic bomb in the Christian's weaponry which, when understood and used effectively destroys demonic strongholds like no other weapon.
- *Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of yoke, and let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6).*
- There are ofcourse many reasons for fasting revealed in the Bible. It is not a cure-all or way to twist God's arm but to me the Bible is clear on this subject. Fasting and praying do not change God, they change us and I believe that every Christian, in normal health, needs to be involved in this great Christian discipline.
- Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho says: "As we learn to pray in the Holy Spirit, realizing that we have been given the authority, we are able to bind the forces of Satan in People, communities and even nations. However, because Satan is a liar and the father of lies, he tries to convince us that he is in control. But as we learn to fast and pray and exercise our rightful spiritual authority, Satan and his forces must yield to the will of God."
- I believe every Christian should try to develop the simple discipline of fasting at least one day a week, and that us ministers should engage in fasting regularly, to see the power and the anointing of God consistently manifest in our ministry.

- To fast means primarily not to eat – the purpose being a) to humble ourselves before God; b) to give Him our undivided attention; c) to be sensitive to His voice and receptive to His power; d) to place ourselves in a position where we are utterly at God’s disposal.
- Therefore, fasting is an abstinence from earthly food in order to feast on the heavenly.
- Refer to our second reading: Matt 6: 16, 17, *“When you fast”*. By using the word ‘when’ rather than ‘if’ Jesus assumes that we will practice the disciplines of giving, praying, and fasting.

Benefits of fasting:

1. In fasting, we humble ourselves before God allowing him to search our hearts exposing sins and wrong motives (Psalm 35:13). *“But I, when they were sick – I wore sackcloth; I afflicted myself with fasting, I prayed with my head bowed on my chest.*
2. Through fasting and prayer, the power of the devil over people, families, churches, cities, and even nations can be broken.
3. It is a way by which we can bring the body under subjection (1Cor. 9:27). Late Dr. Derek Prince once said: ‘Fasting deals with two great barriers to the Holy Spirit that erected by man’s carnal nature. These are: the Stubborn self – will of the soul and the insistent self-gratifying appetites of the body. Rightly practiced, fasting brings both soul and body under subjection to the Holy Spirit.
4. Fasting gives greater spiritual clarity. As we feed on God’s Word in times of fasting, it is not unusual to experience clearer direction and increased revelation. Applies to people searching, contemplating beginning a new project, trying to figure out a business idea.
5. Fasting can bring deliverance and victory. Many have testified to have received healing and deliverance during, or at the end of a time of prayer and fasting.

6. Corporate prayer and fasting can even lead into times of revival and a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As more and more churches enter into times of prayer and fasting together, I strongly believe we will see greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our land. Read *Joel 1:14*: “Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God; and cry to the Lord.” *Joel 2:12*: “Yet even now”, says the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. Cp *Psalm 126:5*: Those who saw in tears shall reap with shouts of joy!

D. FIVE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FOOD FASTS

- a) There are five common categories of fasting food. First, a **regular fast**, is one in which we go without food, drinking only water or liquids that have no calories. Common lengths for this fast are one day, three days, or one week. It occasionally is longer, sometimes twenty – one days or even forty.
- b) A **liquid fast** is one in which we go without solid foods and drink only light liquids, such as fruit juices. Most people do not include milk shakes in this type of fast.
- c) An **absolute fast**, sometimes called an Easter fast, is one in which we abstain from all food and water. This fast lasts for one or three days. I encourage people to be cautious when going on an absolute fast and never to extend it beyond three days.
- d) A **partial fast**, sometimes called a Daniel fast, is one in which we abstain from tasty foods and eat only certain things, like vegetables or nuts. Re-known Revival leader, John Wesley often fasted on bread and water. Those with medical challenges can only engage in partial fast by being creative. I also encourage us to embrace a media fast in which they abstain from media entertainment, excluding news.
- e) A **Benedict fast**, established by *St. Benedict of Nursia, Italy (525 AD)*, is one in which we eat only one meal a day. Many monks in the monasteries of Europe lived this way for years and had strong bodies and even stronger spirits.

E. CONCLUSION

- Read 2 Chronicles 15:1-7: "...your work of (prayer) shall be rewarded.
- End with story I had when I had just become a believer: laying of pipes for a new pumping station.