

Stomach's Empty

Prayers of the First Century Followers of Jesus...We are moved by their actions....When Jesus ascended to heaven, those left staring into the sky...were desperate for His return. They had spent every day with Him and in His absence they remained connected to Him through prayer. They were desperate for His presence and His power

We have been studying the way they prayed....Because we too are staring into the sky wondering when He will return....Desperate for His presence and power in our lives.....We want to amp up our prayer lives...don't we?

Earlier, I mentioned how they fasted and prayed. I wanted to pause and teach about fasting because I believe it is critical for all of us individually....For our church...and for our community

It is particularly important in our Western culture. We live in a society of instant gratification. We are selfish people and we want our needs met now. I think it started with the Polaroid Instamatic in 1948....Really went nuts with the addition of the microwave. We gotta have it and we gotta have it now. Patience was once a virtue but now it is as rare as a handwritten letter....We drive through McDonalds...but it is not fast enough...so we have two lanes and now an app....We check wait times to decide when to go to the Hospital for..... Emergencies. We don't buy CD's we download music instantly on iTunes or Spotify

We watch on demand movies....read books electronically downloaded instantly....get emails and text messages immediately. If we have to mail it...we Fed Ex it or overnight it.....24/7 News...Sports...Stocks....delivered to our laptop, ipad, smartphone, smart watch

We have a fast pass at Disney...demand instant internet access....3G...4G...5G....it is never fast enough....We order on the internet...pick it up at the loading dock in an hour or have it delivered overnight.We don't wait for computer programs. We download them instantly and complain that it takes more than a few moments. Gone are the days of getting a cup of coffee while we wait for the dial up connection

We get frustrated with red lights that are too long. We don't really stop before we turn right on red. We want everyone to get out of OUR way

Technology and gadgets, from social networks to smartphones, that have really put our culture on steroids. Compulsion to check email, send texts and talk on cellphones. National Safety Council estimates that more than a quarter of all traffic crashes — over 1.6 million a year — involve cell phone calls or texting....Some lawyers even call mobile phone use the DUI of the 21st century.

Leigh Stevens, a partner in FranklinCovey's productivity practice. "We have to stop the madness and be deliberate about choices. We have to learn to act on the important and not react to the urgent." "There is social pressure to be immediately responsive," It's becoming harder to create protected space and time for yourself because it might be read as being uncaring or unavailable by others."

Some universities, including Notre Dame, provide counseling services for Internet addiction, and specialized treatment centers offer both outpatient and residential programs to people who lack the impulse control to disconnect from computers and smartphones. There is even debate among therapists over whether to add Internet addiction to the next edition of the American Psychiatric Association's Manual of Mental Disorders.

Yep....we don't really do self-denial very well. We struggle with delay gratification. We don't really embrace patience. So something like fasting....not really on our list of faves.

In a culture of instant....purposeful delay of the necessary seems really...really..hard. It is unnatural for us. I believe it is harder for those of us in America than for any other people at any other time in History. Fasting forces us to delay gratification..to set aside the instant...For..dare I say it....Something we have to wait for. Fasting is just one way...that we are remindedDon't be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your min Fasting renews our mind. It is an antidote to our instant gratification mindset and our selfishness

What is fasting? Fasting is abstaining from something for a spiritual purpose. In the Scriptures it usually represents food.

Fasting is saying to God....More than my body wants food...My life wants you! My soul need you...Fasting clarifies....our need. Do we really want more of God? More of God in our lives...in our family..in our marriages...our relationships? More of God in our church, our city, our world. Do we want to see those things more than food? IF so fasting is an essential expression for usSaying to God....More than we want the basic daily necessity of food...We long for You. We desire you. We crave you. We are hungry for you. We are willing to wait for the REAL gratification that you bring to our souls

We abstain from something that we must have. So fasting is to choose to go without something- a physical desire or need- for a spiritual reason.When we give up something....God calls that sacrifice. It can be our money...our time...our pride....But sacrifice means we give up something that we value.

It brings glory to God to see us sacrifice and essential need and deep desire...like food. You give up your immediate physical satisfaction for something greater....a spiritual satisfaction.

Why did the disciples fast? Because they saw Jesus fast....Why should we fast?....because we know Jesus and the Disciples fasted.

Matthew 4 1-4 (ESV) 1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." 4 But he answered, "It is written, " 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights....People somehow think He was superhuman and could go without food but Jesus was fully God and fully man...He fasted and felt it for 40 days.Matthew told us that He was hungry...to emphasize the point of His

humanity. Note that when Satan tempted him Jesus didn't disagree...He could have turned anything into food. But look at how Jesus handled temptation


Jesus was physically weak...but Spiritually strong. Notice that when tempted...Jesus quoted Scripture... And not the easy ones like John 3:16

Deuteronomy 8:3 (ESV) 3 And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.


Let's look at this for a moment....God is talking to the Israelites who were wandering in the desert...He humbled them...He actually says that He let them get hungry. A forced fast if you will

God allowed them to feel hunger...so they would appreciate His provision for them...manna. Every day God delivered bread from heaven...Just enough bread for that day. God gave them that day their daily bread...Because they had first felt hunger they appreciate what God has provided. Every time I end a fast..after being really hungry....I am amazed at how heartfelt my prayer is....Thank you God....for THIS food.

Anytime we realize our need in a very real way...We appreciate it more when that need is met.

One of my fondest memories as a child was Homemade Ice Cream in the summer time. I remember hot August nights...fireflies...and intense pain Those memories come with severe pain in my right arm....My job was to crank the ice cream maker  for what seemed like hours....If you are too young to remember...we did not always have electric ice cream makers.

We cranked that baby by hand....and it hurt. But it created in us an expectation...a need....each crank made us more desperate for the reward.

Then one night my Dad provided an Electric Sky Blue Ice Cream Maker . It was beautiful...magnificent....perhaps one of the greatest gifts a boy could receive from his Dad. Well excluding a riding lawnmower. Anyway...at that age...this was the bomb. No one...no one...appreciated that gift from my Dad....More than me...because hours of cranking...helped me understand my need.

God allowed the Israelites to develop hunger...Because gratitude comes from a heart of humility and need....Depriving ourselves or working for something makes us appreciate what we receive....The casualty of our instant gratification society is gratitude. We we receive instantly without effort we tend not to appreciate. Rather we come to expect it and even demand it.

Then the reason why God let them hunger....."So that you would know..."God is constantly teaching us what we don't know.

A friend of mine had a 16 year old daughter who came to him and told him that she was ready for him to get her a car. And she would need a Ford Mustang Covertable in Red.

PHOTO 1

And if possible this year's model.

He told his daughter, you are not yet mature enough for a car.

A few months later....ok It doesn't have to be a convertible. Just a new Red Mustang.....**PHOTO 2** No...you still need to mature you are not ready for a car

A few months later....Ok any mustang red or not, brand new or not....No you are still not ready for your own car.

On her 17th birthday...Dad I need a car...A new one...I don't care if it is a Mustang **PHOTO 3**Still not ready..

Dad, I need transportation....I have to get to work. I don't care what it is as long as it is some kind of car. **PHOTO 4**

Now you are ready to have your own car.

Because you clarified what you really need. You need transportation. In the same way, God often creates in us a desire. He arranges our circumstances to get us to focus on what is important. Then when we have humbled ourselves and have focused on what we really need. Then...He provides it.

God wanted the Israelites to clarify their need...to make sure that they know that you don't live on bread alone....How do you know that? You go without it....you feel hunger and still live. So God showed them a physical need that they could do without to teach them to replace it with a spiritual need they could not do without.

I repeat this often...we tend to focus on the physical...God is constantly trying to get us....to see the spiritual things that are really important. Spiritually we live on the Word of God

In other words...Your survival is not solely dependent upon food. There is something greater and deeper that sustains you- The Word of God. Fasting is a spiritual discipline...a form of worship...that moves the hand of God...It is like a supernatural exchange between us and God. We give to God what means the most to us and receive something greater in the Spirit. God gives us what is most important to Him

Is fasting always about food?

For years our high schoolers have done 30 days Media fasts. They tell me it brings forth a physical response. No internet, tv, texting, etc...for 30 days. Replacing that time with prayer, Bible study, and meditation.

Married couples have fasted from sexual intimacy based on...

1 Corinthians 7:5 (ESV) 5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

The purpose of that fast abstain from sexual intimacy for the purpose of a deeper spiritual communion with God. Giving up something in the flesh...to gain something spiritual. Note that God is pro sex in marriage...He created it. Between a man and women....In the context of a Godly marriage....Two people joined together by Him...Surrendered to Him

Do not deprive one another...limited time...come together again... God wants married people to have sex...It was His idea

Sometimes we fast to gain God's perspective. Fasting from a relationship for a period of time that may be consuming us....Fasting from activities that can consume us...Golf....sporting events...shopping...working out...not working out...Fasting is generally thought of as food..but it can include other areas of your life.

However, few things get your attention as quickly and as fully as food. Our bodies shout quickly when food is missing. We have an impatient internal dinner bell...A natural alarm against starvation....Jesus fasted from food....the first Christ followers did what He did And so should we...

Benefits of Fasting

Remember every hunger pang is a reminder to let our physical needs remind us of our Spiritual need....It moves us from our need...to our need for God

1. Communion with God

Hunger pangs remind us to pray that is the whole point of the fast. To draw near to God as He draws near to us. It is not just to avoid food, but to take the time we would have spent preparing and eating and spend it with God. Feeding on His Word....Being nurtured by the Holy Spirit....Having a Spiritual meal rather than a physical one. Fasting improves your connection with God. It is like removing the static out of the line....As you tune in spiritually the static of your flesh goes away

2. Humility

Your hunger pang reminds you that you have unmet needs. You realize you depend upon God to meet every need. By acknowledging that you need God you humble yourself.

3. Spiritual Focus

Hunger pangs change your perspective. They remind you to keep God and His things at the front of your mind. Fasting elevates your spiritually and you always see better from a higher elevation. As your view of God increases...your view of earthly things diminishes. As you gain God's perspective....Mountains seem

smaller...Obstacles become opportunities....The weight of your situation
lightens....You find peace in the midst of the storm

4. Victory over Satan

It is when you are physically weak..that you depend upon God's Strength. Satan knows the Bible is a Non-Fiction Book about the story of His Failure and Destruction. It is the greatest weapon God has given us to resist him. Jesus quoted Scripture when Satan tempted Him. We are to do the same. It is the power of the Word of God that is our Strength.

Fasting reminds us of God's Victory over Satan

James 4:7-8 (ESV) 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

After 40 days of fasting....Jesus resisted the devil....look at what happened

Matthew 4:11 (ESV) 11 Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Fasting reminds us to use the Word of God as our strength and not try to fight the battle on our own. But to be armed with the Word of God.The food we really need...And God ministers to us too. As we draw near to Him...Satan flees....

5. Place of Surrender

Fasting tells God "I want You more than this" When you use fasting and learn how to put your flesh under control....It is easier to learn to put other fleshly things under control....When you learn to rely on God's strength in the area of your physical need for food...You can learn to rely on God's strength to conquer sin areas in your life.

6. Guaranteed Rewards

Matthew 6:17-18 (ESV) 17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

God promises to reward those who not only pray but fast and pray. Fasting gets God's attention...Is it really that easy? I fast and God responds? Well the verse says you fast and God rewards. The reward may be intimacy with God during circumstances that don't change.

But it is clear in the Bible that God responds to fasting. Fasting adds volume and urgency to our prayers.

Over the years as a doctor I have heard nurses call out for help...You learn from listening to the tone of their voice how to respond. Sometimes their call for help means "I need an extra pair of hands". Sometimes..."I need cleanup in room 15"....Doctors never answer that one...Sometimes..."A frustration cry for help" Sometimes..."A You will not believe this...cry for help"...We answer that one but

never first. But then...there is a cry for help that includes panic....The 911 cry for help...you know that cry. You stop what you are doing and you respond immediately

God knows how His children cry out to Him...The prayer accompanied by fasting is that prayer that comes from desperate need. It triggers an immediate response from God.

But remember this...God's response..is God's...response. God may not give you what you want or think you need. He gives you what He knows you need and God promises to reward those who put Him first

So you decide to add fasting as a Spiritual Discipline

Maybe for you this is a brand new experience For others it may be the first time you have fasted in a long time.

Often fasting brings these responses....Whose Idea was this?...I don't like it. ...When can we eat? Are we having communion tonight with the bread?....Some maybe wondering...Why don't you guys just eat?I don't get it.

If fasting seems really hard, maybe these steps will make it easier...Commitment before you start is key.

Ask the Holy Spirit to set your objective

Why are you fasting? Closer relationship to God? Guidance related to an issue or decision? Healing? Revival? The Salvation of a family member, friend or people? A greater outpouring of the fruit of the Spirit? To Gain God's perspective? God's presence in a particular situation? God's intervention in a relationship?

Ask the Holy Spirit to lead your fast. Let Him direct you on the purpose and objectives for your fast. He is the One who teaches all things

1. Make your commitment

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. What are you going to give up in the flesh?....What physical desire are you surrendering?....What sacrifice is your worship?...What are you willing to give up in order to gain spiritual things?

Commitment

How long will you fast? What type of fast? Water only? Water and juices? How often? Any physical or social restrictions? Limit exercise and perhaps things requiring mental acuity...Great time to take your wife to a restaurant that serves what she likes that you can't stand.

What are you going to add?

Very critical part of a fast. Instead of eating...what are you going to do with God? How much prayer time? How much time in God's Word? Serving others?

What are you going to do when you are hungry?

You will get hungry. Jesus fasted and He was hungry. Fasting is not easy....it is a sacrifice. ...Jesus was tempted in His fast...you will be tempted in yours. Expect it so you can deal with it. The thought of food will occur. Situations will put you in front of food unexpectedly. The enemy will attack....through food.

When you are tempted what are you to do?

1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV) 13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Temptation....brownies...cheeseburgers ..wings...chocolate God is faithful....No temptation too great. He will give you a way of escape. In this case He has told you the way of escape...Go to His Word.

Prior commitment is critical because once you start your fast...Satan will use temptation and your physical weakness to try to get you to compromise your commitment to God. Writing down what the Holy Spirit guided you to do...keeps you from compromising

In fact I recommend writing a short letter to yourself....Frank...I am writing this to you with a full belly... If you are reading this...you are tempted to change the commitment that you made...you are a woos. Here is what you have committed to.....each one of these Satan does not want you to do. God promised to reward you for fasting...you don't want to miss His rewards. You are giving up something physically in order to gain something spiritually. You are modelling what Jesus did on the cross...He gave up His physical life so we could have spiritual life. People around the world are really starving....really suffering...you are just hungry...You have the hope of food on your horizon...Many do not....Feed on the Word of God as Jesus directed you.... Stop Whining about how hungry you are.

Then I remind myself to feed on the Word of God

Philippians 4:12–13 (ESV) 1 I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Philippians 3:8 (ESV) 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

1 Peter 2:21 (ESV) 21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

1 Peter 5:10 (ESV) 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

Put it in an envelope...Mark it FOR EMERGENCY USE ONLY.....Leave several copies in strategic places. In the Refrigerator...IN the Pantry...In your car...

2. Prepare yourself spiritually

Make sure you are a clean vessel for God's use. You have to prepare your heart to fast. List all unconfessed sins and ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of those you have glossed over. Confess every sin and accept God's forgiveness. Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended. Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit...Surrender to Jesus...Refuse to obey your worldly nature

Romans 12:1–2 (ESV) 12 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Meditate on God's attributes. Expect Satan to attack you in your physical weakness. Expect to have a battle raging inside of you between your flesh and your Spirit....

Galatians 5:16–17 (ESV) 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Don't be surprised by it....Consider it an honor. Satan is afraid of the power and transformation that comes from fasting and praying and feasting on God's Word

3. Prepare yourself physically

Consult your physician. You may have to adjust medications. You may have to adjust your exercise regimen...You may need to avoid people that day or those days.... I recommend that teenagers focus on media fasts..Particularly young ladies. I don't recommend that teenage girls fast from food

Don't rush into your fast. Reduce your food intake gradually as you approach the start..Get your mind and body ready for the fast...then focus on your soul.

4. Plan your time with God

The whole purpose of the fast is to get spiritually closer to Him...Plan you quiet time and Bible study...Plan your time with God around the purpose of your fast. If your fast is for healing....prepare to study what God says about healing...If your fast is for provision...study what God says about how He provides our needs. If your fast is for revival...study what God says and has done. Study how He poured out His Spirit.

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So why so much time on fasting? Why now? Why Remnant?

Because I believe God is calling us to seek Him for Revival....We have been praying for it and now we are fasting for it....We are desperate for God to pour out His Holy Spirit on us, our church, and our community....But I think God has a question for our church....before He sends revival... I think God wants to know our answer to this....

Do you really want me?

At this point...At this time **"Do you really want me?" LEAVE THIS UP UNTIL THE END**

Do you really want more of who I am? Do you really want the changes I will bring: in your life? In the life of your Remnant family? Do you want to embrace those I love? Those you must learn to love? Do you want to get over your prejudices? Your arrogance? Your pride? More of Me means less of You... No more consumers....But everyone a contributor

More of me means Sacrifice...Everything for My Mission...Your time...your talent...and yes your money....Well my money that you have a death grip on. ...Are you really willing to give to my mission....are you a consumer or contributor?.

Are you sure you are ready for Me? Because when you are desperate for me above all else. Then...you will see revival.

Revival came when people prayed and were desperate enough to fast

God wants us to crave Him more than anything else. He wants us to cry out to Him because we are desperate for Him....I believe at this moment for our church He is asking us....Do you really want more of me? Are you desperate for me? Are you hungry for me? How badly do you want me?

I am challenged for us by the First Church in Acts...They were totally sold out to do whatever Jesus asked. Look at what was happening in their church...First there was one Sermon and thousands are cut to the heart and turn to Christ....Next chapter lame man jumping up and praising God.Next chapter thousands more come to Christ....Next Chapter persecuted and happy about it...Next chapter # of disciples increasing rapidly and multiplying

People are coming to faith in Christ every single day. Churches planted all over all the nation. Gospel is spreading with power. Demons are being cast out.

I see what they were experiencing...and I realize what the Church in America is missing.

What they experienced is what we are suppose to be experiencing....I see the potential of what God's people could be....And I see what we have allowed ourselves to become...And it makes me want to cry out to God...desperate for more of Him and more of His power.

When you see the First Century Church.... 1. Does your heart burn to see what they saw.... 2. Do you ache when you realize what we have become? 3. Do we want to be

the church that represents Jesus or not? 4. Do you have a holy discontent for what we could be? 5. Are you willing to cry out to God until His promises come true? Desperate churches....are desperate for what could be...Desperate churches...fast and pray....and never let God rest.

I want Remnant to be the church that gives God no rest. I want us to wear God out because we are calling out to Him day and night. Never letting Him rest...Never stopping until the Kingdom of God is restored...Until all the earth is singing His praises

I have developed a holy discontent with the state of the people of Jesus in many Churches....We look almost nothing like the first church in Acts.... Because we are not desperate for the things of God to happen in the Church....Do you want to see the Gospel spreading through us...like it did through them? Do you want to see the miracles of God in our midst...like it was in theirs? Do you want to see people turning to Christ in our church...like they were in theirs? Are you desperate for it? Are you crying out for it? Are you willing to stand on your watch and cry out to God day and night until it happens? Do you want to see that in your lifetime more than anything else?,,,,,,More than food?

Do you really long for the Glory of God to be restored in the church? It is a huge question for us

Do we really want to see that? As Jesus would ask...Do you really want me? Do you really want more of who I am?

Are you tired of....Meaningless programs devoid of the Power of the Holy Spirit? Worship services devoid of Christ Centered Spirit led Praise? Marriage and families devoid of the presence of the Holy Spirit?

Are you tired of sitting back and faking it pretending like everything is perfect in our monotonous routine version of Christianity? Seems comfortable...but wholly ineffective to bring meaningful change in our lives....Each generation dismissing more and more the things of God

Do you long to see.... 1. The glory of God restored in this church? 2. The holiness of God restored in this church? 3. The Power of God restored in this church? 4. The Heart of God restored in this church? 5. The Word of God restored in this church? 6. The Blessings of God restored in this church?

Then stand on your watch and do your job. Join your church family on the watchtower. Fast and pray...crying out desperately....Giving God no rest "Your kingdom come...Your will be done...on earth as it is in heaven" In our lives...at Remnant..In Sarasota. Around the world

We live in an instant gratification world. Fasting is an antidote to that mindset and to our selfishness. We fight our flesh with our Spirit....We surrender our physical needs...for spiritual gains...We amp up the volume, intensity and urgency of our prayer life...We refuse to give up crying out...no matter how long it takes.....

Even if we never see His Kingdom come in our lifetime...Because our children...our grandchildren...need to live in a world where the praises of Jesus ring out.

And When You Pray Week 3 "Stomach's Empty"
Frank Burns MDiv

November 7, 2021
Remnant Church of Sarasota

So for the next few moments...consider His question. "How desperate are you for ME?"