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The Benefits Of Fasting
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Fasting is a way of getting our flesh under control and we encourage all those who can to begin at the first of the new year to consider fasting for a few days. There are different kinds of fasting, fasting does not necessarily mean that only food is involved, but there are other things which could be considered, this is not something that has to be done by all believers, but it is a way to draw closer to the Lord and grow in our walk with Him. Daniel talks about fasting for a period of ten days at which time it showed that he and his friends had a better appearance about themselves, then those who had continued with the king's offerings. The following scriptures tell us the importance of choosing to fast and what the benefits can be, teaching us how and why the fasting would be something we should consider.

Pro 8:32-34 "So, my dear friends, listen carefully; those who embrace these my ways are most blessed. Mark a life of discipline and live wisely; don't squander your precious life.

Blessed the man, blessed the woman, who listens to me, awake and ready for me each morning, alert and responsive as I start my day's work." MESSAGE

Learning to listen, becoming more disciplined in our walk, not wasting time, these are some of the things that benefit and will enable us to become blessed, alert and responsive to the Lord.

However, if we are just fasting without becoming more involved in our study of the word and prayer, it becomes only a diet, which can be beneficial, but that is not the purpose of fasting as the word teaches.

Gal 5:16-17 "So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. 17 The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions." NLT

Fasting is found in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. Fasting will enable us to be able to be led by the Holy Spirit and help us to realize that the war raging on the inside of us or around us, is good against evil and is a spiritual war. Some of the old preachers used to believe that a person shouldn't be ordained unless they were fasting at least twice a week, making them more aware of spiritual things, however, younger preachers today teach that fasting could be more beneficial by living a fasted life, a life of discipline which would please the Spirit of God more. The Lord will sometimes lead a person to fast for a period of time and what kind of fast it should be.

The purpose of fasting is to deal with us, it is not something that we can do to maybe think that we can get God to change His mind regarding a situation, but what are we going to do about the situation that we are in or facing. Fasting should be putting us in a place where we are seeking God, trying to become more like Him, our attitudes must be correct in order to receive anything from Him. The children of Israel were complaining to God, asking why did they not receive from Him, but He answered explaining what their motives were and what the problem was, their attitude regarding fasting appeared to be totally for their flesh and not to be pleasing to God. There is a right way to fast and there is a wrong way to fast. We should be asking the question, why are we fasting? Do we have a purpose or are we just fasting? Are we going to fast to gain more from the discipline side and gain a closer walk with the Lord, or is it more of a fleshly thing

that we chose to do?

The following scriptures give us the information that is needed on how and why we should be fasting, fasting for spiritual principles, wrongly and rightly, what our attitudes should be regarding fasting and what benefits we will receive from fasting. This particular reading is from the Message bible, it speaks language that we understand and the King James Version is listed below to use as a comparison of what is being taught regarding fasting and the benefits.

Isa 58:3-14 "But they also complain, 'Why do we fast and you don't look our way? Why do we humble ourselves and you don't even notice?' Well, here's why: "The bottom line on your 'fast days' is profit. You drive your employees much too hard. You fast, but at the same time you bicker and fight. You fast, but you swing a mean fist. The kind of fasting you do won't get your prayers off the ground. Do you think this is the kind of fast day I'm after: a day to show off humility? To put on a pious long face and parade around solemnly in black? Do you call that fasting, a fast day that I, God, would like? This is the kind of fast day I'm after: to break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace, free the oppressed, cancel debts. What I'm interested in seeing you do is: sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families. Do this and the lights will turn on, and your lives will turn around at once. Your righteousness will pave your way. The God of glory will secure your passage. Then when you pray, God will answer. You'll call out for help and I'll say, 'Here I am.' If you get rid of unfair practices, quit blaming victims, quit gossiping about other people's sins, If you are generous with the hungry and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out, Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness, your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight. I will always show you where to go. I'll give you a full life in the emptiest of places— firm muscles, strong bones. You'll be like a well-watered garden, a gurgling spring that never runs dry. You'll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew, rebuild the foundations from out of your past. You'll be known as those who can fix anything, restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate, make the community livable again. If you watch your step on the Sabbath and don't use my holy day for personal advantage, If you treat the Sabbath as a day of joy, God's holy day as a celebration, If you honor it by refusing 'business as usual,' making money, running here and there— Then you'll be free to enjoy God! Oh, I'll make you ride high and soar above it all. I'll make you feast on the inheritance of your ancestor Jacob."

Yes! God says so!" MESSAGE

Isa 58:11-14 "And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. 12 And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. 13 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: 14 Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." KJV

The kind of fast that God is wanting are listed in the scriptures above, it lists several things that God would like to see in us with our fasting, it also lists the benefits of living this kind of a fasted life, what our rewards will be and the freedom that we will experience because of our actions with the fast and that we will receive a greater understanding of how the Lord works. If we are fasting right, God is going to take care of us where it doesn't seem that there is any provision, He will provide for us.

We have been hearing recently from different prophets that this upcoming year is going to be great for the church and the believers, however, if there are those who claim to be believers and who refuse to walk in the light, they are going to be enveloped in a greater measure of darkness than ever before, letting themselves become deceived, believing they are right and everyone else is wrong, this deception will continue to grow. Those choosing to walk in the light are going to have

the best year that they have ever had, blessed by God. What we compromise to keep we will lose, if we compromise our faith and values we will lose.

Reference was made earlier to Daniel and the type of fast that he chose and the following scriptures go into detail regarding that fast. He chose not to compromise his faith and what he believed. The king had certain requirements regarding those that would be chosen to stand in the king's court. He found favor with the prince of the eunuchs that was responsible as to how they would be treated, the prince was reluctant at first to do what Daniel asked, but agreed and was surprised to see the end result. Therefore, Daniel and his friends were chosen to have high posts in the kingdom and were able to help the people who had been taken prisoner by the king of Babylon. The benefits that Daniel and his friends received after their ten day fast was, they had knowledge, skill in learning, wisdom and Daniel had understanding in dreams and visions.

Dan 1:4-20 "Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. 5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. 6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego. 8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. 9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. 10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king. 11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. 13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. 14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. 16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse. 17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. 18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. 20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." KJV

In the following verse Paul addresses how a husband and wife should handle a time of fasting in their lives.

1 Cor 7:5 "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." KJV

These following scriptures are reminding us about the authority that has been given to each of the believers. We can take our position and exercise our authority regardless of where we are. It takes faith to exercise the authority that God has given us, without faith we won't exercise the faith that has been given. The disciples were faithless, full of unbelief. When we get so busy working for God that we lose our relationship and we aren't spending time with Him we begin to develop problems. Part of fasting is keeping our relationship with God, spending time with Him. Prayer and fasting will make us aware of the delegated authority that Jesus has given to us, without that

authority we will be full of doubt and unbelief.

Matt 17:17-20 "Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. 18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. 19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? 20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. 21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." KJV

Eph 1:16-23 "Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; 17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: 18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." KJV

Eph 3:10 "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God," KJV

If we go into a fast for the next ten days, though the choice is ours, whether we chose to fast or not, this is not a thing that is commanded for us to do, it is strictly volunteer. Remember that fasting is not something that we do to get God to change His mind regarding situations that we are confronted with, but is strictly for us to make correction in our lives. Commit to something we can keep, don't go with something that we can't stay with, make it something that will enable us to grow in the Lord.