

Fasting and Joy

Consider It All Joy...

The spiritual discipline of fasting adds much joy to our walk with God. There are many benefits to fasting and they all are immersed in joy. Here are four benefits that I have experienced in my life and that I have seen in the lives of other people who fast:

Humility before God: Both David and Ezra stated that they humbled themselves with fasting. Fasting is certainly not the only way to humble ourselves before God but it is one way. Why should we be interested in humbling ourselves before God? Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6, and I Peter 5:5 and say the same thing: God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Fasting done with the correct motives will produce humility in our lives. Humility in us gives God the freedom to give us grace. I love God's grace. We all receive it to some extent. I wholeheartedly believe that properly motivated prayer and fasting increases His grace. Humility and joy are definitely connected in our relationship with God.

Joy and Gladness Before God: Read what Zechariah says in Zechariah 8:18-19. "Again the word of the Lord Almighty came to me. This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months will become joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals for Judah. Therefore love truth and peace.' I have had people approach me during a seminar and confess depression. They typically want to know what they should do. At times I have recommend fasting. They often get this look on their face that says, "You are an idiot. I am depressed and you want me to go without food?" God has a way of injecting more joy and gladness into our lives through fasting. How God does this is not significant. The fact that He does it is significant.

3. We Will Be Rewarded By God: Jesus makes this perfectly clear. Matthew

6:18 says, “so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” Our Father desires to reward us through properly motivated fasting. I personally believe that this reward that Jesus speaks of is a spiritual reward. God certainly knows how to draw us into closer intimacy with Him. Being rewarded by God can only bring additional joy into our lives.

4. We Will Have A Heightened Sensitivity to God: This appears to be evident for the leaders at the church in Antioch in Acts 13:2-3. “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.” Why is this so significant? Up until this time in Acts, no one had been sent out with the express purpose of taking the gospel somewhere else. Some had been scattered by persecution but no one had been sent on a mission trip. The Holy Spirit directed these church leaders to do something new in order to spread the gospel and He spoke to them during a time of worshipping and fasting. In 2004, when we at Impact Ministries sensed God was heading us in a particular direction concerning a retreat center, our staff fasted for direction and God spoke with great clarity. We obeyed and He magnificently blessed us. Sometimes we need a greater sensitivity to the Holy Spirit that God has placed in us. Fasting and worshipping work together to increase that sensitivity and a greater sensitivity to God increases our joy.

Most Christians never connect fasting with joy but God makes the connection for us when we choose to pursue Him through fasting.