

Prayer and Fasting

I. An impossible task

- A. *Revelation 7:9–10, [9] After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, [10] and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”*
- B. *Matthew 28:18–20, [18] And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*
- C. *2 Corinthians 2:12–17, [12] When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, [13] my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia. [14] But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. [15] For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, [16] to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? [17] For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.*
- D. *Ephesians 6:12, For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

II. Spiritual tools for spiritual work.

A. Sermon on the Mount

1. When you pray... When you fast... Seek first the Kingdom... Don’t worry...
2. When we pray and seek God, when we fast to hunger after him, when we seek first his kingdom, then we can release fears and worries.
3. When the posture of our heart is in the right place and we are seeking God and his kingdom, he works through his for his purposes more clearly

B. *Matthew 6:9–15, Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

1. What is prayer?

- a) From New City Catechism: “Prayer is pouring out our hearts to God in praise, petition, confession of sin, and thanksgiving.”
 - 2. Why do we pray?
 - a) We primarily pray because we want to enjoy a relationship with our heavenly Father! We don’t pray, primarily, to get things or out of duty. We pray because we want GOD.
 - 3. How should we pray:
 - a) Again from NCC, “With love, perseverance, and gratefulness; in humble submission to God’s will, knowing that, for the sake of Christ, he always hears our prayers.”
 - 4. Daniel Henderson (Strategic Renewal) 3 Things on prayer
 - a) Scripture Fed
 - (1) Notice all of this is rooted in the Word. Without the Word, we cannot pray these truths. We don’t even know them.
 - (2) Prayer is rooted in truth. Truth is rooted in God and his Word.
 - (3) Without the bedrock of truth, prayer is pointless. If God is only what we think he is then we are praying to our own imagination
 - (4) NCC, “The whole Word of God directs and inspires us in what we should pray...”
 - b) Spirit Led
 - (1) Spirit Led builds on the Word as the Spirit enlightens us
 - (2) In light of the fact that God is the Father in heaven, how do I pray? In light of the fact that he is holy, how do I pray?
 - c) Worship Based (seek his face, not just his hand)
 - (1) God is not a genie or a vending machine
 - (2) He knows our needs, he wants to take care of our needs
 - (3) What you think you need might not be what you need
 - (4) His goal is his glory, your christlikeness
 - (5) When we start with worship, it helps us to stay focused
 - 5. A simple rubric for prayer (think similar to DBS)
 - a) Upward, Downward, Inward, Outward
- C. Matthew 6:16-18 “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 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.*
- 1. What is fasting?
 - a) Fasting is to intentionally not consume something (typically food or drink) in order to intentionally crave God more.
 - (1) Killed by cravings... - Numbers
 - b) Ex: You skip a meal in order to feast on God’s Word and Spirit.
 - 2. Why should you fast?

- a) Fasting helps us to develop a hunger for God by reminding us that every craving is actually rooted in a deeper craving for the Lord.
 - b) Everything we eat or drink in this life passes through the body (or gets stored in our body), but the food and drink from heaven (the Word and the Spirit) lasts forever. It is spiritual nourishment for our souls.
 - c) Fasting teaches us to hunger for God more than for food.
3. Pointers on fasting
- a) Check your heart - it's not a diet
 - b) Check your heart - it's not about staying busy so you forget to eat
 - c) Check your heart - it's not so you feel in control
 - d) Check your heart - it's not about arm-wrestling God
 - e) Check your heart - it's about hungering for God and his kingdom. It's about remembering with each growl of the stomach that you are more desperately in need of God and should be more viscerally salivating for his presence.

III. How can you pray for us while we are in Greece?

A. [1] And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. [2] And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." [3] And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." [4] And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." [5] On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. [6] And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. [7] There were about twelve men in all.

[8] And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. [9] But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. [10] This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. (Acts 19:1–10)

B. Prayer Requests:

1. Pray that Bill and David pursue the Father's heart from the right posture of humility each day so as to be in touch with what the Spirit is saying and doing around them.
2. Pray for wisdom and boldness in engaging with contacts that they encounter, be they locals, refugees, NGO workers, or anyone else!
3. Pray for God-prepared people who are spiritually open or recently come to faith and are EAGER to be trained and developed.

4. Pray for contacts who will hear, obey, and pass on what they learn from the Word.
 5. Pray for calm and confident hearts as Bill and David walk forward into the unknown by faith on this "Luke 10" trip.
- C. When will you fast for us during the next two weeks?
1. Pick a time
 2. Pick a spiritual plan (read and pray, journal, alone, with family, etc)
 3. Choose something to fast (a day, a meal, a type of food, etc)