

Fasting

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If I'm honest, I did not handle the first few weeks of the COVID-19 quarantine well. In a matter of days, all of the anxieties and fears I thought I had under control returned in full force. To distract myself, I reached out to my former best friends: TV, Netflix, and YouTube. As a result, prayer began to weaken and reading scripture became unimportant.

These patterns were all too familiar. As though the enemy was writing a script for my downfall and I played my part perfectly every single time. Then God, in His perfect timing, put Joel 2:13-14 in front of me:

“Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning, and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.”

Fasting Reveals What We Need

The word ‘fasting’ stuck out to me. I knew what fasting meant in general terms, going a period of time without food or some other significant thing, it just didn't have personal meaning for me. Then a quote by John Piper reshaped my entire perspective:

“She [fasting] reveals the measure of food’s mastery over us – or television or computers or whatever we submit to again and again to conceal the weakness of our hunger for God. And she remedies by intensifying the earnestness of our prayer and saying with our whole body what prayer says with the heart: I long to be satisfied in God alone!” (John Piper, When I Don’t Desire God)

Put simply, fasting for Christians is meant to reveal our deep need for God. By taking away something earthly that we rely on, fasting shines a light on our hearts to reveal our weakest parts. The parts that we have been trying to control, fix, hide or avoid. Thankfully, as much as fasting reveals the worst in us, it also reveals the greatest parts of God. How

He is good, glorious, patient, wise, loving, merciful and generous. Fasting reveals that God is the only thing we *really* need.

Return to the Lord with Fasting

So, I fasted. Not from food, but from technology. I closed my iPad, turned off my TV, and deleted apps from my phone. The distractions were removed and I was left standing center stage under a spotlight exposing all my weaknesses. Then, I looked up and saw God the Father inviting me to return to him. How amazing?! That all my insecurities and fears are completely exposed and God wants to love me! We can all walk away from our weaknesses with confidence because Christ covered our sin and brokenness on the cross! In Him we are made new.

I encourage you to embrace the rhythm of fasting in your life. If fasting is new to you and you don't know where to start, begin by fasting from one meal a day or turning all electronics off for an hour each evening over the course of a week. Then use that time when you would usually be eating, on your phone, or playing video games to pray, read your Bible, journal, or anything else that grows your affection for the Lord.

In a way, COVID-19 feels like one massive fast from life. But it's just a season and eventually, we will go back to our schools, our jobs and our lives. So, my prayer in our waiting is we won't long to return to what is 'normal', but we might long for the Lord and return to Him.

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others 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. — Matthew 6:16 – 18