

FASTING FOR FREEDOM

Mark 9:14-129

- Intro...
- **The life of a disciple is a life of dependence and fasting is a demonstration of dependence...**
- This is just something we ought to do ask Christians.
- Jesus said (**Matt 6**) "*WHEN you fast do not be like the hypocrites...*"
- 'Not "if", but "when".
 - David fasted. Esther fasted. Moses. Daniel fasted. The whole nation of Israel fasted together.
 - The early church fasted and Jesus Himself fasted, and taught about, fasting.
- The assumption from Jesus in **Matt 6** is that the people of God will practice, not just praying, but praying AND fasting.
- We believe that this is something that God wants us to lean into this season — to embrace as part of our spiritual practice and discipline.
- **Mark 9:14-29**
- 'Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not."
- He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the
- and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.
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- So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."
- Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"
- When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it: "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!"

- Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.
- And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

Prayer

- **The Point:** There are some strongholds that can only be broken through prayer and fasting.
- **What is prayer fasting?**
 - Prayer fasting is the deliberate abstinence from food, in order to commune with, and rely on God, through deliberate, focused prayer.
 - Lament is the **"Language for living in the space between a life full of heartache and the fulfilled promises of God."**
 - Similarly, The physical hunger we experience while fasting, reminds us that we will never be fully filled or fully satisfied until Jesus returns.
- **Romans 8:23** ("groan and long") for the day that Jesus returns completes our redemption.
- **THIS is the common denominator whenever we see fasting in scripture — there is an acknowledgment that we are living in the already BUT NOT YET Kingdom of God.**
- **1 Samuel 7** - God's people fasted in order to recognize how far from God, and how desperately they needed Him.
 - When they fasted, their physical hunger and need for food, reminded them of their spiritual hunger and need, for God.
- **2 Chron. 20** - God's people faced an unbeatable enemy, and they fasted.
 - As their bellies were empty, they were reminded that their hopes were empty, also, unless God showed up.
- **Psalms 69** - David wept and fasted, not because of his own sins, but because he was ill treated by others.
 - His lack of food reminded him of the lack of love and care from the people around him, which drove him to look for that love and care in God alone.
- **Matt 4** - Jesus going into the wilderness for 40 days, praying and fasting.
 - In His humanity, Jesus acknowledged His need to be deeply, and intentionally, connected to the Father and to the Spirit.
- **Acts 13** - The early church had a habit of not just praying, but praying and FASTING.
 - The fasting was a physical reminder that YES, Jesus had come, but they were still living in a falling world waiting for Him to come AGAIN, and make all things right.

- **Matthew 9** - Jesus said that His people WOULD fast as we waited in the space between the fallenness of the world and the Day when He returns.
- Fasting is a physical reminder that we will never be satisfied fully on earth, not until the Kingdom of God is fully manifest here.
- **And this hunger and drive for food (when we fast) should drive our hearts to say, "Maranatha, even so, Lord Jesus come quickly."**
- I chose this particular story to teach us about fasting is because, just like this father, WE NEED JESUS TO COME QUICKLY... breakthrough!

- **Five points in the progression of this story:**

1. HELPLESS DESPERATION - The father and the disciples are helpless and desperate.
(Mark 9:18, 24, 28; Matthew 17:14)

- The dad doesn't know what to do. His son has been like this most of his life, and up until this point, no-one has been able to help him.
- He's desperate.
- *"But at least the disciples show up to save the day."*
- Nope.
- When they prayed for THIS boy to be healed, for THIS situation to be change..., for THIS stronghold to be broken... there was no deliverance. No freedom.
- **Now, not only is the FATHER desperate and helpless, but the disciples are desperate and helpless, as well.**

2. PERMANENT INCARCERATION - The boy has been tortured and trapped his entire life.
(Mark 9:17, 20, 22)

- This demon had taken over this boy's body, and if you've ever seen a person who is demonized, you know that this boy is in absolute bondage to this evil spirit, with no way of getting free, and as far as he knows, that will never change.
- **Permanent Incarceration.**

3. INEVITABLE DESTRUCTION - The boy's condition is chronic, incurable, and destructive.
(Mark 9:17-18, 21-22, 28; John 10:10)

- **His condition is chronic. It was lifelong.**
 - In **v. 21** the dad tells Jesus that this has been happening **since the boy was a child.**

- **And it appears to be incurable.**
 - Even then disciples (who Jesus gave authority to cast out demons), **couldn't do anything about it.**
- **His condition is destructive.**
 - When the father describes his son's experience in v. 22, he says that the evil spirit often threw him into the water and into the fire **trying to kill him.**
 - Jesus describes the work of the enemy in **John 10:10** just like this: **"He comes to steal, kill and, destroy"**
- *Acknowledge that some of us find ourselves in this part of the story, today.*
- **Maybe you feel like this father or like the disciples** who just want to see your people set free. But no matter what you do, you don't see any change...
 - *PAUSE in the story...*
- Mark makes sure to tell us that the father said (v. 22), **"If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."** (v. 22)
 - "Us"? The dad is not sick. The dad is not demonized.
 - The son is the one who needs help. But the dad doesn't say, "Have compassion on my son and help him. He says: **"Jesus, please, if you can do anything, have compassion on US, and help US."**
- **The father may have not been the one in bondage, but his son was not the only one affected by this evil spirit.**
- **So [Jesus] asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" (v. 21)**
 - Jesus is not small talking or being polite by asking "how long has this been happening".
- **Jesus CARES DEEPLY about this father and this family and this situation.**
- **This is the question of someone who CARES. "How long has this been happening?"**
- **Jesus cares as much about the man as He does the miracle.**
- **He doesn't want us to only experience His healing for us, but also His heart for us.**
- **And Jesus shows us here what it means to walk in love. This is part of love.**
- I think we can take a cue from Jesus, in this moment in history...
- **Or maybe you're like the son. You're not trying to help someone else get free, You ARE the person who needs to get free.**
- **So what do we do with THAT? How do we DEAL with that?**

4. PRAYERFUL STARVATION - Jesus arrived prepared after praying and fasting. (Mark 9:29; Matthew 4:2; John 4:31-32)

- **What do we do with life long, incurable, or hopeless situations or strongholds?**
 - The disciples asked the same question of Jesus, and He had a very specific answer.
 - **‘So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”’ (v.29b)**
- **“Jesus why could we not do this and you could? What’s the difference?”**
- **The difference was that APPARENTLY BEFORE Jesus ever got to there, He had ALREADY been praying and fasting.**
- Jesus had a pattern of prayer fasting. He was doing it in **Matt 4.**
- It appears that he’s fasting in **John 4.**
- As a Jewish man, this would have been part of his spiritual life.
- THIS WAS the difference between what they did and what He did.
- Jesus wasn’t saying: “What you should have done was leave the boy, go pray and fast and come back and try again.”
- He was saying, **“Had you ALREADY been praying and fasting BEFORE YOU GOT HERE (like I did), you would have had a different, and more favorable, experience.”**
- **Prayer fasting is not only a response to impossible situations, but a preparation for them.**
- He doesn’t say: “This kind only comes out when I show up in a special way.”
- Jesus wasn’t saying **you can’t do this**. Jesus was saying, “you can’t do this **without prayer and fasting.**”
- Jesus has given US authority and power to tear down spiritual strongholds. Our weapons ARE mighty in God.
- **The problem is not that we don’t have weapons. The problem is that we don’t use the weapons that we do have.**
- **Jesus demonstrates to us the kind of power that we have access to, while exposing the fact that we may not be able to fully employ that power apart from the practice of prayer fasting.**
- **And what happened as a result?**
- **His deliberate, prayerful starvation led to:**

5. DIVINE EMANCIPATION - Freedom came after Jesus prayed and fasted. (Mark 9:25-29)

- There are some strongholds that are only broken through prayer and fasting, and God wants us to experience that kind of breakthrough, which is why He didn't keep this a secret, but wrote it down for us, in His word.
- **Acts 13** — AS the disciples were fasting and praying, God reveled Himself to them.
 - There is a blessing in fasting, that as we starve our flesh from something physical, God meets our souls and lives, with something spiritual.
- You may not even realize that this is what you need because your situation seems like such a practical earthly (non-spiritual) thing.
- **MAYBE it's actually a SPIRITUAL problem that needs to be addressed with spiritual weapons like prayer and fasting.**
- God is moving and He is the one who is doing this work, and He will continue to do it.
- BUT, He really loves involving us in it, instead of having us watching from the sidelines like the disciples had to do **because they weren't prepared.**
- I don't want US to miss it when the opportunities arise.
- He is inviting us to make ourselves READY for what is coming, through the spiritual practice of prayer fasting.