

PREPARING OUR HEARTS TO SEE THE KING

1. JESUS PREPARES HIS BRIDE

- A. How can we best prepare for the coming year, the next move of God & coming before the King?
 - I. We can participate with Jesus in His preparation.
- B. Jesus is a passionate Bridegroom who prepares His bride. He burns with desire & delight.
 - I. His desire is His love for His Church. His delight is His pleasure in His Church.
 - II. *For everyone will be seasoned with fire and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt.* **Matt 9:49**
 - III. The fire speaks not only of the intensity of His love but the jealousy of His love.
 - IV. The mark of those being prepared, they will be seasoned by fire. This is the refining process.
 - V. This refining can sometimes take the form of persecution, accusation, or misunderstanding.
 - VI. At other times the preparation looks like the wilderness (loneliness, disappointment). **Hosea 2:14**
- C. Jesus also prepares His bride through wooing, sanctifying and washing. **Song of S., Ephesians 5:25-27**
- D. Ester is a prophetic picture of the preparation of the Church for the Bridegroom. **Ester 2:12**
 - I. Myrrh speaks of suffering. Oil speaks of intimacy with God and the presence of God.
 - II. Perfume (spices) speaks of those things that make us attractive to Him.
- E. *Awake, O north wind, And come, O south! Blow upon my garden that its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits.* **Song of Songs 4:16**
 - I. The N & S winds are winds refreshing and winds of suffering that its spices may flow out.
 - II. *Sometimes it is hard to follow to Jesus. Isn't it harder to watch Him walk away?* Francis Chan
 - III. There are times that we may ask, is this worth it? This question can lead us into disappointment.
 - IV. I believe the question we should ask is, "Is He worthy?" To which we can always answer, yes!
- F. One way we can participate in His preparation is to pray, "Search me a know me." **Psalms 139:23-24**
 - I. We can invite the Holy Spirit to bring conviction of sin, including sins of omission.
 - II. We can allow Jesus to confront us and change us.
- G. On June 6, 2011, I heard the phrase, "fresh clean linen" and saw a picture of a table prepared in the back of our sanctuary. The table was clothed with beautiful white linen without spot or wrinkle. We had been invited to dine with Jesus.
 - I. *For the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.* **Revelation 19:8**
 - II. He prepares a table. **Psalms 23:5.** Speaks of communion & intimacy in the midst of tribulation.

2. THE FRUIT OF FASTING

- A. Another way we can partner with Jesus in His preparation is through fasting and prayer.
 - I. Ester called for a fast and fasted before her appearance before the King. **Ester 4:16**
 - II. Daniel prepared himself through fasting before his vision of the pre-incarnate Jesus. **Dan 10:1-6**
- B. Fasting helps us position ourselves in a place of humility to hear and receive grace from the Lord.
 - I. We never fast to bend God's arm. Fasting is a form of humbling ourselves.
 - II. David speaks of how He humbled himself with fasting. **Psalms 35:13**
 - III. Fasting is a time of humbling ourselves before the King and a time of seeking the King of Kings.
- C. The church operates in the power of the Spirit when its members obtain grace from God.
 - I. *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.* **James 4:6**
 - II. *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.* **James 4:10**
 - III. Another promise associated with humbling ourselves. Humble and I will heal. **2 Chronicles 7:14**
- D. Fasting positions us to overcome.
 - I. *They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.* **Revelation 12:11**
 - II. One way we can, not love our lives unto death is through fasting. It facilitates death to self.
- E. Fasting helps move the immovable. This kind does not go out but by prayer and fasting **Matt 17:20-21**
- F. Fasting cultivates sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.
 - I. *"Fasting . . . opens the way for the outpouring of the Spirit and the restoration of God's house. Fasting in this age of the absent Bridegroom is in expectation of His return. Soon there will be the midnight cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' It will be too late then to fast and to pray. The time is now."* — Arthur Wallis

3. OTHER REASONS FOR FASTING

- A. Appears to be a requirement for the abiding or lingering presence of God.
- B. You will see life's priorities more clearly.
- C. The Kingdom will become the highest priority in your life.
- D. You will see balance return to your life where there is imbalance.
- E. Hidden areas of weakness will rise to the surface so you can address them.
- F. Selfish ambition and pride will be washed away.
- G. You will become more grateful for the simple things in life.
- H. The gifts of the Holy Spirit will work more effectively in your life.
- I. You will have more self-control.
- J. *"Fasting begets prophets and strengthens strong men. Fasting makes lawgivers wise; it is the soul's safeguard, the body's trusted comrade, the armor of the champion, the training of the athlete."* — Basil, Bishop of Caesarea (AD 330–379)

4. FASTING IS BIBLICAL

- A. Jesus taught that those who follow Him would regular fasting.
- B. After Jesus is baptized, the Holy Spirit leads Him into a place of complete lack of provision.
 - I. Jesus fasts for 40 days. Fasting causes us to learn complete dependence on the Holy Spirit.
 - II. It also teaches us about resisting temptation.
 - III. It is a key to walking in power as the power comes from being dependent on God.
- C. Another time Jesus speaks of fasting is in reference to the Bridegroom being taken away. **Matt 9:14-15**
 - I. Jesus told His disciples that the joy they experienced in His nearness would change (to sorrow).
 - II. Then they would fast! They would fast out of their desire to encounter Him.
 - III. We do not fast to move God to love us. It is not to move His heart, but our own.
 - IV. This fasting is motivated by desire for Jesus, rather than by desire for more power in ministry.
 - V. It is motivated by a refusal to accept the current state of our spiritual barrenness and dullness.
 - VI. It is centered on desire, both understanding His desire for us and awakening our desire for Him.
- D. Fasting is always voluntary. Leaders may invite people to fast but it is never mandatory.
 - I. It is a proven means of obtaining grace in the context of a commitment to prayer and scripture.
 - II. There are great rewards to fasting but we should be careful to fast in secret.
 - III. Jesus' instruction on fasting. **Matthew 6:16-18**
- E. Fasting should always be conducted in the context of prayer. Fasting is fuel to the fire of prayer.
 - I. Fasting without prayer generally appears to be a wasted exercise.
- F. The early church fasted. In the New Testament we see Anna, John's disciples, Jesus, Cornelius, Paul.
- G. As service. *Anna, didn't depart from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayer night and day.*
- H. For revelation. *So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. Acts 10:30-31*
- I. Consecration and commissioning. Paul and Barnabas. **Acts 13:2-3**, Church planting. **Acts 14:23**
- J. Fasting has been the regular discipline of believers throughout church history.
 - I. Polycarp, Martin Luther, Charles Finney, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, Rees Howell
 - II. Derek Prince, Mahesh Chavda, David Hogan, Lou Engle, Mike Bickle
- K. Scripture doesn't mention children fasting food. They can fast non-food abstentions (entertainment).

5. THE HEART BEHIND FASTING

- A. *"Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me—for Me? Zech 7:5*
- B. *"Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm. Joel 2:12-14*
- C. *Is it a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? " Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Isaiah 58:5-12*

SCRIPTURES

Ephesians 5:25-27 (NKJV) *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*

Hosea 2:14 (NKJV) *“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her.*

Psalms 139:23-24 (NKJV) *Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Matthew 17:20-21 (NKJV) *So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. 21 However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”*

Esther 2:12 (NKJV) *Each young woman’s turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months’ preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women.*

Esther 4:16 (NKJV) *“Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!”*

Daniel 10:1-6 (NKJV) *In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar. The message was true, but the appointed time was long; and he understood the message, and had understanding of the vision. 2 In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. 3 I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. 4 Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is, the Tigris, 5 I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz! 6 His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.*

Matthew 9:14-15 (NKJV) *Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?”*

15 And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Matthew 6:16-18 (NKJV) *“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV) *If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

Acts 13:2-3 (NKJV) *As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.*

Acts 14:23 (NKJV) *So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*