

THE PLACE OF PRAYER AND FASTING

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I bring greetings in the name of Jesus this evening, we hope that you have been enjoying your time spent at Bible School so far and that it may continue to meet the needs of each one of our lives and in the lives of our congregations.

I would like you to turn with me to Acts the 10th chapter.

We have an account in Acts 10 of an individual that prayed and fasted and I think the account is an inspiration to us, noticing God's response to that, I would like to read the first six verses and then move over to verse 30.

Acts 10:1-6

“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, [2] A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. [3] He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. [4] And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. [5] And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: [6] He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.”

Move over to verse 30, Cornelius was rehearsing on the events of those days when Peter came.

Acts 10:30-33

“And 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, [31] And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. [32] Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. [33] Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.”

I was inspired when looking at Cornelius's life the fact that his prayer, his fasting, his alms had come up for a remembrance before God. God took notice of them, it wasn't something that God didn't care about or didn't pay any attention to but it is something that God took notice of. That inspires me as we think about prayer and fasting, the fact that our God is a God even though He is in control of this whole universe yet He pays attention to each one of our prayers and our times that we spend before the Lord. He takes notice of them and He responds.

He responded to Cornelius's needs here, He sent a man, He arranged the circumstances so a man came to him and showed him the Lord's will for his life. I think that's an inspiration to us as we think about the place of prayer and fasting.

Someone has said that prayer and fasting is one of the most and maybe the most unused power in the world. That is one of the things I would like to challenge as with this evening; that prayer of and fasting is one of the most unused powers in the world. Is it unused in our life? Is it unused in our churches? I will leave that for us to meditate upon.

It certainly is in contrast with the scripture that says in Luke that men ought always to pray and not faint. We think of someone who faints as someone who doesn't have much power, a fainting person is someone whose strength goes out of him, it is gone, and Jesus said that men ought always to pray and not faint, (Luke 18:1) indicating that there is power in prayer that keeps us from fainting. Again that is an inspiration for us. Pray without ceasing tells us that we need this power in our lives. (1 Thess.5:17).

We have said already that the prayer meeting is the life of the church it is the way in which you detect the pulse of a church, where you could somewhat take the thermometer of the church by the prayer meeting, how many people come and how much enthusiasm that they have there in the prayer period. I believe there is a sense in which we could say that we can take our own pulse, we can take our own temperature, we can evaluate our own condition by our prayer life, how meaningful and how much prayer life we have, we can evaluate that.

Now we think about fasting that sort of added dimension to prayer, we often have messages on prayer but not quite as often on fasting. Fasting appears in the scriptures as another way that God has provided to us to increase our petition or strengthen our petition with God. I thought about the scripture that says: This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. ([Matthew 17:21](#)) indicating that here was a special occasion which called for a special petition and so prayer and fasting was brought into focus in that setting.

We like to think now about the need for prayer and fasting.

Is there a need for it in our lives? Is there a need for it in our churches? Is there a need for it in this world today?

I think we have to conclude that we are needy people when we think of our spiritual lives, our endeavours to live a Christian life, we would have to conclude that we are a needy people. We are a people that are weak and failing, people that in a sense are helpless when we think about the onslaught of the enemy of our souls and when we think about the world in which we are living and then the pressures which come in upon us because of that, we have to admit that we are weak and failing and helpless in this world, in our own strength, in our own power.

We are also living in a world that is needy, we are living in a world that is a needy world, a world that is full of wickedness, a world that needs God, a world that is troubled. We are living in a world that has a lot of troubled people in it, a lot of troubled nations in this world that are needy as well and they are troubled. We are living in a world that is dangerous from a spiritual standpoint as well as a physical standpoint, we know some of those dangers.

We are living in a tough world that has a tendency to give us some knocks and bumps, and at times it tries to knock us down and bump us over, to knock us off our course in life. Someone has said that when life knocks you down you are in the best position to pray. I think that is a good statement, when life knocks you down you are in the best position to pray.

But how much better would it be if we would come to God daily in prayer and fasting, before life knocks us down, and reach out and take hold of the hand that keeps us from going down. How much better would that be? I think that should be our goal to lay hold of that power by prayer and fasting that will keep us from going down, keep us from being knocked down. Even as we stumble we might hold on, reach out and hold on to God's hand in prayer and fasting and keep from going down, how much better that would be.

Well we certainly recognize our need of prayer and fasting and imploring supernatural help.

I thought about the privilege of prayer and fasting. We have an enemy of our souls that is stronger than what we are, we are no match for him but we are able to contact in prayer and fasting to contact the One who is a match and exceeds: "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." ([1 John 4:4](#)). So in prayer and fasting we are able to lay hold of a power that exceeds the power of Satan which we very much need because we are no match for Satan in our own strength, but we can reach and lay hold of the One that is. And so one of the privileges of prayer and fasting is the fact that we now, through prayer and fasting, are able to reach out to lay hold and implore the power of One who is the greatest power in the world, greatest power in the universe, greatest power out in space as far as you want to go, the One who is in control of all that, and to think about the privilege in prayer and fasting of actually contacting that individual, that Supreme Being and petition Him for help. That certainly represents the privilege of prayer and fasting.

We are besieging One who has no limits. We think of ourselves as people who are limited, people who are not able to do all that we would like to do, unable to accomplish everything that we would want to, unable to control the things around us and in prayer and fasting we are able to lay hold of the One who has no limits, the One who can do all things and can do them well.

We are also able to make contact with the One who is actually working on our behalf and wants to work on our behalf, the One who has a desire to work on our behalf. In Romans the eighth chapter it talks about the One that: He is for us who can be against us? ([Romans 8:31](#)) God is the one that is for us and in prayer we can petition the One that actually wants to work for us, wants to help us, we can petition Him, the One that is willing to help us, the One who sees all things and we think again about our limited knowledge, our limited vision, we wonder sometimes as we make decisions and evaluate things we just wish we could have more insight be able to see into things and be able to understand them as we see them, and in prayer we are able to again contact the One who is able to see all things and therefore able to direct our lives, to give us wisdom and to give us direction in life, the One who has no limit in His vision.

The One who has no limits as far as the future, He knows the future, He knows all that is before us and again we think about making decisions and charting a course through life. We wish we would know that if we would choose this or if we go in this direction or if we make this decision what would be the outcome of it? And we don't know. We can ask questions, we can ask other individuals, sometimes they can give us wisdom and we can use the best judgment that we know how and yet our vision is limited, we have questions about it, but in prayer we can actually implore the power of One who knows the future, the One who knows that if you take this course in life this is where it will bring you out at. We are not talking quite as much about things where the Bible gives us direction but areas of life where we need to make decisions where the Bible doesn't necessarily shows us which of two good things we should choose. God is the one who has able to direct us. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; ([James 1:5](#)) and how much we need that wisdom to chart out course through life safely and to prosper spiritually.

We have a great privilege to come to God in prayer and in fasting, the One who knows what is best. We, in our own lives, we evaluate things and we say: Well I believe this is best and this is the way, I want to choose this way. But in prayer and fasting we are able to come and implore the One who knows what is best, not just supposes what is best but knows what is best. God's way is vast and human wisdom maybe a fair way and may seem to show us, but it is only earthly dim wisdom that truth can never clearly know. That is the kind of God than we are reaching out for in prayer and fasting, imploring His help.

I thought about this aspect as well which can be a real comfort to us at times. Sometimes we would like to reach out and touch other people's lives and be able to influence them to choose right, we would like to be able to bring influences to bear upon their lives, we would like to guard their physical safety sometimes and their spiritual safety, we would like to watch out for them but we are not able to have contact, maybe we don't know where they are at right now, maybe they are beyond our reach, we are not really able to contact them, not able to speak a word to them, not able to give them encouragement and direction and warning, we are not able to do that. But think about the time that in prayer and fasting we are in never out of contact with any other one in this world, never.

God is able to be in contact with whosoever He will and through prayer we can contact God and God can contact them wherever they are in this world, there is a sense in which there is a lot of comfort in that as we face the issues of life. And you know there is even a lot of safety in that because of the fact that when I want to talk to somebody, I want to give them warning and direction and counsel and encouragement, I might not do it the right way, I might not say the right things in the circumstance, I might not say it in the right way, I might not give them the right words to encourage them, but you know when we bring it to God and let God speak to them He never says it wrong. He always speaks to them in the right way and so there is a real comfort in that and also a real safety net. That doesn't mean we ought not to take opportunities to speak a word of the Lord and to give encouragement and comfort but lets never feel handicapped when we are not able to do it There is a real comfort and safety in knowing the fact that no

one is out of our touch as we contact God and God can contact them as He sees fit, and that is a real blessing.

I hope that by now we have come to the conclusion that we need supernatural help and through prayer and fasting God has provided access to supernatural help. Praise God for that privilege that we have in prayer and fasting.

Now what really determines the effectiveness of our prayers and our fasting? What really determines the quality of it? I would like to look at that next.

I believe one of these things, I have three, one of them is faith.

We must exercise faith in God as we pray.

We can't come to God and ask Him something and expect to receive an answer if we don't ask in faith; But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. That is one of the requirements in [James 1:6](#) where it talks about asking for wisdom. So we must come in faith, we must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. ([Hebrews 11:6](#)) we must come in faith to God, it determines the quality of our prayer, our prayer in faith believing that He is the one that exists and the one that is able to move on our behalf, the one that is able to do His will in this world, the one that cares about us. All of that involves faith.

We must also come with a need.

We must come recognizing the fact that we are insufficient in ourselves and that we need God's help. We need supernatural help, we must come with that sense of need, God wants us to come with that and I think that was one of the great differences between the publican and the Pharisee. The Pharisee came and he didn't sense any need, but the publican when he came he sensed his need, God be merciful to me a sinner, and God heard his prayer ([Luke 18:10-13](#)). I believe again that sensing our need of God's help will be a determining factor in the effectiveness of our prayer.

And then I believe also we must come in surrender.

We must come surrendering our will to God's will. I believe it is essential for us to have an effective prayer life, coming with not my will but thine will be done. ([Luke 22:42](#)). Surrendering it to God. Surrendering to let God work in our lives to help us to obey Him and also surrendering our will to His will as to how He sees best to answer our prayers. All of that I believe are a part of which determines the quality and the effectiveness of our prayer.

We see the motto sometimes that says: Prayer changes things. How many of you have that motto in your home: Prayer changes things. A few hands went up, maybe some of you forget all the mottos that you have hanging on the wall in your house, many have seen it or have it hanging in our home; Prayer changes things. I think that is a good motto. Prayer does change things. But I thought about another statement that is closely related to that that is important to: Prayer changes me and prayer changes you.

I think that is something we ought to think about. Sometimes you know we pray and ask God to change some circumstances, to work on behalf of some circumstances, and we know many times God comes back to us and wants to show us some area of our life that needs to be changed. He has some things to speak to us about and He wants to work in our lives and many times He works in our lives and that is in a sense of a way of answering those prayers. Many times when God works in our lives as He helps and changes our lives, He wants us to see ourselves, helps us to see the contribution that we can make or should make to the situation that we are concerned about, that is a part of answering our prayer. And so we must recognize the fact that when we come in prayer to God that prayer changes us, prayer changes me and prayer changes you. We don't go away from sincere and fervent prayer without having God work in our lives. I think that is a part of real and genuine prayer to God, it is the fact that we come to God and wanting God to grow within us and to work in our lives as well as in the lives of others and so prayer needs to change us many times in order for it to be effective.

I would like to look at a few things that prayer and fasting is not intended to accomplish.

The first one I was thinking of is the fact that prayer and fasting is not intended to force God against His will.

We said about fasting is a dimension of strengthening our petition with God but it should never be approached from the standpoint that I am going to force God to do what I want Him to do. God cannot be forced in that way and God does not want to be forced in that way. It is not asserting our will over against God's will, prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance but prayer is in a sense laying hold on His willingness, God wants to work in our behalf, He may not choose to do it in the way that we want Him to do it, but He is never reluctant to work in meeting our needs and so we must never try to force God.

It reminds a little bit of what someone told me about a little cartoon, I didn't see the cartoon myself, but somebody told me about the cartoon about some congressmen who went into see the President with the idea of somehow putting pressure and twisting the President's arm and getting him to accomplish some things and our picture shows this group of congressmen coming out of the President's office and their arms were all twisted. And that's a little bit the way it is with God, you know if we try to twist the arm of God we find that doesn't happen we can't twist God's arm, God could work in our lives by twisting our arms and He would have a right to do so. However God does not. He gives us a choice. Many times it seems that our arms need to be twisted to be able to make those changes that God finds necessary in our lives, nevertheless we cannot force God against His will, we can't and really we shouldn't come to God endeavoring to twist His arm to get Him to perform on our behalf.

Prayer is not a substitute for obedience. I'd like to refer to Isaiah 58, this is perhaps one of the classic passages referring to it, there are a number of lessons we can learn from this passage;

[Isaiah 58:1-5](#)

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. [2] Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

[3] Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. [4] Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. [5] Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?”

And now he tells what really is the fast;

[Isaiah 58:6-9](#)

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? [7] Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

[8] Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and so on. Verse. [9] Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am.....”

You see the point? He is saying that fasting and praying all the while knowing that we are living in disobedience to God's will it doesn't mean a thing. It doesn't amount to anything that is what He is saying. He said when that's the case before you come to Me to pray and fast and to cry out to Me you need to go and take care of the things that you know are not according to My will. Prayer and fasting is not a substitute for obedience and if we don't have a right relationship with Him then we call out to Him and ask for Him to cleanse us and to forgive us of our sins and to take us into a right relationship with Him, it is not a substitute for obedience. I think we must keep that in mind.

It is not a means of appeasing God by some external ritual either. We have a lot of that in pagan religions where they afflict themselves in order to somehow find their god's approval and appease his wrath. Well prayer and fasting is not to do that, prayer and fasting is employing the hand of a God that is for us. A God who wants to move in our behalf and it is reaching out and employing and requesting His help. It is not for impressing others of our spirituality. Let's turn to Matthew the sixth chapter. It talks about when we pray and give alms in the first part of the chapter let's begin reading here in verses six.

[Matthew 6:6-8](#)

“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. [7] But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. [8] Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”

And then He gives them a model prayer, an example of how they should pray, a basic and principal form of how they should pray. Then in the verse 16;

[Matthew 6:16-18](#)

“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. [17] But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; [18] That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”

I think that tells us that we are not to do and try to impress other people with our spirituality, that is not the point of prayer and fasting, never to make an impression. And again I thought about the Pharisee and the publican you know, he was praying and he was talking to God in a way that indicates that he was trying to leave an impression on God, and perhaps others that I believe were standing there and observed it, to leave an impression of his goodness, he fasts twice a week he said. Well God can't answer that prayer. God answered that prayer of the publican that poured out his heart in need before God and I don't think that publican cared if anyone saw him, he was only interested in the fact that God would hear, that God was listening to his cry. I think we never want to impress others with our spirituality.

We may raise the question here: Does that mean that no one should ever know that we are fasting? Is it wrong to tell somebody I'm going to spend some time praying and fasting for your need? Is it wrong to tell someone that?

I would make this observation for you to think about: Is it wrong for you to tell somebody that you're going to be praying for them? We do that don't we? We tell people that we are praying for you. I just told a brother today that I would be praying for him. Well the scripture gives the same instruction for prayer and for fasting so if we can't tell somebody that we are praying for them we can't tell somebody that we are praying and fasting for them either. So I think the point here is that we are not to do it for show, to do it for making impressions, we are not to do it to draw attention to ourselves, that doesn't mean we can't do it as an encouragement, that is my personal belief on that, but never do it to try and impress people and make people think well of us, that should never be a motive in doing it.

Prayer and fasting is not primarily intended for health benefits even though there are some health benefits that go along with it, that's not what it should be primarily intended to be the purpose of it. I think if we are going to fast for health reasons we probably should make that a separate fast if that is our goal. Now we may fast for spiritual reasons and we may receive some sideline health benefits, I don't think that's wrong, but if we are intending to do the fast for our physical needs as a part of our goal then we should probably do that as a separate fast rather than confuse the two of them.

Well these are some things that I believe fasting is not intended for but let's come now more directly to what is the place of prayer and fasting? I think that's the question this subject brings into focus.

Where is the place, what is the place for prayer and fasting?

Back in Leviticus the 16th chapter is where I find the first reference in the scripture that I believe refers to fasting. It doesn't use the word fasting but the word is afflict there, ([Leviticus 16:29, 31](#)) I believe in the Old Testament that the call of God in the Old Testament was for them to afflict their souls which I believe refers to be refraining from things of natural pleasure and enjoyment, that's what it was referring to there, to afflict their souls. I believe that the principle is there, I think that was part of what they did when they afflicted their souls it was probably to withhold themselves from eating and probably from some other natural things that they would normally do for enjoyment. And so to my knowledge that is the first reference to this principle of praying and fasting.

In [Judges 20:26](#) I believe is the first record we have in scripture where the word "fasted" is used and I don't think we will take time to turn to that. I will raise this question, people have raised this question already, Is fasting something that God commands us to do, is it a biblical requirement or as a biblical suggestion and encouragement? I have heard people say: Well the Bible doesn't require it. But in answer to that question if you look in [Leviticus 3:29](#) they were commanded there to afflict their souls, they were commanded to do that, that was an instruction and a commandment that was given to them to: Afflict your souls and those that didn't do that where to be cut off it says. And I don't understand what all of that was in focus there but it appears like it was a direct commandment for them to do so.

Moving into the New Testament I would make this observation. There is a question about why the disciples of the Pharisees and the disciples of John were fasting but your (Jesus) disciples didn't fast, and that question was raised to Jesus and Jesus said: Well when the bridegroom is there the children of the bride chamber don't fast but He says when the bridegroom leaves then shall ye fast ([Luke 5:33-34](#)) I don't know how to much closer to a biblical directive you can get then that but it is pretty close isn't it? He directly implied that when the bridegroom leaves, which we have now, Jesus went back to heaven again, he left, then shall they fast, my Bible says and then shall they fast. I think that is enough of a biblical directive that would indicate that we ought to be doing some of it, I think we can take draw that conclusion from it.

We believe that not everyone will be able to fast and not everyone would be able to fast at some points in their life depending on what their physical condition is and so on and they may not be able to fast, but I believe that most of us can do some fasting. I believe that the Bible is telling us that this is a privilege and an opportunity and a responsibility that we should exercise ourselves in. I believe it is giving us that kind of direction.

Now what are some different ways of fasting?

I gave this message in an abbreviated form up at Numidia this past week Thursday when we had a day of prayer and fasting. After the message a young brother come up to me and said: In a practical way now how do we fast? I felt a little bit I suppose deflated or whatever you want to call it, because here I was I had preached a message and the person wanted to know in a practical way how to fast and I thought that was a little bit what we were talking about. The other side was that apparently that at least there was enough interest and inspiration to cause him to want to know how to do it, so that was the brighter side of it.

We think about different kinds of fasting. We do sometimes at Numidia fast just one meal in a day and I would say that if we are simply going through the motions of missing one meal but don't use that time then to the Lord and pour out our hearts to the Lord and meditate upon what the Lord has to say to us, to listen to His word and to His Spirit, we probably have missed the real meaning of fasting. Because fasting finally is not just going through the motions of refraining from food or some other natural pleasures that we typically enjoy but the idea is that it gives us the opportunity to draw near to God and to use that time, that period of time for drawing closer to God in Fellowship and growing nearer and nearer to Him and for imploring His help. So I believe that when we miss a meal we ought to use that time that we would normally have spent at mealtime, at least that much time to talk to God and to allow God to talk to us.

Someone has made the observation that they don't see anywhere in scripture where an individual was a working man and prayed and fasted. I haven't thought that through nor studied out the scriptures in rela-

tion to that but I think it does become clear to us that it isn't just a matter of going through the motions of skipping a meal but the idea that now we want to draw near to God, we use that time to draw near to God. And I believe we ought to try and find as much time when we do pray and fast that we spend as much time as we can to do that, to meditate and pray and talk to the Lord. That is really the goal of prayer and fasting. I believe not also just one meal but we may even have a burden or a need that we bring to God and we pray and fast for a whole day, it would be another type of fast that we could do and perhaps at other times it would be better to choose a day that we aren't tied down with natural responsibilities, even though I'm not saying it is wrong to do that, but there are days like Saturdays that we are not tied down and there is an opportunity for us to fast for a whole day and draw near to God and meditate and allow Him to speak to us.

And then maybe that we may even fast for more than a day, we may fast for a number of days, a week even or the Bible talks about a 40 day fast. I don't know much about 40 day fast but the Bible seems to indicate at least occasions that I see in scripture that it seems to imply that there was some miracle involved in 40 day fast. There are those that I believe have fasted for 40 days simply on juices but if that is an appropriate way to fast or not I will leave that for you to decide. I think that what ever the Lord is leading us to draw near and afflicting our souls and pouring out our hearts be for Him and restricting ourselves, I believe that whenever the Lord is directing us to do in that, that meets the biblical requirement, I believe we ought to do and maybe there is a place for an expanded fast that would allow juices or something like that, more than just water.

But I think it is important for us to recognize the fact that here is a resource that God has provided for us.

I thought about the scripture there that we read in Matthew the sixth chapter it says: "When ye pray" and it says "When ye fast" ([Matthew 6:7&16](#)) I think that is telling us that it is something that we plan to do, not just at random or all of a sudden decide: I guess well it's about that time we ought to fast again. That may be alright but it seems to imply that when you do it as though you are going to do it every so often and when you do it you would be careful to do it this way and to follow these instruction, so it is implying that there ought to be a schedule, that we ought to plan to do it every so often. And of course there will also be those special times when we are burdened and concerned and realise our need of God in a special way, our need of God's help, that we then pour out our hearts to God and I believe those are the kind of fasts that God does answer.

When do we fast?

I believe when we are facing the possibility of harm and danger we fast. It is a time for prayer and fasting I believe. I am thinking about something more centered, we look ahead and see danger involved. I thought about the account therein Ezra you know, ([Ezra 8:21-23](#)) Ezra was going to take the children of Israel some of the little ones and some of them that were well of and they were going back to build Jerusalem again, back to live it Jerusalem and he was afraid, even a man of God like Ezra was afraid, he was concerned he was afraid, he was afraid to ask the King for help for a band of soldiers because they are told the king that they were trusting in God in my own words. But what did they do as they prayed and fasted their by the river..... and the Lord heard their prayer, he heard their prayer, He was entreated of them. But they were concerned for their own physical safety and for the right way for them and their little ones, primarily the focus was physical danger but there may even have been some implications in relation to spiritual safety as well, I don't know.

I also thought about Esther about the time that there was a danger for the Jewish people as a whole and there was specific danger for Esther going in before the King and they fasted for three days there on that occasion before she went into the King. ([Esther 4:16](#)) Again it was another time when prayer and fasting is in place.

Adversity, facing adversity, facing harm in danger, material protection of our physical and material things that we are concerned about.

Then I believe also that when Satan gets an upper hand I believe it is a time to fast. Or we might say it more plainly when we realise that we have failed and we have sinned, I believe it is a time to pour out our hearts in prayer and fasting before God calling on His help and His resources, His forgiveness, pouring ourselves out in penitence before Him, crying out for His mercy and His help on our behalf. It requires effort.

Nehemiah when he was headed back to Jerusalem and he heard all about the condition of Israel, the condition of Jerusalem and he poured out his heart and it talks about praying and fasting and confessing his sins before God, I believe there he was confessing he was identifying with the people when he confessed their sins, the sins of the people around him. ([Nehemiah 1:4-11](#))

When we face the powers of darkness in the spirit world and it seems like the demons are at work, as we say sometimes, Satan's power is real like we referred to therein [Matthew 17:21](#), This kind cometh not forth but by prayer and fasting. A time to pray and fast to overcome the powers that are beyond us and above us, it is another time to pray and fast.

We want to allow God to work a complete work of sanctification and cleansing in our lives. I believe it is another time therein Acts ninth chapter when Saul was on the road to Damascus and the Lord apprehended him there his response was: Lord what wilt thou have me to do? And then he was three days and nights without food. I believe it was a fasting experience where he wanted to God to work in his life to accomplish what the Lord wanted to in his life. I believe we face times like that as well where we need to pray and fast.

Seeking God's wisdom and direction. We read the account therein [Acts 10](#), I believe Cornelius were seeking God's direction, God's wisdom, God's leading, God revealing his will and again I believe it is a time that we should be praying and fasting before God.

Well there would be a lot more to say but it is time to close and I would raise this challenge for us;

If you were to evaluate last year how many people, the top 10 people that you talked the most to last year, would God be amongst those top 10? Or would you have to expand that list to the top 20 people that you talked to the most last year or the top 30 people?

I think that is a challenge for us, we spend a lot of time talking to people, we spend a lot of time talking to people about other people and situations and some of that is right when it is the right people with the right desire, the right interests, I believe there is a place for that. How much time do we talk to God? Shouldn't we move God up a little higher on the list of the people we talk most to?

I believe is a challenge for us, it is something for us to consider.

Someone has said that we ought to talk less to men about men and more to God about men and more to men about God and that would cure the gossip problem. I think that is right.

We think about the problems we face sometimes in personal relationships and problems we face in our churches, I have wondered sometimes if we have used, have we drawn on this power of prayer and fasting for our needs personally and for the needs in our churches when we see Satan busy at work, have we done that?

Do we talk more to Lord about it than anyone else? I leave that challenge with you.