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**“He covers his hands with the lightening and commands it to strike the mark.**

**Its crashing declares his presence; the cattle also declares he rises.” Job 36:32-33**

**“Strike the mark” is from the Hebrew root word “paga” which can mean intercessory prayer.**

**ACCELERATING PRAYER WITH FASTING**

Prayer and fasting are close companions in the Christian faith. The Bible gives many examples of patriarchs, kings, men and women of influence, disciples, and Christ Himself who fasted and prayed as a regular discipline for the purposes of God.

**Who were some of them and what was their purpose?**

We find many of the leaders in the Bible sought the Lord in an important situation or in national peril:

God declared a fast to bring about Israel’s humility, to loosen bonds of wickedness, to let the oppressed go free, break every yoke to share with/care for those in need.

Isaiah 58:5-6

Israelites fasted and offered prayers of praise and confession after sinning against God. Nehemiah 9

Esther fasted with Israel for strength and wisdom to ask the King to spare Israel from Haman’s plot of genocide. Esther 4:16

Daniel prayed to reconcile his country to God. Daniel 9

Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted for guidance when appointing elders. Acts 14:23

Jesus fasted 40 days before beginning His ministry. Mathew 4:1-2

**What is the purpose of fasting?**

David said, “I humbled myself with fasting.” Psalm 35:13

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” James 4:8

“I proclaimed a fast…to seek a right way for us.” Ezra 8:21

King Jehoshaphat and Judah’s threat of an invading army. 2 Chronicles 20

Deliverance from evil spirits. Matt.17:21; Mark 9:29

Praying for people to break their yokes of bondage. Isaiah 58:6

Praying for the salvation of unbelievers.

**How does effective prayer and fasting work?**

We seek God.

We approach God with humility and acknowledge our dependence on His power and grace.

We search our hearts for any sin and unrighteousness and ask for forgiveness.

We seek to listen to God to learn what is His will and desires concerning the situation.

We offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

**To achieve this, we must be all in!**

We are willing to set aside the legitimate appetites of the body to concentrate on the work of praying.

We demonstrate a resolute commitment to the Lord by placing ourselves in a position to receive from Him.

We are passionate and fervent in our requests – we may cry out with all that is within us.

We are committed to never let go and never stop until the Lord responds.

**Overcoming prayer**

“So we fasted and implored our God for this, and He listened to our entreaty.” Ezra 8:23

Prayer can be spiritual warfare. Sometimes there are opposing spiritual forces that demand the opposition be overcome.

God is willing but continuing prayer is needful in the spiritual realm for a breakthrough. Fasting gives power to a demand. It brings pressure to bear in support of our request. Do not be discouraged or stop praying. Be patient and dedicated to victory.

Prayer can be spiritual wrestling. Our flesh rises to demand attention or distraction from fasting. We face discouragement when the answer is not immediate. Our perseverance will bring benefits.

**Starting a fast as a beginner**

1. If your regimen included prescription medicine, or you suffer from a chronic, degenerative disease like diabetes, check with your doctor first.

Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and demands proper care.

The responsibility rests with you and not others or the church.

2. Do not set too long a period at first (i.e.: omit only one or two meals). Drink plenty of water, avoid caffeine in coffee and diet drinks.

3. Consider adding fruit juices to your fast.

4. Allow plenty of time for rest.

5. Focus on Bible study or a portion of Scripture.

6. Create an objective for your fast.

7. Consider keeping a journal of insights or answers to prayers.

8. Do not draw attention or boast about your fasting.

9. Continually check your motives for fasting.

10. Gradually return to solid food by starting with small quantities.

This essential practice will begin to produce powerful results in your life and in the lives of those for whom you intercede.