**DAY 3**

**PREPARING FOR POWER**

Jesus talked about giving, praying, and fasting as if they were non-negotiable practices in the life of a believer. Yet, wrong motivations for these spiritual disciplines can derail the results, turning them into meaningless religious routines.

*“So,* ***when you give*** *to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do…And* ***when you pray****, do not be like the hypocrites…And* ***when you fast****, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do.”* Matthew 6:2, 5, & 16

The religious leaders of Jesus’ day, those he kept referring to as “hypocrites,” prayed publicly, gave more money at the synagogue than the average person, and fasted two days a week! Sounds like a pretty serious commitment that you would think God would be impressed with and respond to. However, Jesus said the only reward they would receive was the admiration of people. I don’t know about you, but I’m looking for quite a bit more than impressing people in my pursuit of God! The key to fasting effectively and praying prayers that move heaven are to:

* **SPEND SIGNIFCANT TIME IN THE SECRET PLACE**

The secret place is simply that undistracted, designated place of prayer and worship that you intentionally reserve for just you and the Lord. This is where we go and “shut the door” to meet with God in secret. Jesus made us a promise when we do this: *“But whenever you pray, go into your innermost chamber and be alone with Father God, praying to him in secret. And* ***your Father, who sees all you do, will reward******you*** *openly.”* Matthew 6:6 (TPT)

My prayer for you is that you would increase your life in the secret place and develop a stronger desire to be a “one thing” pursuer of God!

“***Here’s one thing*** I crave from God, the one thing I seek above all else: want the privilege of living with him every moment in his house, finding the sweet loveliness of his face, filled with awe, delighting in his glory and grace. I want to live my life so close to him that he takes pleasure in my every prayer.” Psalms 27:4 (TPT)

* **BE LED BY THE SPIRIT**

We will talk about the secret place in an upcoming lesson, so let’s consider your Pursuit in light of being led by the Spirit. If we’re not careful, the term “Spirit-led” can get ethereal and spooky; leading many down a road of subjective behavior and charismania, yet the Word is clear that this is how we are to navigate our spiritual lives.

“The mature children of God are those who are moved (led) by the impulses of the Holy Spirit.”

 Romans 8:14 (TPT)

Let’s consider Jesus’ preparation for ministry as he fasted for forty days and forty nights in the wilderness.

*“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and* ***was led by the Spirit into the wilderness****, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.”* Luke 4:1-2

There are a couple of questions worth considering from this passage. First, does the Spirit actually lead you into times of testing and a wilderness experience in order to release you into a new season of power and realized potential? Second, what kind of fast is the Spirit leading you into? Third, what should you expect during these days of ***Pursuit***? There are no biblical mandates or verse-by-verse instructions detailing how long we should fast, how often or what type of fast we should undertake. So, we will need to seek God for clarity and direction as to what our days of ***Pursuit*** will look like. Then, we simply follow the Spirit’s leading, I have had the Spirit lead me into three-day fasts, fourteen-day fasts and once, during a crucial time of ministry re-direction in my life, a 40-day fast. I would recommend getting some counsel and confirmation from trusted leaders and spiritual mentors for any extended time of fasting. If we get caught up trying to break a personal record or focus on doing what others are doing, fasting can turn into a religious routine that resembles the methods of the Pharisees. At the same time, we should not avoid the practice of fasting because we do not “feel led.” Fasting is a discipline and an act of faith that we can initiate whenever we choose.

*So, buckle up and get your mind set in the right place so that you can see it through to the end.*

**TAKE A MOMENT**

Ask the Holy Spirit what your time of ***Pursuit*** should look like. How long should you fast, and what type of fast will you commit to undertaking? Do you sense the grace and passion to go for it? If you will wait on God and are willing to do whatever He leads you to do, it will become apparent. Once you have clarified what the Holy Spirit is leading you to do, **be sure not to let your flesh or appetite** **determine the *Pursuit***. Be led by the Holy Spirit within you as you set aside your agenda and succumb to God’s direction. As you do this, you will find resolve and grace to go the distance while discovering a new level of faith for the days ahead.

* + **THIS WAS NOT ON THE BROCHURE**

The next step is to prepare your mind and spirit for what might happen as the Spirit leads you in these days. Many have a romantic concept of fasting and anticipate dreams, visions, angelic visitations, and an immediate sense of being closer to God than they ever have before. In my experience, this is not always the case. Don’t get me wrong, fasting does create a nearness to Jesus and a sensitivity to the Spirit that nothing else will produce, but oftentimes during a fast, we will deal with some heart issues that begin to surface. We will be confronted with our baggage and bondage that God is longing to free us from or will face some real external spiritual opposition as we pursue God.

Let’s consider Jesus again:

*“He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil for forty days.”* Luke 4:1-2

This is the part that is not in the brochure! Who signs up for a wilderness trip to be tempted and have a one-on-one confrontation with the Prince of Darkness? This doesn’t sound like my idea of a spiritual retreat! But, let’s look at the end-game.

There are four distinct dynamics that happened to Jesus during his time of fasting that I believe we can use as template during any season of extended fast. This will help us to hear realistic expectations and to not be derailed as we encounter resistance and warfare in the process.

1. WE WILL DEVELOP A DEEP & COMPLETE DEPENDENCE ON THE SUSTAINING STRENGTH OF GOD.

*“Man shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”* Matthew 4:4

1. WE WILL LEARN HOW TO FIGHT WITH THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.

*“It is written…it is written…it is written!”* Matthew 4:1-11

1. WE WILL LEARN HOW TO RESIST AND DEFEAT THE DEVIL.

*“Get out of here, Satan,” Jesus told him. “For the Scriptures say, ‘You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.’ “Then the devil went away.”*

Matthew 4:10

1. WE WILL RETURN OR CONCLUDE OUR FAST IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT.

There is something in this portion of scripture that I want you to see and never forget. Jesus headed into the wilderness full of the Spirit, but he returned in the power of the Spirit! There is a direct and obvious connection between fasting and the empowerment, the wilderness battle and the start of his miraculous, public ministry where demons cried out as he approached, and healings flowed freely to all who were near him.

*“Then Jesus,* ***being filled with the Holy Spirit****, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.”* Luke 4:1

*”Then Jesus* ***returned in the power of the Spirit*** *to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region”* Luke 4:14

I believe these days of Pursuit are setting you up for a new release of power and authority in your life! If Jesus needed to fast to see a release of power, then so do we. We have the biblical example of the “non-fasting” disciples who lacked power as the negative illustration of this truth (see Matthew 21:19-21).

Before we pray, I want to remind you of the words of the Apostle Paul who lived a life of fasting, while being used consistently by the power of God. This verse will also serve as our memory verse for the day.

**MEMORY VERSE**

“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power."

 I Corinthians 2:4

**PRAYER DIRECTIVE**

Today as you spend some time with the Lord, ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into and through every day of your Pursuit. That when you face the powers of hell you won’t be discouraged or surprised but will be prepared to wield the sword of the Word!

Let the Word of God be your sword as you resist and defeat your personal enemies. Ask for a fresh baptism of the fire and power so that you can be fully prepared for the ministry that awaits you as you “return in the power.”

**THOUGHTS & NOTES**