

The Goodness of God: Fasting and Personal Consecration

This week, we want to take time to acknowledge the goodness of God. He has brought us through another year, and we are so fortunate to see 2024! As is our custom at Showers of Blessings Church, we are taking the month of January to enter the New Year with a corporate fast.

In the scriptures, we can see repeatedly that fasting is done by a community of people to express a communal need for God's intervention. It brings to mind the old song, *"If ever a time we need the Lord, surely, we need Him now!"*. This is truer now than ever before. We are facing things we have never seen before, and moving forward will require things we have never done before. In Esther 4, the Bible tells us that when Esther took stock of the situation of her people and realised how dire the situation was, she said in verse 16, "Go gather all the Jews that are present in Shushan and fast ye for me...and I and my maidens will do likewise...". In other words, "All hands on deck!" And that is what we are calling for, all that can take part in this fast that will position us to receive from God in a different way in 2024.

We learned in Bible study over the past couple of weeks that spiritual fasting is not a way to earn God's favor by getting him to do something for us. Rather, the purpose is to produce a transformation in us—a clearer, more focused attention and dependence upon God. This week, our focus is on Personal Consecration. The word Consecration means to be set apart for a holy purpose, and this week, it is important that we consider what exactly this means. Pastor Sarah mentioned in teaching the other night, that "every fast ought to start with repentance". The fact is, we all sin. And more so, we often carry habits, scars, and thoughts that we might not even realise we have, but they are standing in our way. Consecration is a time of self-examination and reflection, a time to ask God to search our hearts and our thoughts to recognise what is not like Him.

We want to encourage you to enjoy your fast. This is an opportunity to spend uninterrupted time with the best friend you could ever have. An opportunity to hear from Him and gain insight on some of the wonderful things He has planned for your future. We are expecting to come out of this time, refreshed, empowered, renewed and ready to face everything 2024 brings; the good, the bad, the highs, the lows and ultimately the victories.

Getting Started

Esther's three-day fast was considered a breakthrough fast. Read the story in Esther 3:8-15, Esther chapters 4 & 5:

1. What were Esther and her people facing that seemed bigger than she could handle? Esther 3:8-15
2. Why did Esther ask all the Jews in Shushan to fast? Why didn't she just fast on her own or with one or two close friends? Esther 4:16

3. How does the chapter demonstrate the importance of communication and collaboration in overcoming adversity?
4. How do you understand the phrase “If I perish, I perish,” in the context of your own faith and commitments?

Let’s Get Personal

Get your pad of paper and reflect on the following:

1. What is one thing that happened in 2023 that you are proud of and grateful to God for?
2. What is a mistake you made and the lesson you learned?
3. What is a lie of the enemy that you are ready to let go of in 2024?
4. What are you hopeful to see God do in your life in 2024?
5. Imagine it is December 31, 2024, write your testimony as though God has already fulfilled the desires of your heart. What are you grateful for?

Take The Next Step

This week’s assignment is to do the following:

1. Thank God for unseen victories. In your prayer time this week, dedicate time to journal your thanks to God for victories that you have not yet experienced in the natural. Imagine if you were to push through your current season of discomfort, what could be waiting for you on the other side? Write these thoughts down and give God thanks for it. Do this each day this week.
2. Consider unseen stumbling blocks. In your prayer time this week dedicate time to praying that God would illuminate some previously unseen things in you that may be separating you from his highest good for your life. Are there patterns or ideas past down, wrong lessons from childhood, or enemy strongholds that you are not even aware of? Ask God to bring it to light and write it down. In the coming weeks it will continue to be a prayer point in your time with God.

Have a great week.

Please remember that there is a Zoom Prayer meeting for those who can make it on Tuesdays at noon, and a Thursday night in person Prayer meeting at 7 pm.