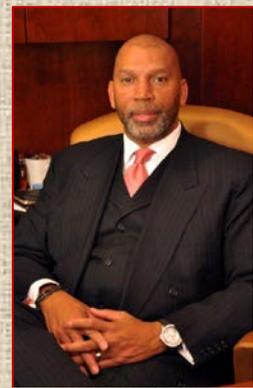


# WORD FOR THE WEEK

April 3, 2014

## FASTING



“This kind can only come out as a result of prayer and fasting.” This was Jesus’ reply to his disciples (Matt. 17:21) when they were failed at the task of casting out a demonic spirit that tortured a young man. They were frustrated, embarrassed that they walk with Jesus and saw his power demonstrated, but they themselves could not manifest this kind of breakthrough.

Jesus mentions two things in response to their question (vs. 19) when they said to him, “Why could we not cast him out?” First, Jesus addressed their unbelief. It is difficult for we who read the scriptures to fathom the idea that the disciples could spend so much time with Jesus and yet wrestle with unbelief. What is even more of a reality is the fact that we too wrestle with unbelief in so many areas lives. This does not suggest that we are totally faithless, but that we are not as faith-filled as we should be. Jesus reminds them that any kind of spiritual conquest must be launched through faith, even if it is simply the size of a mustard seed, which is very small; yet it produces great results – the mountains will move.

The second issue addressed by Jesus is that of fasting and prayer. In other words, there must be some time devoted to the disciplines of prayer and fasting. Prayer is our privilege and right as believers to approach the throne of grace boldly and obtain mercy in our times of need. Throughout the scriptures we are invited to pray, encouraged to pray, commanded to pray, empowered by prayer, filled with the Holy Spirit through prayer and blessed by answered prayer. In fact, it is expected that we should always pray and not lose heart.

In addition to prayer, Jesus speaks of fasting. Fasting is also a spiritual discipline designed to lead us towards godliness and discerning the will of God for our lives. Fasting, whether it is an absolute fast, meaning abstaining from food or drink, or a partial fast, meaning abstaining from meats only, or some other kind of food item, is done so that people might focus on spiritual growth and development. It is the believer’s way of demonstrating humility, penitence, worship, sacrifice, and seeking guidance and discernment.

The biblical expectation is that believers fast. Jesus says, “When you fast” which implies that He expects his followers to fast. (Matt. 6:16) Like prayer, fasting is to be done discretely as unto the Lord. Believers fast out of obedience to the call to fast, and in response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

The promise is when we pray and when we fast in secret or as unto the Lord, the Lord who is all-knowing and has an all-seeing eye, which understands our motives and sees our personal sincere devotions, will reward us in ways that can only be described as a God-move.

The church is “fasting!”



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