

Fasting and Guidance

I. The Christian way of life

A. If a sinner can do it, it is not the supernatural Christian life

B. The Christian life requires that the Holy Spirit lives inside of us

1. The Christian life is supernatural

2. The Christian life involves the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

John 16:12-13 I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.

II. The twofold purpose of the Holy Spirit

A. To reveal the Word of God

B. To reveal God's will that is found outside the Word of God

III. Two types of guidance

A. General guidance

1. Comes from the Word of God

2. Is available to all believers

B. Specific guidance

1. Comes from outside the Word of God
2. That which comes to us as an individual

IV. Man's perspective vs. God's perspective

A. Man's eyes

1. Only see the natural things surrounding him
2. Can only perceive and draw conclusions based on the natural

B. The eyes of the Holy Spirit

1. The Holy Spirit is not limited by the natural realm
2. The Holy Spirit sees past time into the future
 - a. The Holy Spirit leads us
 - b. The Holy Spirit guides us
 - c. The Holy Spirit directs us

V. Seasons of attacks

Proverbs 6:6-8 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

Psalms 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out from them all.

- A. It is vital to build up on the Word in preparation for satan's attacks
- B. The Word will bring us through during seasons of attacks

C. When we don't know the way out, the Holy Spirit will lead us, guide us and direct us out of the situation

VI. Four ways the Lord leads

A. The Holy Spirit

1. This is the primary way the Lord leads
2. He reveals God's will to us
3. He will show us things to come

B. Dreams

C. Visions

D. Angels

VII. Three ways the Holy Spirit leads

A. Inward peace

1. Most general way the Holy Spirit leads
2. Peace means God trusts you in a situation
3. Peace is God saying "I trust you. do whatever you feel led to do and I'll back it."

B. Inward witness

1. This is God saying "Do this"
2. This is a little stronger direction than peace

C. Inward voice

1. Often comes unexpectedly, when your mind is not on guidance at the moment
2. Almost seems audible
3. God specifically speaks to your heart through the Holy Spirit

VIII. Three ways the Holy Spirit warns

A. A "check"

1. This is opposite of inward peace
2. This is not necessarily saying "Don't do this"
3. May mean there is a better way
4. May mean the timing is wrong
5. May mean the method is wrong

B. A bad feeling

1. This is opposite of the inward witness
2. A sensing that something is wrong
3. A sensing that something is not right

C. A strong warning

1. Opposite of the inward voice
2. A strong, strong voice of God inside saying "Don't do it" or "Don't go that direction"

IX. New Testament Examples

Acts 16:6-10 *Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,*

After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

A. Paul and Silas were *forbidden* by the Holy Spirit to go to Asia

1. This was a strong warning
2. Paul and Silas heeded the warning

B. Paul and Silas attempted to go the Bithynia but the Holy Spirit *suffered them not*

1. This was not as strong of a warning
2. This was more like an uneasiness or bad feeling
3. Paul and Silas heeded the bad feeling and did not go to Bithynia

C. Paul had a vision in the night which directed him to go to Macedonia

D. Paul had to depend on the direction of the Holy Spirit since the Word of God could not give him the specific direction that he and Silas were needing

E. Revival broke out and churches were established through the guidance of the Holy Spirit

X. Praying in the Spirit was the key to Paul's success

- A. Praying in the Spirit made Paul sensitive to the will of God
- B. Praying in the Spirit made Paul sensitive to know when the Spirit was forbidding him to go
- C. Praying in the Spirit made Paul sensitive to the fact that the Holy Spirit suffered him not to go
- D. Praying in the Spirit made Paul sensitive to visions
- E. Praying in the Spirit made Paul sensitive to the peace on the inside

XI. Two ways to become sensitive to the Holy Spirit

- A. Prayer
- B. Fasting

James 1:5 *If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

I Corinthians 14:2, 4, 14-15 *For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.*

He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

Jude 20 *But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.*

XII. Praying in the Spirit

- A. When you pray in the Holy Spirit you are not praying to men
- B. When you pray in the Holy Spirit you are praying to God
- C. When you pray in the Holy Spirit you pray mysteries and God reveals those mysteries to you
- D. Praying in the Holy Spirit increases your sensitivity to the will of God

XIII. Fasting

- A. Fasting and prayer are linked together in the Word of God
- B. Fasting is substituting the time you would normally be eating
 - 1. Substitute eating with prayer
 - 2. Substitute eating with worship
 - 3. Substitute eating with study of the Word of God
- C. Fasting puts down the outward man while prayer builds up the inward man

XIV. Matthew 6

Matthew 6:2 *Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

Matthew 6:5 *And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

Matthew 6:16 *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.*

A. Commands given in Matthew 6

1. Giving is commanded

Matthew 6:2 *Therefore when thou doest thine alms...*

2. Praying is commanded

Matthew 6:5 *And when thou prayest...*

3. Fasting is commanded

Matthew 6:16 *Moreover when ye fast...*

B. To be done in secret

1. Giving

a. We are not to give so that others will see it

b. Giving is between you and God

2. Praying

a. Ninety percent of the prayers in the Word of God are said in private

b. The motive for praying should not be so that others will think that we are spiritual

3. Fasting

a. Others are not to know that we are fasting

b. Fasting is for our benefit

C. What is done in secret will be rewarded openly by the Lord

Acts 13:1-2 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

XV. Our works do not cause the Holy Spirit to speak

- A. The Holy Spirit does not speak because we fast
- B. Fasting gets us to the place where we can discern what the Holy Spirit has been saying all of the time
- C. Fasting does not move God any more than praying moves God
- D. Fasting and prayer put us in a better position to move with God

Isaiah 58:3-4 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.

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.

XVI. Motivation for fasting

- A. People were fasting so that God would hear them
- B. God does not have a problem hearing His people
- C. Fasting is not so that our voice will be heard in Heaven, rather so that we will hear God's voice on the earth

Zechariah 7:4-6 Then came the word of the Lord of hosts unto me saying,

Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?

And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?

D. God does not want fasting to be a religious act

1. The Word does not say to offer God a sacrifice of fasting
2. The Word says to offer God a sacrifice of praise

E. Fasting is for us, not for God

XVII. Guidance outside the Word of God

A. Guidance by angels

1. Guidance by angles is more prevalent in the Old Testament than the New Testament
2. Angels came to Abraham to warn him about Sodom and Gomorrah
3. Angels delivered Lot and his family from Sodom and Gomorrah
4. An angel showed Abraham the ram in the thicket to use as a sacrifice
5. An angel led Hagar to a well of water for her and Ishmael and told her that her son would become a great nation
6. The angel of the Lord came to Joshua before the battle at Jericho
7. An angel directed, led and guided Gideon in fighting against the Midianites
8. The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to tell her that Jesus would be born of her and that He would be the deliverer of the people
9. Angles appeared to Mary Magdalene at the tomb of Jesus and told her she would find Jesus in Galilee

10. An angel delivered Peter out of prison

11. Paul was being taken to Rome by ship

a. A storm arose

b. The ship was about to be destroyed

c. The people were in fear

d. Paul told the people that an angel had appeared to him to tell him that the ship would be destroyed but that no one would lose their life

Hebrews 13:2 *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

12. Angels still lead us today

B. Guidance through visions and dreams

Acts 2:17 *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;*

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I'll pour out of my spirit upon all flesh: and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

1. Joseph dreamed that he would be exalted above his own brothers and it happened

2. Daniel had many dreams and visions

3. Joseph, Mary's husband, was led by visions and dreams

a. Was told that his wife would be pregnant by the Holy Spirit and that he should not cast her away

b. After the birth of Jesus he was told in a dream to go into Egypt so that the child would be protected

4. The wise men were instructed in a dream to return home by a different route than when they had come

5. Pilate's wife was told in a dream that Jesus was a just man

6. Ananias was told through a vision to go to Saul of Tarsus and lay hands on him (Acts 9)

7. Paul was in Troas and had a dream of a man from Macedonia telling him "Come over here"

XVIII. We are to seek after God Himself

A. We are not to seek after angels, dreams or visions

B. We are to seek after the Word of God

C. We are to seek guidance from the Holy Spirit

XIX. Hearing from God is the most important thing in life