

Jesus said “when you fast” and “when you pray” indicating that these were presumed activities for his people. I don’t know where the word “fast” had its original application but it seems misapplied when it comes to fasting, as I have never fasted when I felt the time went by quickly. Never the less, fasting is not about comfort; it is a type of sacrifice which inspires faith and moves heaven. The purpose of praying and fasting is not about who knows or does not know you are fasting; the Lord will know. It is about obtaining results from heaven which may be beyond your own ability to receive or obtain without heaven’s help.

A great example of the power of prayer and fasting is found in Mark 9 where the father brings the afflicted son to the disciples who cannot heal him, and then to Jesus who does heal him. Later when the disciples question Jesus on why they could not cast the spirit out, he answered, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.” (Mark 9:29).

People often quote this verse in light of deliverance, but I ask my students the question “is this what Jesus did?” Did he pray and fast before he cast out the spirit? Of course he didn’t, there wasn’t time for fasting and praying - he had to act fast when he saw the people coming on the run. He only time for a fast prayer - not prayer and fasting!

So what is the answer to this situation? It is clear what Jesus said, and it is clear that he did something very different. The answer to the question lies in the time of prayer and fasting Jesus had just accomplished previous to the incident. Fasting and prayer were a regular part of Jesus’ ministry. He had just come off the mountain from a time of prayer and fasting with the three apostles. It is very likely that during his time of fasting that something was taught to him or given to him to prepare him for the incident just ahead of him.

The disciples were having great results in ministering to people while Jesus was away. Many people were being healed and demons were being driven out. Yet none of them could help this boy. Jesus ministered a bit differently than they did in this situation. When he saw there was a problem he did not address the demon, or the boy, instead he addressed the father with a question, “how long has this been happening to him?” The father replied “from an infant ...” This does not show up in the English translation, but the father said the child (boy) had this problem since he was an infant. At that point Jesus clearly exhorted *the father* to have faith - not the boy. God always requires faith to receive anything from Him. There are times when a person in need of healing cannot supply the faith they need. Someone who is dead, for instance, or someone in a coma cannot supply faith, it must be supplied on their behalf. In this case the boy had been demonized when he was an infant, before he would have been of age for his own faith. It would have done the disciples no good to address the boy all day long, *the key to deliverance was with the father* who had spiritual authority over the child. In order to connect this with Jesus’ answer to the disciples “this kind comes out only through prayer and fasting”, the disciples knew he did not fast when the child was brought to him, they knew this was something he had done before and in his time of prayer and fasting preceding the incident he was prepared by the Spirit of God for what lay ahead and what he was going to need to do to have the victory.

Fasting is like that. It is a way to bring grace into the picture. By grace I mean God’s ability to do for you, in you, among you, or to you something that is beyond your human ability to accomplish. There are things we can do to receive or increase God’s grace (see 2 Cor 9:6-8; 2

Pet 3:18; 2 Tim 2:1), prayer and fasting is one of these things. We cannot underestimate the need for fasting and prayer on behalf of our nation if we expect God to act on our behalf.

I for one believe we as a nation are already past the point of man's redemption from the problems we face. We are seriously in need of God's intervention if we are to receive a transformation from the grave danger we are in and the disasters we are heading toward. Our God is able, but He acts in answer to our requests and He is moved, or not moved, depending upon us, our actions or lack of actions and requests. It takes faith to please God.

In 2000 due to the upcoming presidential election I felt the need to fast and pray, I had a sense of urgency about the two very different directions being offered to us through the presidential choices. I was at a minister's retreat with the MorningStar Fellowship when I began a three day total fast. I did not intend to fast any more than those three days when I began, but some time during those days I decided to continue the fast for 21 days like Daniel prayed. He also was praying for his nation and people and the fulfillment of her destiny. Then at some point near the end of my 21 days I looked at the calendar. The Holy Spirit pointed out to me that from the day I began my fast to election day was 40 days! I had not planned this, but when I saw it I felt energized to fast and pray for the nation all the way until election day.

And what an election day it was! It was not only Americans who took note but millions of people around the world watched as the election was called for one candidate, then for the other. For the first time in our history a candidate conceded the election, then changed his word and released his legal team. Everyone can recall the events of the rest of that day (and those to follow). This became a constitutional crisis that resulted in the best U.S. civics lesson in history. It seemed the whole nation was stirred. I was up until 3:00 am watching the TV and praying for the nation. I was getting more worked up when the Lord spoke to me clearly in my spirit. His words to me were "Lloyd, you have been praying and fasting through a time when not many were praying. Right now millions of people are praying! Will you go to bed?" So I did and I slept very peacefully.

Again we are at a critical time and the election is a pivotal point in this time. We cannot expect someone else to do our praying for us, we must stir up an army of pray-ers and fast-ers. There are many ways you can get involved. You can pray and fast for 40 days. You can be part of a team that takes a portion of time that adds up to 40 days, churches can easily accomplish this. You can fast for 3 days or do a Daniel fast for 21 days with less of some main ingredient that you usually enjoy daily. Consider fasting for at least 3 days - I have usually found day 2 to be the toughest and after that things become very clear, so it's worth going past day 2. Food is not the only thing that may be eliminated for a time of consecration, perhaps a certain type of drink, soda for instance could be avoided. Maybe you could give up TV or a sport that you generally participate in, and dedicate that time specifically to the Lord for prayer for our nation and the election. Don't do this alone, find others to stir up or wake up. I think you may find more interest than in any other time in recent history for people willing to pray and fast with you for God's mercy upon our nation. People know we need His help, and can be shown this one way to can get involved beyond voting to influence the outcome.

People who have gotten engaged with the national crisis we face in the past few years have had their share of both ups and downs. Many have seen candidates elected as a concerted effort of those motivated to see our country brought back to our national and spiritual roots. Yet there has been the sense of betrayal and deep disappointment from those in authority such as the Supreme Court. Jesus warned against losing heart in the last days because of false ministries that cause disappointment and poor fruit. Hope deferred does make the heart sick. Fasting and prayer can change all that because God never disappoints when He is moved to act on behalf of His people. God is willing to act, we need Him to take action - *are you* willing to take action?