Section 9: Fasting and Prayer

Lesson Forty-Three: Fasting and Prayer

Okay, what is the Purpose for Fasting, if not to persuade God?

To Control Appetite and Clear My Mind

To control appetite

What’s for lunch? Let’s face it, in our culture where we are bombarded twenty-four hours a day with radio and television food commercials, highway signs and billboards and a seemingly endless number of fast-food restaurants on every street, fasting is no piece of cake. (Pardon the pun.) In fact, people who have moved to the United States from Third World countries have noticed that fasting is more difficult for them in this environment than in a country where eating even one square meal each day was often a challenge.

When you choose to deny yourself food or drink for a meal, for a day or for many days, you will have to exercise authority over your appetite. In the discipline of fasting we quickly learn the difference between appetite and hunger.

Most Americans are familiar with appetite but are not familiar with hunger. In my book Power Praying, I (Alice) addressed the difference between hunger and appetite.

Hunger is created when a craving or urgent need for food is stimulated by nerves and hormones connected to the stomach. Appetite, however, is triggered by the very sight of food regardless if hunger is present. Appetite dominates the body, whereas hunger sustains the body. So appetite is mental, hunger is physical. Because appetite is a product of the mind, it can be swayed by factors that influence the mind, such as your favorite Italian restaurant or someone discussing a new pie recipe.

Paul instructs us, The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4–5). One valuable reason for fasting is to train us not to obey every vain imagination that enters our mind. Our appetites must be controlled by a conscious effort of the mind or they will continually overrule our spirit.

One of the reasons Christians fast—and an important result of fasting—is to gain the upper hand over our mental and emotional cravings for food, especially for particular types of food such as sweets or junk foods. But there are many other reasons for fasting also.

Think about it: What mental or emotional cravings for a particular type of food would you like God to remove from your life through a fast? How and when will you fast?

To clear the mind
In 1 Peter 4:7 we read, Be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray." People often ask why fasting is important to those who pray. Perhaps fasting, more than any other thing helps us to be clear-minded and self-controlled. The inability to focus on the Lord will cripple us. Fasting helps remove the distractions that hinder our concentration upon Him. Ron Boehme, who works with Youth With A Mission, says, Fasting makes my heart and mind clearer and more open to God."

Next week we’ll look at more reasons for fasting.

Eddie and Alice

"America’s prayer coaches"

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