

Thoughts to Inform our Commitment to Pray, Fast and Give.

From James Tembo –

During our family celebration, I was asked to share a word on the final day and I had what I thought was something I needed to share written down in my small note book and ready to speak.

Early that day I started feeling very weak and could not understand why. As a formality, I opened my note book to just refresh myself on the message I was about to share and felt strongly that I had a wrong message for the day. I ignored it convincing myself that even if it was not the right message I had no time to start preparing another. Little did I know how wrong I was.

When we reached Kafakumba my whole body was shaking and I shared this with Sukai. I disappeared from the gathering and locked myself up in one of the rooms but failed to pray because the shaking increased so much. Somehow I knew that it was not anything to do with sickness. I am not a day time sleeper but the only thing I remember even now is that I was lying on my back with a pen in my hand writing this message from Matthew 6.

The Three Acts of Righteousness

1. Giving

Lev 23:22 “When you reap the harvest¹ of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.’ ”

- We are challenged by the Lord to leave part of our income for the poor. We are not farmers but this can translate into what we have as our income.
- God says let us do it in secret without blowing the trumpet; our right hand should not even know what our left hand is doing.
- Time is also one of the things that we can give. Job’s three friends gave of their time and Job spoke (for seven days). When we give our time, the children we claim to love, will speak.

2. Prayer

We pray for many things but how many times do we remember to pray for the orphans we love?

By name let us commit to this:

- Pray for their salvation.
- Pray for their future and careers.
- Jesus spent much of his time in prayer and I am sure we know who he was praying for. Us.

3. Fasting

Some of us fast for many things while some of us do not even see it as necessary. We think we know the pain of those that are suffering. People that know the pain, fast like Jesus in order to loosen the chains of injustice. True compassion is burdensome and results in action. When did we fast for the orphans? Even when we do, we want everyone to know. May the Lord increase the pain in us so that we may stay focused and know that we are created in Jesus to do good works.

After this I felt relieved and the shaking stopped and then I heard that Lawrence had an impression about giving. This made me convinced that, though quickly and poorly prepared, I had the right message and I remember calling Levy and Towela to pray for me. I have had this on my heart but still am not sure of how best I can explain it and I pray that you don’t just brush it aside but read and meditate upon this.

I pray that we will reach a stage of committing our selves fully to this call and, even as individuals, we will be able to pray and fast for one another. God has commanded us even to pray for our enemies. We are not even enemies and yet we only pray for one another when someone calls for it. Prayer will save us from many vices, like not trusting one another, speaking falsely on issues about our brothers and sisters. This can easily cause us to lose focus of why we are here. We see this even among the disciples of Jesus. In all wisdom the Lord silenced them by washing their feet and urging them to serve one another.

Let's learn to serve and pray for one another faithfully. God is in total control. I had a dream of a man hanging to a bar losing grip and about to fall in some dark hole. All the others around him were busy talking about him instead of holding him and saving him from falling. The others were faces of the Hands family. To me it is faces that have lost focus and think they are in focus.

I pray that this connects with your hearts. Please read **Romans 12:9-18**.

Thanks and may our God Lord be with you all!

James

What is fasting? (From Levy Mwenda)

As we approach the end of the year and prepare for our Pray, Fast, Give event, I thought it would be relevant to share some thoughts about fasting. It is important to recognize the purpose and importance of 'denying one's self' in order to refresh our spirits and help us to hear God's voice, free from outside influences.

WHAT IS FASTING?

(Matthew 6: 9 – 13; 18 – 19; Isaiah 58: 8 -9; 11 -12)

When fasting, one should be sensitive and not ritualistic.

- Fasting involves denying the body natural food and drink, that we may intensify our sensitivity and openness to our Lord
- Fasting is a time of placing the desires of the flesh under the desires of the spirit, or as it is sometimes called 'chastening of the soul'
- (Psalms 69:10, 11).

NOTE: Fasting was a regular practice of the early church, meaning:

(a) It was practiced individually (2 Corinthians 11:27)

(b) It was practiced corporately (Acts 13:2)

What fasting is Not Intended to Do

- Fasting is not a tool to manipulate God to change His mind
- Fasting is not a commandment that will make a person more acceptable in God's eyes
- Biblical fasting is not a weight-loss gimmick. (Note if you are participating in a fast for any of these three reasons, you are setting yourself up for a disappointment)

Specific Reasons for Fasting

To Prepare Us – Fasting provides the opportunity to get away from any negative impact the world has on our decisions and allows us to hear God without outside interference.

To Cleanse Us – Fasting is a means of personal cleansing for the physical body, ridding it of impurities. This means that since we are spiritual beings, the spirit is refreshed during times of fasting by the work of the Holy Spirit

To Equip us – Fasting equips us for battle against Satan (Isaiah 58:6).

- It's important to note that when faced with hopeless situations it is helpful to respond with fasting (Nehemiah 1:4)
- Fasting is important for national crisis (when King Jehoshaphat heard that a great multitude was coming to make war with his people, he called for a national fast - 2 Chronicles 20:27)
- Fasting is important in knowing the will of God (After reading something Jeremiah had written about the desolation of Jerusalem, the prophet Daniel made request by prayer and supplication, with fasting.)

Kinds of Fasts Written in the Bible

- *Normal fast* – This involves abstaining from all food. (Matthew 4:2) – Though this scripture does not tell us whether He took water or not.
- *Partial fast* – this is a fast that is a limitation of diet but not total abstinence from food and water. (This fast is demonstrated in Daniel 1:12)
- *Absolute fast* – this means abstaining from both food and water. e.g. Ezra “ate no bread and drank no water as a result of the guilt of those from the captivity (Ezra 10:6). This type of fasting is also recorded when Esther requested that the Jews fast and pray on her behalf (Esther 4:16)
- *Private fast* – This fasting is referred to in Matthew 6: 16 – 18. Jesus spoke that when fasting we must not be noticed by others.
- *Congregational fast* – This type of fasting is found in Joel 2: 15 -16. Reference is also made in the book of Acts 13:2 where part of the congregation of the church at Antioch was fasting.
- *National fast* – This type of fasting is seen to the response of King Jehoshaphat to an invasion. The King was made to call for a national fast. (2 Chron 20:3). Other references can be seen in Nehemiah 9:1 and Esther 4:16, and the King of Nineveh who proclaimed a national fast in response to the preaching of Jonah (Jonah 3: 5 -8)

Caution

- When fasting, one needs to be aware of physical disabilities that would prohibit it.
- When time comes to end a fast it should be done carefully with light food.
- Fasting can also apply to the things we love to do like Watching TV, Computer and Phones and other distractions.

Please make time to contemplate these scriptures, and prayerfully consider what fasting means to you as we look forward to a time where, as a community, we can purposefully focus on our intentions and the vulnerable children across Africa together.

Blessings!

Levy