

# GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 38, **No.40, October 9**, 2012 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."** (2 Peter 3:18)

## **A SPECIAL TIME of PRAYER and FASTING for SOUTHSIDERS! October 15 - November 14, 2012 {Part 1}**

As we have done several times over the last few years, we once again call for Southsiders to band together for a time of prayer and fasting. **There are more than a few reasons** we could set forth as to why we call for a time of Prayer and Fasting—here are primary ones!

- 1. Chief among them is that we need to be much more focused in INTIMACY with and in the worship of the KING OF KINGS and LORD of LORDS!**
- 2. Moreover, we need to be much more focused upon and effective in the work of the KINGDOM OF GOD—** modeling the good news of the GOSPEL with our lives and proclaiming the GOSPEL with boldness.
- 3. Let us also make this a time to heed the Biblical prayer call of 1 Timothy 2:1-3 —** "... I admonish *and urge* that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be offered on behalf of all men, **for kings and all who are in positions of authority** *or* high responsibility, that [outwardly] we may pass a quiet and undisturbed life [and inwardly] a peaceable one in all godliness and reverence and seriousness in every way. **For such [praying] is good and right,** and [it is] pleasing *and* acceptable to God our Savior,..." (Amplified)
- 4. Thus, in prayer and fasting we are issuing a call to WORSHIP and ADORE the LORD our GOD!** We are issuing a call to PRAY FOR one another; to pray for MISSIONARIES; to pray for those who still abide under the wrath of God; to pray for BOLDNESS in proclaiming the GOSPEL; and to pray for our nation and for all who are in authority!

**5. Moreover, I believe** we should also have a focus on praying for Randy and Beth McReynolds and the congregation where Randy serves as pastor. Information is in the Suggested Focus pages which has the helps for praying for missionaries.

## **Biblical Teaching Regarding Fasting** (Edited from several sources)

***The typical fast.*** The Bible teaches that normal fasting means totally refraining from solid food. The typical fast mentioned in the Bible did not involve abstinence from liquids.

***The complete fast.*** The complete fast, also called an absolute fast, involves no food or water (Acts 9:9). This is a severe fast and can be dangerous. A person should not begin fasting on a complete fast for more than one day. Also, if a person has a serious health problem, he should consult his physician before engaging in a complete fast.

***A partial fast.*** The partial fast has several applications and is distinguished by the things that can be eaten, and the frequency of eating. **First, the partial fast involves** abstaining from certain foods. Some authorities interpret Daniel's actions as a partial fast (Daniel 1). Daniel and the young men of Israel were asked to eat from the Babylonian king's table; they declined. They did not want to defile themselves and asked for a ten-day test case. During that time, Daniel and the Israelites only drank water and ate pulse, a type of vegetable. They abstained from the meat and wine of the king's table (Daniel 1:12).

**When this partial fast is used today**, people abstain from certain aspects of their meal. On several occasions John Wesley ate only bread when he fasted. God may lead some people to abstain from certain foods as a test of their sincerity, especially when searching for a specific answer to prayer.

**Second, the partial fast involves** abstaining from food for a specific time period. Some fasts involve abstinence only during the daylight hours. A person would wait until after the sun had fallen to eat the evening meal. **Actually, the partial fast involved half a day.** The usual fast in the Old Testament began at sundown and extended to sundown the second day. When the partial fast was used, a person would abstain from food only during the daylight hours.

**Third, the partial fast included** abstinence from sexual relationships between husband and wife. Paul taught the husband and wife, "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer" (I Corinthians 7:5a). Just as some people abstain from the enjoyment of eating food, so in the partial fast marriage partners abstain from marital relationships for a time. Paul exhorted, however, that when the fast is over the husband and wife are to "come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency" (I Corinthians 7:5b).

**Length of Fast: Most often the fast in the Bible lasted only one day.** It ranged from sunset the first day until sunset the following day. A person would not eat the

evening meal after the sun went down; nor would he eat throughout the daylight hours of the following day. At sunset the second day food could again be eaten (Judges 20:26; I Samuel 14:24; II Samuel 1:12; 3:35). The Old Testament one-day fast followed the Jewish method of reckoning a day from sunset to sunset (Genesis 1:5, 8, 31).

On at least one occasion, a fast lasted only throughout the night (Daniel 6:18). Perhaps that fast did not last longer because Daniel was out of danger by the next morning. However, the king did fast throughout the night because his Jewish friend faced the perils of the lion's den. Esther called for a fast of three days and three nights. This was a crisis situation in which Israel faced extinction (Esther 4:16).

**Only three occasions mention the 40-day fast.** Moses, Elijah, and Jesus each fasted for 40 days. On each occasion, God had a special message to reveal to His people. God does not use the fast to reveal special messages to us today. He speaks directly through His Word. But God does use the fast to prepare our hearts for service. Therefore, someone could be led to fast for longer than one day. Each person should be careful to follow the leading of the Lord as to the length of the fast.

**Fasting is not merely abstaining from food.** Many people do without food for health reasons, but they are not fasting biblically. Others fast because they want to lose weight. This is not biblical fasting either. Also, many people miss a meal because they are busy, but this is not fasting.

**Fasting involves prayer, repentance, and searching one's heart. Fasting involves the right reasons and biblical methods.** The Old Testament describes fasting as "afflicting one's soul" (Isaiah 58:3). There must be a spiritual purpose to fasting if it is to be a testimony to God.

**The Bible does not tell how often or how long we ought to fast.** Nowhere are there specific regulations on fasting. Yet, this does not mean that fasting can be ignored. When a person feels a need in his Christian life, it is appropriate to fast. We can only assume that since all Christians have problems and difficulties, all Christians should fast at some time, but they should seek the will of God and fast in a voluntary manner.

**Fasting can empower the sincerity of our prayers.** When we pray, God answers our prayers with regard to the sincerity of our faith. "Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24).

### **Suggestions for Getting Ready To Fast**

***Determine the length of your fast.*** Suggestion: Begin with one-day fasts. Experience such to the glory of God; later, longer fasts if God so leads. It is better to have 'short' successes and build on those, than to start 'long' only to have failure. ***Begin by refraining from solid foods, but drink liquids.*** Perhaps at a later time you can increase the scope of your fast.

**Plan to spend long periods of time in prayer.** When one fasts, he should meditate and seek the face of God. He should not be hurried; he should not feel the compulsion of the clock. When a person fasts, he should enjoy fellowship with God. **Our prayer requests are not answered according to the amount of time we spend in prayer.** But the child of God will want to spend much time in fellowship with his heavenly Father. The Christian becomes more conformed to the image of God as he communes with God in prayer.

**Begin by repenting.** David humbled himself before God. "When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach" (Psalm 69:10). If a person does not repent with the right attitude in his heart, his abstinence from food is useless. Repentance in part is a deep commitment to completely forsake or avoid pet sins and moves out from there. God warned Jeremiah, "When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them. . ." (Jeremiah 14:12). Make sure that you are in the proper relationship with God and that there is not hidden sin in your life. "Cleanse thou me from secret faults" (Psalm 19:12).

**The Bible teaches, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (I John 1:10).** The first verse emphasizes the fact that we have a desire to sin; the second verse emphasizes the fact that we actually sin. After God points out our sin, He provides the remedy.

**Ask for forgiveness.** God's Word promises, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). The basis of cleansing is not how long we pray. The basis of our cleansing is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son (I John 1:7). Therefore, we should not be defeated or discouraged when we begin our fast. We should claim victory (I Corinthians 10:13; I John 5:4-6).

**Pray continually for specific requests.** The Bible teaches us to pray constantly. "Pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17). During a time of fasting, set aside several periods during the day when you can pray to God for specific requests. Since you are not eating, why not spend the time in prayer that you usually spend in eating. At each mealtime, pray for each request on your list. **We should seek to pray in faith.** "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James 1:6). Jesus says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find, knock; and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7). "Ask," "seek," and "knock" mean to keep on asking, seeking, and knocking.

**Read large sections of Scripture.** The Word of God will increase our faith (Romans 10:17) and can become the basis of answered prayer. Psalm 119 is powerful on the importance of the Word of God. (John 15:7; I John 3:23). **Select key verses or passages to meditate upon.** Perhaps these verses will become a stimulus for more faith in trusting God for the answers he seeks. (Psalm 1)

**Fast and worship God.** Anna served God through her prayers and daily fasting. "And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the

temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day" (Luke 2:37). We worship and magnify Him. One of the best ways to magnify God is to contemplate His greatness and power. Just the consideration of God and His attributes is an act of worship. **Another way to worship God is to thank Him for all He has done for you. When you realize what God has done in the past, you will have confidence to GIVE TO God your every petition.**

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## **An Intimate Hour with God, by Jim Elliff**

The Lord invites us to know Him better. What a privilege! If the joy of heaven is in knowing the Lord's presence without any sin to hinder us, surely seeking His presence now must be the greatest possible pursuit. **Do** you feel your need to pray? A person who has no need to pray cannot be living by faith. Prayerless-ness says, "I am sufficient in myself for everything required of me." But is that so? And do you not grieve God by your persistent self-sufficiency? The Bible says, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." (Heb. 11:6)

The following suggestions are designed to help you spend an extended time in prayer and meditation with God. You may spend this hour alone or with others. The order is not essential, but does provide a helpful way to progress. This tool may be used daily or for special times of retreat with God. Some may wish to follow this hour with more intense Bible reading.

It is sometimes good to kneel or to lie down before the Lord. "Come let us bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our God, our Maker." (Ps. 95: 6) Walking while praying can also be helpful, or sitting in a comfortable chair so that all the focus can be on God. Be sure and find a quiet place.

**1. Come in Christ's Name**— The audience we have with the Father is entirely based upon the merits of Christ. In other words, it is solely because Christ lived perfectly, died satisfactorily, and rose again victoriously for us that we have the privilege of addressing the Father. Because God accepts Christ, He can accept us in Him. "...He made us accepted in the Beloved." (Eph. 1: 6b)

Don't just say the words, but actually trust in Christ as your mediator. Express in some detail your dependence on Christ's worthiness and on His substitutionary work on your behalf. "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ....For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." (Eph. 2:13, 18)

**2. Delight in Him**— Express your wonder and delight in God. Praise Him for His character and His power. Do not thank him at this time for His activity in your life, but focus on the person of God and His attributes: His Love, Patience, Immensity, Strength, Holiness, Grace, Glory, Knowledge, Wisdom, Goodness, etc.

"Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." (Ps. 37: 4)

**3. Express Your Longings to Him**— Tell God what you desire above all other things. Express your deepest longings for fellowship with Him and for holiness of life, or whatever is in your heart. This is not a time to pray about everything you need, but to make known your deepest, long-term desires. You may wish to personalize Ephesians 1: 15-23 as a guide.

"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." (Ps. 42: 1-2a)

**4. Read a Psalm**— You may wish to use one of the "Psalms for the day," according to the day of the month. Add 30 to the day of the month to arrive at 5 Psalms for the day (i.e. on the 15th, the Psalms would be 15, 45, 75, 105, and 135). It may be helpful to read the Psalm you choose out loud.

**5. Sing to Him**— Use a hymnbook, recall a chorus or hymn from memory, or make up your own song from the Scriptures. "Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing." (Ps. 100: 1-2)

**6. Intercede for Others**— Remember... Those who have asked you to pray for them; The leaders of your church; The missionaries you know; The leaders of our country; Those who are unsaved; Your family members; Your friends; Those in trouble or grieving, etc.

"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you..." (1 Sam. 12: 23)

**7. Place Your Day Before Him**— If you are praying in the morning, you may wish to place every aspect of the day before the Lord, one item at a time. "Lord, please give me patience with my daughter when she comes to breakfast, help me show her love and kindness." "Lord, when I try to make that sale at 2:00 this afternoon, help me to speak as a Christian would speak, and give me wisdom." By going chronologically through every possible event of the day, you are learning trust Him in the details of life. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Pr. 3: 5-6)

**8. Petition Him for Other Special Needs**— There are matters needing attention in your own life and in the lives of others, the church or your group. Tell these to God and ask for His guidance, deliverance, endurance, wisdom, or whatever it is that you need. It is at this time that you will want to deal with any repentance God is requiring. Expect Him to give you grace to overcome. "Be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3: 19b) Ask with faith and genuine humility. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4: 16)" ...Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." (Jn. 16: 24b)

**9. Meditate on His Word**— To meditate means to ponder, reflect, contemplate, or think over slowly, the Words of God. If this is your only Bible reading time, continue reading the passage that is next for you in your plan. Read at least a chapter of Scripture. Look for the key verses and meditate on them, asking God to show you

what they mean. Mark them in your Bible and ask God to help you remember what He is showing. Pray that He will give you a way to humbly share these truths with others. **Read to obey.**

If you are in a group, allow a period of quiet so that each person may read the Word. The leader may wish to suggest the passage for use with the group. If there is time, insights may be shared with each other.

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also does not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper." (Ps. 1: 1-3)

**10. Offer Thanks to Him—** Even if there have been difficulties in your life, the Lord has been good to you. Express to God your appreciation for specific acts of kindness He has done in the light of what you truly deserve. "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name." (Heb. 13: 15)

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**Sunday, October 14, we will have a SIGN UP SHEET for the SOUTHSIDE'S 31 DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING! Beginning with Monday, October 15, through Wednesday, November 14, we desire AT LEAST one person or family PRAYING and FASTING on EACH DAY! Grace to all! James Bell**

## **SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES!**

**1. Tuesdays, 10:30am— Ladies Bible Study!**

**2. WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM!**

**YOUTH: Wednesdays, 6-8pm @ Adam and Bethany's home.**

**3. Thursdays @ 6:30pm: OUTREACH VISITATION**

**4. EVERY SATURDAY @ 8:00am: Men's Fellowship and Bible Study**

## **Sunday Schedule for October 14, 21, 28**

**1. 9:30am- Sunday School**

**2. 10:45am-** Morning Worship / Children's Church

**3. Noon Fellowship 'Covered Dish' Meal**

**4. 1:00pm- Early Afternoon Service {{LORD'S SUPPER SERVICE is 10/21/12 @ 1pm}}**

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