

Prayer and Fasting at the Beginning of A New Season

Monday December 3, 2018

Our theme comes from the Gospel of Matthew: “Immanuel: God with us in the Birth of Jesus.” We will be looking at the early years of Jesus’s life and ministry during the season of advent.

We are continuing our new pattern for our Day of Prayer and Fasting that goes along with a change in seasons for our worship, preaching and teaching within the Intown Community. Our aim is to give our hearts a correlation between our public and private worship. As you hopefully experienced with the kickoff for the series from the life and writings of Daniel, we believe we can open our hearts and minds to the Holy Spirit’s working of applying the truth of the gospel to our lives on Sundays and throughout the days that follow.

Again, today, you may want to fast from some routine part of your life that by avoiding that behavior you can focus more on your relationship with God in prayer. Whether you change your food diet or your place of communing with the Father like Jesus did or you look to shed idols that might be vying for your attention, examine your life in light of the sermon this week and enter into the experience of those who were looking for a savior.

You might open your time of prayer by asking the Lord to guide your time and to help you be open and honest with Him. Remember that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit desire to hear from you.

Let’s look at the early years of Jesus’s ministry that we see in the chapter that follows the birth of Jesus, the visit by the magi and his baptism by John the Baptist.

Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil. 2 After He had fasted 40 days and 40 nights, He was hungry. 3 Then the tempter approached Him and said, “If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” 4 But He answered, “It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” 5 Then the Devil took Him to the holy city, had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: He will give His angels orders concerning you, and they will support you with their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” 7 Jesus told him, “It is also written: Do not test the Lord your God.” 8 Again, the Devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 And he said to Him, “I will give You all these things if You will fall down and worship me.” 10 Then Jesus told him, “Go away, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve

only Him.” 11 Then the Devil left Him, and immediately angels came and began to serve Him. {HCSB version}

There’s a great deal to absorb here. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your heart and mind as you read through these verses a couple of times. Jesus was led by the Spirit to be tempted. Can you imagine any reasons why the Spirit would lead Jesus into temptation?

Temptation comes when we are hungry, weak and needy. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Have you ever experienced the feeling of hunger and had some of that hunger satisfied by your spiritual connection to God?

After fasting it might be obvious that man does not live by bread alone. Jesus had survived on fasting and prayer. Jesus was fully man or else the temptation wouldn’t have been real. In what ways can you relate to the temptations that faced Jesus?

What do you “live on” as you go through each day? What gives you life? Consider that question for a few minutes.

Have you been in situations when it seemed that the attacks of evil were relentless? Are you aware that God is near to you during those times and his angels are standing by to help you?

Here’s what I was experiencing when I meditated on this scene: I’m reminded of listening to the Spirit. “There is no greater value or experience in my life than hearing and taking in your words as I take food into my stomach, Lord. Thank you for speaking to me. Help me to listen to you today and every day.”

As you continue to think about Jesus’ temptations and yours, consider how Jesus prepared for these by spending an extended time listening to his Father. How can regular times of listening to the Father prepare you for times of temptation and attack?

What commitments do you want to make today or for this season of Advent, if any?

- 1. Take a moment to write down your prayer requests that you believe are most urgent. Focus on these requests as you talk to the God who is with us. You might want to share these requests with others in your fellowship or community. You can also submit your requests on the Intown website. <http://intown.org/worship/prayer>**

Express your heart to God as you continue your day and week.