

Friday, January 22, 2021

Church Family,

When I started coming to our church 25 years ago, there were many things that were different than I was familiar with in my home church. I grew up in a small country Methodist church and I can remember Ken mentioning things in our conversations and I had literally never heard of them before. In my mind, I would think, "What in the world are you talking about?" It was quite an adjustment for me and honestly, I struggled. I felt like I had a close relationship with the Lord and these new things made me question it. During this time, I had wonderful friends, pastors and mentors who were willing to answer questions, have conversations with me and most importantly, pray with me! In one of those conversations, a friend challenged me with this question~ "If you can experience more in your relationship with Christ, would you want to?" Well, of course, my answer was YES! That question changed my outlook on the differences I was experiencing. My heart changed from being "defensive" to "open" to whatever the Lord had in store for me.

Fasting was one topic I had heard of; but it was not practiced in my church and I had never participated in a fast. Over the years, through fasting, I have learned so much and have grown in my relationship. I have experienced break-throughs, heard from the Lord, and have been challenged through fasting that I would not have otherwise. Tony Evans writes that *"fasting is the deliberate abstinence from some form of physical gratification, for a period of time, in order to achieve a greater spiritual goal ... The idea is to devote the time we would ordinarily spend on these activities to prayer and waiting before the Lord. Fasting calls us to renounce the natural in order to invoke the supernatural" (p. 7).*

I have found that there is a closeness to God that you simply will not experience just from prayer or devotions alone. Fasting has the ability to take your relationship to the next level. You get a revelation of God's Word when you fast that you simply cannot get any other way. Disconnecting from the distractions of the world and connecting to the power and presence of God through prayer brings a closeness to God that will not only lead and guide you; but also sustain you when you doubt or falter. I still find myself in awe of the love and faithfulness God has for me that He desires to meet with me, cares for the small details in my life and always reveals just what I need.

My prayer this week for our congregation has been that we all have heard from the Lord and that we have experienced a new level in our growing relationships with Jesus!

Love you all!  
Stephanie Hatcher