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**Essential**

**Practices**

**Let God Touch Your Heart**

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**The Power of Fasting**

*Nehemiah 1:1-11*

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**Nehemiah 1:1-11**

In late autumn, in the month of Kislev, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes’ reign, I was at the fortress of Susa. **2**Hanani, one of my brothers, came to visit me with some other men who had just arrived from Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had returned there from captivity and about how things were going in Jerusalem.

**3**They said to me, “Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been destroyed by fire.”

**4**When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven. **5**Then I said, “O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of unfailing love with those who love him and obey his commands, **6**listen to my prayer! Look down and see me praying night and day for your people Israel. I confess that we have sinned against you. Yes, even my own family and I have sinned! **7**We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, decrees, and regulations that you gave us through your servant Moses.

**8**“Please remember what you told your servant Moses: ‘If you are unfaithful to me, I will scatter you among the nations. **9**But if you return to me and obey my commands and live by them, then even if you are exiled to the ends of the earth, I will bring you back to the place I have chosen for my name to be honored.’

**10**“The people you rescued by your great power and strong hand are your servants. **11**O Lord, please hear my prayer! Listen to the prayers of those of us who delight in honoring you. Please grant me success today by making the king favorable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me.” In those days I was the king’s cup-bearer.

1. **In fasting we illustrate our priority of wanting to please God.**

Matthew 4:4 ‘Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’

Psalm 69:10 “I humbled my soul with fasting.”

1. **In fasting we mourn about all the things that do not please God.**

Matthew 9:14

One day the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked him, “Why don’t your disciples fast like we do and the Pharisees do?” 15 Jesus replied, “Do wedding guests mourn while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Genesis 6:5-6

“The Lord says how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become ... The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.”

Psalm 30:5 ‘...weeping may go on all night but joy comes in the morning.’

1. **In fasting we show that our life’s choices shall not be ruled by our bodily appetites.**

1 John 2:15

Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. 16 For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world.

1. **In fasting we add weight to our prayers.**
2. **Fasting adds weight to our prayers of confession and repentance.**

Jonah 3:6

“When the king of Nineveh heard what Jonah was saying, he stepped down from his throne and took off his royal robes. He dressed himself in burlap and sat on a heap of ashes. 7 Then the king and his nobles sent this decree throughout the city: “No one, not even the animals from your herds and flocks, may eat or drink anything at all. 8 People and animals alike must wear garments of mourning, and everyone must pray earnestly to God. They must turn from their evil ways and stop all their violence. 9 Who can tell? Perhaps even yet God will change his mind and hold back his fierce anger from destroying us.” 10 When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened.”

1. **Fasting adds weight to our prayers for guidance and direction.**

Nehemiah 1:3-4, 11

‘They said to me, ‘things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been burned.’

When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed for the God of heaven. 11. O Lord, please hear my prayer! Listen to the prayers of those of us who delight in honoring you. Please grant me success now as I go to ask the king for a great favor. Put it in his heart to be kind to me.”

Acts 13: 2-3

“One day these men were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work I have for them’. So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.’

**Action Step:**

Commit to a time of fasting this week!

Judges 20

Esther 4

I Samuel 31:13

Matthew 4