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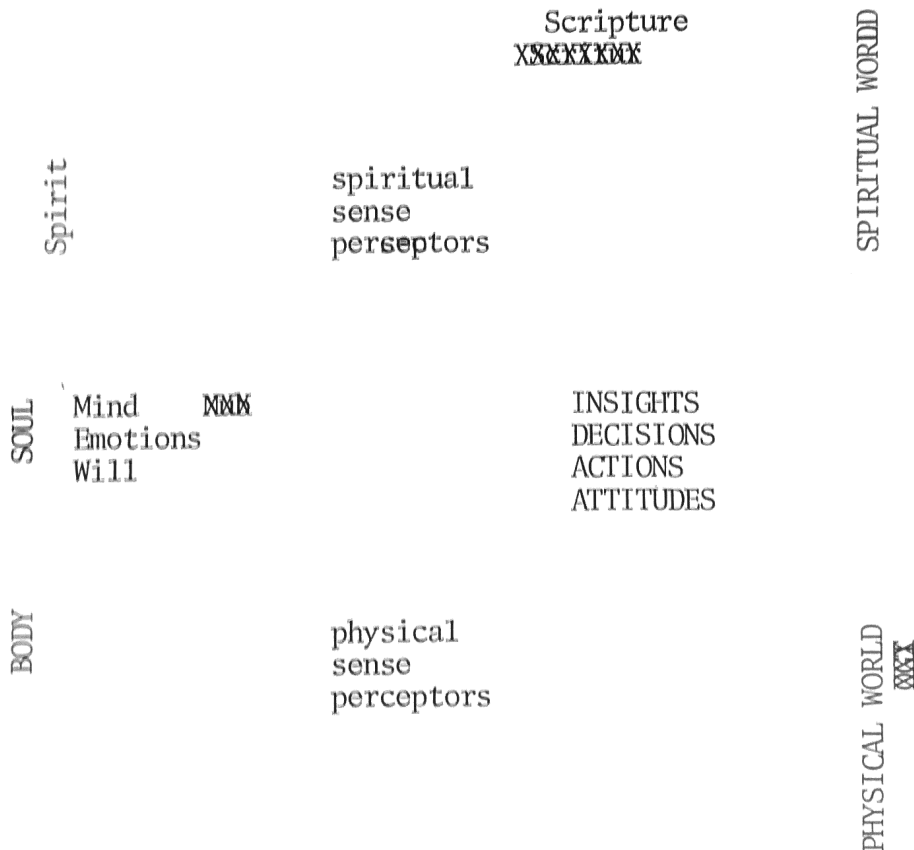
Sensitivity to God - Page 1

INCREASING SENSITIVITY

Through Prayer and Fasting

The voluntary practice of fasting with prayer was used by the Lord, by His disciples, by the Apostle Paul, by the early Church and by a host of outstanding Christians down through history to develop spiritual discernment and to discover the will of God in particular matters.

FASTING ALLOWS GREATER
CONCENTRATION ON
SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION



Men through whom God has worked greatly have emphasized the significance of prayer with fasting. One such man used the following schedule for a day of prayer and fasting.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE

For a Day of Prayer and Fasting

Whenever this Christian leader had an important decision to make or whenever he was asked to bring an important message, he would set aside a twenty-four hour period prior to the meeting or to the time the decision had to be made. The twenty-four hours went from evening to evening. Here are the items included in his day of prayer and fasting:

READING LARGE SECTIONS OF SCRIPTURE

He read or scanned as many significant sections of Scripture as possible for general content and key ideas related to the subject of his needs.

Evening

MARKING SIGNIFICANT SECTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

m When a particular section seemed significant to him, he would make a special notation of it for the purpose of studying it further the following morning.

- S L E E P -

STRENGTHENING PERSONAL SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

His first job in the morning was to enjoy a time of personal edification from the Psalms and Proverbs. These sections were used to put his own heart in tune with the Lord.

Morning

STUDYING SIGNIFICANT SECTIONS

He would then reread the significant sections marked the evening before and begin a study in each one. The study involved outlining the section, making special word studies, looking up cross-references, etc.

God created the evening as the beginning of the day. "The evening and the morning were the first day." (Genesis 1:5, etc.) The Jewish Sabbath began in the evening. The significance of this is that the important thoughts in the evening are upon our minds throughout the night hours and set our mental attitudes for the following day.

TURNING SCRIPTURE INTO A PERSONAL PRAYER

As each insight was gained in his study of the Scriptures, he would turn it into a personal response to the Lord. As he did this, he would analyze his life and evaluate it on the basis of the principles of each section.

SELECTING KEY VERSES-TO-MEMORIZE

In the course of his study and prayer, key verses would stand out as those which should be committed to memory. He would begin to memorize these, a few verses at a time.

MAKING MELODY IN HIS HEART

For meaningful variation during memorizing, he would read related excerpts of Christian classics or read and hum related hymns.

Afternoon

DISCOVERING PRINCIPLES THROUGH MEDITATION

The word, "meditation," is based upon rumination - as a cow chewing its cud. In the same way, this missionary would mentally, emotionally and volitionally think and rethink all that which he had studied for the purpose of identifying key Scriptural principles to be used in the solution of his problem or in the preparation of his message.

During this time of meditation, he sometimes would become weary. If so, he would put himself to sleep meditating on Scripture. He often discovered that during his nap, many of the ideas would fall into place in his mind, making his meditation that much more significant after his rest.

* After preparing a message by use of this schedule, he would go directly to the platform to bring the message. Those who listened to him speak marveled at the preciseness to their needs and the depth of his message.

One man made the comment, "It was as though we were listening to the very oracles of God!"

REASONS FOR FASTING

DEFINITION

FASTING, NESTEUO

To fast, to abstain from eating, is used of voluntary fasting. Fasting had become a common practice in Christ's day (Matthew 9:14, 15; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:33-35) as instructed in the Levitical Law (Lev. 16:29) and was continued among Christians in the Early Church (Acts 27:9).

I. FASTING AS A DISCIPLINE LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus Christ was led to fast forty days - Matthew 4:2

II. FASTING TO SEEK GOD'S WILL IN A SPECIFIC MATTER

The Israelites fasted to determine direction in battle - Judges 20:26
Paul and Barnabas prayed with fasting before choosing elders - Acts 14:23

III. FASTING IN REPENTANCE FOR SIN

The Israelites fasted and repented and put away false gods - I Samuel 7:6

David fasted and repented of his sin - II Samuel 12:16, 21-23

Ahab fasted and repented after causing Naboth's death - I Kings 21:27

Hearing God's Word, Israel fasted, confessing their sins - Neh. 9:1-3

Daniel fasted and repented for himself and the people for not having walked in the laws of the Lord - God's chastisement was to come - Daniel 9:3ff

Joel called for a fast because of the Lord's chastening - Joel 1:14, 2:12, 15

The people of Ninevah repented in fasting - Jonah 3:5.

IV. FASTING FOR CONCERN FOR THE WORK OF GOD

Nehemiah fasted over the condition of Jerusalem - Neh. 1:4

(cont'd next page)

Reasons for Fasting (cont'd)

V. FASTING FOR DELIVERANCE OR PROTECTION

Jehosaphat and all Judah fasted for deliverance in battle - II Chr. 20:3
Ezra and the people fasted for the Lord's deliverance - Ezra 8:21-23.
The Jews fasted and grieved after King Ahasuerus' decree - Es. 4:13, 16
God delivered the Jews from Haman's plot, they fasted and rejoiced -
Es. 9:31
People fasting for repentance and deliverance but God will not hear -
Jer. 14:12.

VI. FASTING TO HUMBLE ONESELF BEFORE GOD

David humbled himself before God - Psalm 69:10, 11, 13.

VII. FASTING AS PART OF WORSHIP

Anna served God through prayers and fastings daily - Luke 2:37
The early Church was fasting and worshipping God - Acts 13:2, 3

VIII. FASTING WHEN IN DEEP SORROW

Sorrow over the death of Saul and his sons - I Samuel 31:13; II Sam. 1:12,
II Chron. 10:12
David grieved over the life of his child - II Sam. 12:16, 21-23
David prayed and fasted for his enemies' troubles - Ps. 35:13
King Darius fasted when Daniel was in the lions den - Dan. 6:18.

* GUIDES FOR PROPER USE OF FASTING

Fast for the purpose of greater effectiveness in discerning and achieving God's purposes. Isaiah 58:6.

Fast secretly and God will reward you openly - Matt. 6:16-18.

* WARNINGS AGAINST IMPROPER USE OF FASTING

Don't fast to achieve selfish purposes - Isa. 58:3-5
Don't fast to impress others with your spirituality - Zech. 7:5;
Matthew 6:16-18; Luke 18:12.

NOTE: In addition to the above verses some Greek manuscripts mention fasting in connection with the following references: Matt 17:21; Mark 9:29; Acts 10:30; I Cor. 7:5. Because fasting was commonly practiced at this time it would be in harmony with these contexts.