

DITCHING STUFF: FASTING FROM THE THINGS THAT DISTRACT

(by Linda Ellsworth, author of *live* magazine theme Bible studies)

Introduction

As a person who encounters hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) when I fail to eat on a regular basis, I have often felt “left out of the picture” when it comes to fasting. As I thought and prayed about a “different” approach to fasting—one in which I could engage, I was encouraged by the first Bible Study, and realized that yes, indeed, there is a “fast” for me.

READ AGAIN Matthew 6:19 – 20 and verses 25 – 34

These verses list the four “do not” commands given by Jesus. Do you recall what they are?

Verse 19:

- Don’t hoard treasures on earth ---rather store them in heaven

Verse 25, 31

- Don’t waste time worrying about nourishing the body – God knows your needs before you ask and will provide.
- Don’t spend so much time worrying about your outward appearance—God dresses His creation in beauty. Having made you, He knows exactly what you need . . . won’t He look after all this for you?

Verses 34, 33

- Don’t waste time worrying about the future—rather **seek** the holiness of God and His kingdom work **first**...He looks after everything else!

We fast to seek Him, whom to know is life eternal (John 17:3). The implication, then, is that worrying about “stuff” is a wasted effort in God’s kingdom work. God wants us to “ditch the stuff” and seek Him!

Psalms 27 gives us a beautiful outline on to how to do just that . . . but before we go there, let’s go into “fast mode.”

Ditch the stuff

Turn off the phone and the TV. Print this Bible study and turn off the computer. Find a quiet place, free from interruption, where you can fast and feast on God’s Presence and His Word. You will need your pen, your Bible, and a notebook to journal. Set aside two hours to start.

Seek Him

READ: Psalm 27. Read it again, perhaps in a different translation.

READ Verse 1. This verse gives us the focus of our “seeking” fast.

Merriam-Webster defines “seek” as:

- 1 to resort to: go to
- 2 **a:** to go in search of: look for **b:** to try to discover
- 3 to ask for: REQUEST . . . seek advice
- 4 to try to acquire or gain: aim at . . . seek fame

God is:

our 1. _____ 2. our _____ and our 3. _____

READ verse 4

As we leave stuff, David expresses the one thing that we seek:

As we do this, it enables us:

a) To _____

b) To _____

READ verse 5

When we do this, God will _____

And will _____

READ verse 6

Because God has done this,

we will be _____

We will then _____

And we will _____

Now pause and take at least 30 minutes to review the truth of the first six verses by reflecting on how God has worked in your life over the past week, month, year, decade.

Write out (journal) the exact ways in which you have evidenced His working in your life, and your specific responses.

Devoid of “stuff,” now contemplate and record the times of sadness, loneliness and despair that have touched your life in the past.

READ verses 7-10

As you review your record, how many times during those difficult seasons did you feel and respond in the same manner as David?

Follow the cry of David's heart, as you bring your crushing load to the One who shoulders it all. Re-write David's cry in your own words . . . be passionate!

David cried aloud to the Lord. Now take the cry that you have written and cry it aloud to your Father . . . as many times as necessary. Pause and listen for God's response.

READ verses 11 and 12

Do you hear it? The calm that has settled into David's being? The turning that his earnest seeking of God has caused? Now David asks God to:

Which includes leading him in:

Pleading with a sense of confidence that God will keep him from:

READ verse 12

What is David's conclusion, following his passionate plea to the Father?

What is your conclusion, following your passionate plea to the Father?

How can you speak truth to having seen God's goodness in this life? Take time to list as many specifics as possible.

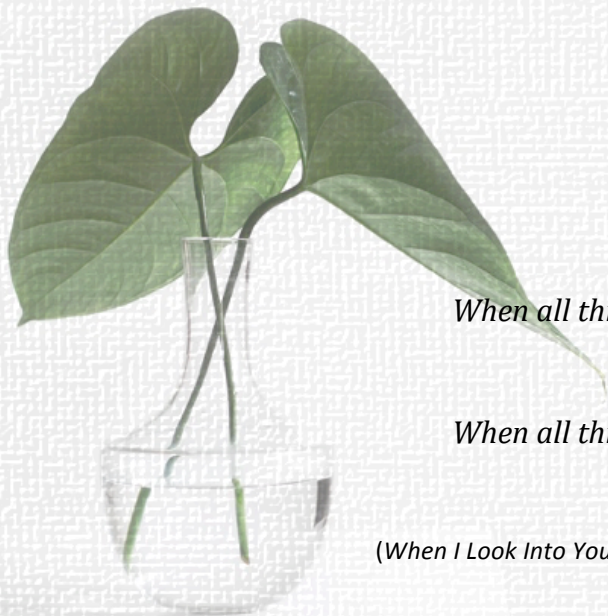
Re-read your list. Meditate (as a cow chewing her cud) on God's intervention in your life.

READ verse 14

Following his time of prayer (conversation with God) and reflection (of God’s unfailing faithfulness), David is able to shout out with great emotion and elation. Write his encouragement in your own words:

Now shout this out to the Lord as your own recital of His faithfulness to you. Go ahead . . . out loud!

You have taken time and effort to “ditch the stuff.” You have spent two hours in the presence of a holy and loving God. If you don’t know this hymn, just pray the lyrics to the Father of Mercies, who loves more than anything, to spend time with you.



*When I look into Your holiness,
When I gaze into Your loveliness,
When all things that surround become shadows in the light of You...
When I've found the joy of reaching Your heart,
When my will becomes enthralled in Your love,
When all things that surround become shadows in the light of You...
I worship You; I worship You.
The reason I live is to worship You.*

(When I Look Into Your Holiness; Wayne & Cathy Perrin; Integrity's Hosanna! Music; 1981)