

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES WORKOUT SHEET 9

THE EXERCISE OF SELF DENIAL

FASTING

Fasting involves denying ourselves in order to express our greater desire for God and the things of his kingdom. It is closely linked with prayer.

Take some time this week to ask the Father's guidance about doing one of the following:

1) Miss out a meal and spend that time in worship, prayer, bible study, meditation, interceding for others, or serving others, as the Spirit leads you.

2) If you feel led by God to do so, move to regularly making one day a week a 'fast day', missing out one, two, or three meals that day as you feel led by God. Consider giving the money you would have spent on food to those who have none.

Remember, start with small steps and accept that it may take a long time to build up to a whole day fast or even longer. Children, the elderly, and anyone with a medical condition should not fast. If in doubt, check with your doctor.

3) Consider fasting once a week, or even once a month, from one of the following, in order to focus on God: television, newspapers, radio, i-pod, e-mail, internet browsing, tea & coffee, alcohol, chocolate.

4) Consider a permanent fast from: negative talk, criticism, gossip.

5) Fasting is about love, not law. It is about discovering and yielding to the heart of God. Meditate on Isaiah chapter 58 and listen to what kind of fasting the Lord wants.

B) FRUGALITY

Think about the following:

Frugality means:

- *moving from self-indulgence to generosity
- *resisting the desire for glamour, status and luxury, and sharing your resources instead with those who have nothing
- *dying to self
- *living simply
- *acting justly

a) Take a look at your life right now: home, car, clothes, food, holidays ... how much of what you see is about 'need' and how much is about 'greed'?

b) How much clutter do you have stored in your basement or attic?

c) When you shop, ask yourself these questions:

What is necessary to meet my/our needs?
Will a simpler model/make be enough?
How will this affect the living conditions of others?

d) Starting with small steps, develop the habit of going without something, in order to give what you would have spent to someone in greater need than yourself.

*"He has shown you, O man, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God"*

Micah 6:8

Lord, you told us "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth". Help us to live simply, freely and lovingly, as you did on earth. Amen.