

## LimitLESS- Live It Out Loud! Part 2

James 1:19-27

**Purpose of series:** The purpose of this series is to assist you in taking off the limits of God's expression through you and in your life and His blessing on your life. The book of James reveals many practical duties and activities of Christian, that is not heeded will hinder God's expression through them and blessings on them, especially during difficult seasons of our life. This series will provide us with a practical view of how to live a life of spiritual impact and personal fullness in a difficult world under pressure.

**Purpose of this message:** Today, we will continue our LimitLESS series to expand the thought of this message of Live It Out Loud. James gives us a means of how we can lived a "blessed" life. He instructs us how we can follow after God and gain momentum in our walk here on this earth. As we trust in God's Word not only for our own souls, but for the sake of those who have not heard the message or learned to trust in it, James will inspire us, equip us to make a difference where we are, right now in our lives. Were you are is a perfect place for God to show up in a big way. It's good to know that our God loves us and is passionate toward us, you think you want Him to show up? You can't imagine how much He wants to be the center of this world. Think on that!

### Opening:

As we prepare to pray for the message this morning, I want us to do something a little different. I have two sets of scripture that I want us to read out loud together for a foundation of what we will be sharing to day and to give us a unified heart, a sense of mission as we commit to hear God and obey God. I am asking you to read with me and then we are going to pray together over each set of scriptures:

### Salt Prayer

*"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men."*

Matthew 5:13

### Light Prayer

*"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*

Matthew 5:14

### Living It Out Loud

Last week we read and talked about living our life out loud and started reading from James 1:25, where I'd like to begin again today.

*"But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does."*

James 1:25

## 1. I Must Receive God's Word If I Am Going To Be Blessed By It

*"...accept the word planted in you, which can save you."*

James 1:21b

- **Be Careful- James 1:19a**
- **Be Calm- James 1:19b**
- **Be Clean- James 1:21a**
- **Be Compliant- James 1:21b**

## 2. I Must Reflect God's Word If I Am Going To Be Blessed By It

*"Anyone who **listens** to the word but does not **do** what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a **mirror** and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like."*

James 1:23-24

- **Hearers/Listener** 202 *akroates* from *akroaomai*- to listen or hear
- *Akroates* is used 3 times by James here in chapter 1 (James 1:22; 1:23 ; 1:25)

James chooses to use a mirror to illustrate his point. He is describing God's Word as a mirror that reflects who we are. The Word of God addresses the true image of ourselves. The difficulty with a mirror is that it doesn't lie. It tells the truth about who we are. God's Word reflects what kind of person we are on the outside and inside.

**My Dad-** My Dad has Alzheimer. We have struggled and debated what we should do because his behavior is not in the correct reflection of his character. My dad was so predictable growing up. He was so rigid but routine as well. I knew every day my dad was going to walk into our front door at 5:15. He worked the same job for 32 years and I can only recall once or twice when that did not happen. I am not having a problem with this because I know who my dad is. I know that is not him. But I am concerned for him because he is not acting in the way that I know him.

James is telling us that when we look in the mirror of God's Word that it shows things about us, who we are or should be and we walk away forgetting that information. We forget and have Spiritual Alzheimer's. It is a deadly problem because people don't know who you were, they are not looking at you now remembering you by your best days. Your life is a reflection of your heart and it is an expression of your testimony.

*"The enemy does not mind if you are spiritually active. He just doesn't want you to be spiritually effective. Spiritual activity does not equal spiritual effectiveness."* - Point Man

*"For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are."*

Hebrews 4:12 (NLT)

I like what Oswald Chambers said about James 1:23-24...

**One step forward in obedience is worth years of study about it.**

**Esther- The Hope of A Nation**

I believe that we are living in a time much like Esther who was in the Kings palace but unfamiliar with the condition of her own surroundings. In Esther 2:10, Mordecai had forbidden Esther to reveal her nationality to anyone, probably because he knew the undercurrent that was happening in the kingdom there. But he realizes that Esther is oblivious of the surroundings, that all the Jews are about to be destroyed, she was in the only position to make a difference. In Esther 4:1 the author makes a significant statement to give us the full impact of what was going on with Mordecai and how serious he sees the situation.

*“When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly.”*

**Esther 4:1**

Mordecai shows his distress by taring his clothes and putting on sackcloth and ashes and he went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. This is no passive expression and not just another day of life. This was a serious reaction to a certain situation.

Esther's maids and eunuchs told her what was happening with her Uncle, (Esther 4:4) and she sent clothes for him to put on, perhaps to comfort him, but he refused them.

**See, the world cannot interpret your passion for God and in this case, your passion for those who are doomed.** In Esther 4:6 Esther had to make a personal inquiry of what was going on with Mordecai. Mordecai explains to Hathach, one of the Kings eunuchs assigned to her, what was happening and gave him proof of the destruction of the Jews and asked her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people, (Esther 4:8).

When Hathach returned to Esther and told her everything she basically said that there wasn't much she could do. And to go back and tell her Uncle that if she did anything out of order that would mean certain death and anyways, it's been a good month since the king has showed any interest in me, I don't see that working. (Esther 4:9-11)

This reminds me of many people in the church today. They do everything they can do to keep themselves from this world. They throw clothes on the problem and try to fix it up so we don't really have to see the true heart condition of man. They attempt to make it go away by ignoring their responsibility of bringing those who are destined to die to a point of salvation opportunity. They excuse themselves because of all of the legal problems and city counsel troubles and how there is probably no real interest in what we have to say. They don't want to know about it, they don't want to hear about it so they don't have to care about it.

Do you realize that in the church today we have a Christianized version of about everything that is out there. We have Christian radio, Christian TV, Christian books, Christian workout videos, Christian diets, all of it is really good. We have Christian doctors, dentist, travel agencies and Christian cruises and we actually have Christian apparel which is so important because I don't want to wear secular clothes!

That is so unthinkable, from now on I'm going to wear Christian clothing...OK, NOT!

It seems like for some they want to avoid any contact with any unbeliever. We want to live in a Christian bubble. Someone needs to come up with this idea, we need a Christian car. Really, there are so many secular cars out there. We need a Christian

car, one with only two buttons on the radio, one plays gospel music and the other one is to take the place of talk radio with preaching on 24hrs. If you try and listen to oldies and it doesn't even work, actually the car will not start. When you pressed the horn, instead of a blaring sound coming through you press the horn and Handel's Messiah plays, "Hallelujah!" with an announcer breaking in saying, "Excuse me but can I pass?"

If you had a GPS unit, it would not only help you know where you were on the road but it has a complete spiritual mapping system so you would know how many minutes of Bible reading and prayer you have done. It would read Proverbs and Psalm's to you at the appropriate moments on your travel, "The steps of a righteous man are ordered of the Lord."

How about if your car didn't start unless you started in prayer. It won't start, you have to pray first.

Do you remember James Bond and his Austin Martin in Gold Finger? If you did, it had an ejection seat on the passenger side of the car. In the Christian car there are two ejection seats, one for the passenger and one for the driver activated by the sound of a trumpet. The trumpet sounds, the sun roof comes off and you are raptured out of the car and there you go to heaven.

We have got to get out of this Christian bubble. And we have got to get into the real world and see what is going on so we can do something about it.

**See, my goal...**

**...is not to isolate myself from the world but to infiltrate the world**

**...is not to insulate myself from the world but to permeate the world**

**...is not to inoculate ourselves from the world but to influence the world that they might know Jesus Christ. The challenge is how can I influence other people.**

Mordecai heard Esther's response in Esther 4 and he sent back this message,

*"Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"*

**Esther 4:13-14**

Then Esther got the message, she has Hathach take this message back to him,

*"Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."*

**Esther 4:16**

Esther understood the message. She realized that it takes action, not just listening. She was practical in how she responded too, she knew that she couldn't do it without God's help and direction. She was committed with her life for the purpose of saving her people.

**Why should this move us today?**

***“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”***

**Proverbs 14:12**

There are many people bound to the bondages of this world. They are not living, they are on a death march. There is an edict written that they will face certain doom. Unless someone risks their life in an attempt to save all the rest, then the masses are doomed. There is no hope. We cannot just toss clothes over the problem, we cannot say that the lawlessness and evil of this land is too far gone. We cannot say that God is finished with His work here and He hasn't shown up in a long time. I believe He is alive and well and He has a mission for us today. Yes there is a way that seems right to a man, but he hasn't understood the good news of our God!

Esther understood that she could not go out into this world without the help of God. She knew that the king had rules that he lived by and unless God intervened she would be dead the minute she entered the throne room. But she also understood that if she didn't respond, perhaps all the Jews would die. She was at a point, not only in her life but in history that she had to take a righteous step toward the solution and not hide in her fear or the norm of the day.

***“For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.”***

**Romans 2:13**

**Titanic-** The single action, or should I say that lack thereof, of a radio operator determined the fate of 1500 lives on a cold night in 1912. The seemingly invincible Titanic was on her maiden voyage. The ship's radio man received a message from another ship that there were icebergs in area. Unfortunately the radio operator placed the message under a weight next to his elbow and went on with his work. And thus the word of imminent danger never reached the captain, and this small miscue led to the loss of 1500 lives when the Titanic struck an iceberg and suffered a mortal blow.

**Information without action can result in destruction.**

### **Three Practical Ways To Reflect The Word of God**

There are many excuses for why people don't read the Word of God, but one of the main ones is because of the fear of the reflection of what they will see in themselves. It is too difficult to see the true reflection of themselves in the biblical mirror. Here, James gives us three practical ways to reflect on the Word of God:

***“But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.”***

**James 1:25**

#### **1. Read It- “Looks Intently”**

I have a problem with reading. I hardly ever read a book, I always study one. The Greek word used here for “look,” in this verse means “to stoop down and gaze in.” It's the same word used when Peter went to the tomb after Jesus had resurrected and he stooped over to peek in to see where He was.

It is a word that means to investigate. It is not a casual glance, but a direct focus of sight connected to thought. See, we can see ourselves in the mirror at a glance or we can stare at ourselves. When you glance at yourself as you walk by it is our human nature to want to stop and take a longer look. Many times it is easy to open God's Word and try to take a glance at themselves, but God wants a lingering glance. That's what we are doing on Sunday mornings, getting a good intent look at ourselves in the reflection of God's Word.

We need to receive the Word of God and reflect on it by reading it. The second practical way to reflect on the Word of God is...

## 2. **Review It- "Continues To Do So"**

It means that we take a scripture and we devour it. We go over and over with it until it reveals so many different facets and details. Really this is the process of true biblical meditation. There are two kinds of meditation. The eastern meditation consists of pushing every thought out of the mind. The biblical meditation is one that keeps only the Word of God in and reflects over it again and again.

Actually you may be very good at meditation. If you have a tendency to worry over and over about issues, you have actually developed the process of meditation. You just need to change what you are dwelling on.

Do you want to be blessed?

*"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."*

John 15:7

*"Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long."*

Psalm 119:97

*"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."*

Joshua 1:8

Find a way for the words of This Word (Bible) to get into your heart. Read it, study it, listen to it. Be committed to it. Do it measurably, get through it in a year or read a One Year Bible. Read it often, everyday. Read it with others and discuss it.

Here is a great question: "How many of you believe everything you read in the newspaper or watch on Television?" Then why do we spend more time reading or watching something that we do not believe is true? Joshua says that there is a way to be blessed. A way to become prosperous and successful, but it comes through our intense familiarity of God's Word.

## 3. **Remember It- "Not Forgetting"**

*"But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be*

***blessed in what he does."***

**James 1:25**

You not only need to get the Word of God in you, but it needs to get you. You have got to find a means of memorizing the Word of God. There is nothing like it in your walk before the Lord. It will guide you at the core of your life.

***"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."***

**Psalm 119:11**

If I want to be blessed by God and take off the limits of what God can do in me, I want His Word to be a constant companion and reminder to me.

The United States Air Force did a study and found that we forget 95% of what we hear within 72 hours. By Wednesday you have already forgotten 95% of what I have studied all week to tell you.

James tells us here that God's Word can bring blessing into our lives if we read it, review it and remember it. But that is not enough.

- 1. I Must Receive God's Word If I Am Going To Be Blessed By It**
- 2. I Must Reflect God's Word If I Am Going To Be Blessed By It**

**Conclusion:**

- 2. I Must Reflect God's Word If I Am Going To Be Blessed By It**
  - **Read It- "Looks Intently"**
  - **Review It- "Continues To Do So"**
  - **Remember It- "Not Forgetting"**

## **Fasting for the Father's Reward**

**Matthew 6:16-18**

*"And whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face 18 so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you."*

### **Introduction**

Carl Lundquist was the president of Bethel College and Seminary for almost 30 years. He died about four years ago from skin cancer. In the last decade of his life he devoted a lot of energy to studying and promoting personal spiritual devotion and the disciplines of the Christian life.

He even established what he called the "Evangelical Order of the Burning Heart" and began to send out a letter of inspiration and encouragement. In the September 1989 letter he told the story of how he first began to take fasting seriously.

“My own serious consideration of fasting as a spiritual discipline began as a result of visiting Dr. Joon Gon Kim in Seoul, Korea. "Is it true," I asked him, "that you spent 40 days in fasting prior to the evangelism crusade in 1980?" "Yes, " he responded, "it is true." Dr. Kim was chairman of the crusade expected to bring a million people to Yoido Plaza. But six months before the meeting the police informed him they were revoking their permission for the crusade. Korea at that time was in political turmoil and Seoul was under martial law. The officers decided they could not take the risk of having so many people together in one place. So Dr. Kim and some associates went to a prayer mountain and there spent 40 days before God in prayer and fasting for the crusade. Then they returned and made their way to the police station. "Oh," said the officer when he saw Dr. Kim, "we have changed our mind and you can have your meeting!"

“As I went back to the hotel I reflected that I had never fasted like that. Perhaps I had never desired a work of God with the same intensity . . . His body is marked by many 40 day fasts during his long spiritual leadership of God's work in Asia. Also, however, I haven't seen the miracles Dr. Kim has.”

Dr. Lundquist went on to tell of one of the "Burning Heart" retreats that he was leading when he saw a seminary senior not eating. He asked him if he was all right and learned that the student was near the end of a 21 day total fast as part of seeking God's leading for the next chapter of his life.

Dr. Lundquist said that in the later years of his ministry he found a modified fast once a week very helpful in his life and work. He wrote in his letter,

“Instead of taking an hour for lunch I use the time to go to a prayer room, usually the Flame Room in nearby Bethel Theological Seminary. There I spend my lunch break in fellowship with God and in prayer. And I have learned a very personal dimension to what Jesus declared, "I have had meat to eat ye know not of."

## **There Are Three Key Factors To Know About Fasting**

### **I. *"When You Fast" not "If You Fast"***

One of the texts that moved Dr. Lundquist in those latter years of his life was the one we are looking at here in Matthew 6:16–18. The thing that gripped him from this scripture were the words in verse 16, "And whenever you fast . . ." Like so many others, Dr. Lundquist noticed that it does not say, "If you fast," but, "when you fast." He concluded as most commentators do, that **Jesus assumed that fasting was a good thing and that it would be done by his disciples. So Jesus is not teaching on whether we should fast or not. He is assuming we will fast and teaching us how to do it and especially how not to do it.**

### **II. *A Danger in Fasting- Hypocrisy***

If fasting is going to be built into our lives as a way of seeking all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19), we need to know how not to do it. That would include physical tips on how not to endanger our bodies, and spiritual teaching on how not to endanger our

souls.

### **"They Have Their Reward in Full"**

More important than the physical harm that can come from wrong fasting is the warning of Jesus about the spiritual danger of fasting in the wrong way. That's what this text is about. Jesus warns us what not to do and then tells us what to do instead.

He warns us in verse 16 not to be like the hypocrites: *"Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men."* So the hypocrites are folks who do their spiritual disciplines *"to be seen by men."* This is the reward the hypocrites are after. And who has not felt how rewarding indeed it is to be admired for our discipline or our zeal or our devotion. This is a great reward among men. Few things feel more gratifying to the heart of us fallen people than being made much of for our accomplishments—especially our religious accomplishments.

So Jesus says in the last part of verse 16, *"Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full."* In other words, if that is the reward you aim at in fasting, that is what you will get and that will be all you get. In other words the danger of hypocrisy is that it is so successful. It aims at the praise of men. And it succeeds. But that's all.

### **Why Is This Hypocrisy?**

But let's ask why this is hypocrisy. Here you have religious people. They decide to fast. Instead of concealing that they are fasting they make it plain that they are fasting. Why is that hypocrisy? Why isn't it hypocrisy to fast, but to anoint your hair and wash your face and not let anybody know that you are fasting? Isn't the definition of hypocrisy trying to look on the outside different than you are on the inside? So these religious folks are letting reality show, right? They are the opposite of hypocrites. They fast, and they look like they fast. No sham. Be real. If you fast, look like you fast.

But Jesus calls them hypocrites. Why? Because the heart that motivates fasting is supposed to be a heart for God. That's what fasting means: a heart-hunger for God. But the heart motivating their fasting is a heart for human admiration. So they are being open and transparent about what they are doing, but that very openness is deceptive about what they're feeling. If they wanted to be really open, they would have to wear a sign about their necks that said, "The bottom line reward in my fasting is the praise of men." Then they would not be hypocrites. They would be openly and transparently vain.

So there are two dangers that these fasting folks have fallen into. One is that they are seeking the wrong reward in fasting, namely, the esteem of other people. They love the praise of men. And the other is that they hide this with a pretense of love for God. Fasting means love for God—hunger for God. So with their actions they are saying that they have a hunger for God. But on the inside they are hungry to be admired and approved by other people. That's the god that satisfies them.

### **III. An Alternative Way of Fasting**

In verses 17 and 18 Jesus gives an alternative to this way of fasting—the way he wants it to be done. He says,

*“But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face, so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.”*

Matthew 6:17-18

Now there are all kinds of public fasting in the Bible, including the New Testament, for example, in Acts 13:1–3 and 14:23. If someone finds out you are fasting, you haven't sinned. The value of your fast is not destroyed if someone notices that you have skipped lunch. It is possible to fast with other people—for example: our staff fasting together on a planning retreat to seek the Lord—it is possible to fast like that and NOT to fast "to be seen by men." Being *seen fasting* and *fasting to be seen* are not the same. Being seen fasting is a mere external event. Fasting TO BE SEEN is a self-exalting motive of the heart.

### **A) Jesus' Test of the Reality of God in Our Lives**

So Jesus gives us instruction that will test our hearts. He says to us when we are fasting, don't make any effort to be seen. In fact, make efforts in the other direction—not to be seen. Fix your hair, wash your face so that as far as possible people will not even know that you are fasting.

But he goes beyond this and says, that your goal is to be seen by God not man. *“But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face, so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret.”* Fast to be seen by God in secret.

What Jesus does here is test the reality of God in our lives. O, how easy it is to do religious things if other people are watching—preaching, praying, attending church, reading the Bible, acts of kindness and charity, etc. The reason for this is not only the commendation we might get, but more subtly the sense that the real effectiveness of our spiritual acts is on the horizontal axis among people, not the vertical axis with God. If the kids see me pray at meals, it will do them good. If the staff sees me fast, they may be inspired to fast. If my roommate sees me read my Bible, he may be inspired to read his. In other words, we feel that the value of our devotion is the horizontal effect it has on others as they see us.

Now that's not all bad. But the danger is that all of our life starts to be justified and understood simply on the horizontal level for the effects it can have because others see it happening. And so God can become a secondary Person in the living of our lives. We think that he is important because all these things are the kinds of things he wants us to do. But he himself is falling out of the picture as the focus of it all.

So Jesus tests our hearts to see if God himself will be our sufficiency—when nobody else knows what we are doing. When no one is saying, "How are you getting on with the fast?" No one even knows—no one but God! Jesus is calling for a radical orientation on God himself. He is pushing us to have a real, utterly authentic, personal relationship with God. If God is not real to you, it will be miserable to endure something difficult with God as the only one who knows. It

will all seem very pointless, very inefficient because the whole range of horizontal possibilities will be nullified because no one knows what you are experiencing. All that matters is God and who he is and what he thinks and what he will do.

## **B) Jesus' Promise to Those Whose Focus Is God**

Which brings us to the last part of verse 18 and the promise Jesus makes about what God will do for those who focus vertically on him and do not need the praise of other people to make their devotion worthwhile. He says, "And your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

The word "repay" in the NASB (New American Standard Bible) is probably a little too mercenary. It seems to suggest a business deal: We do the work of fasting and God pays up with wages. That is not necessarily implied in the word that simply means "give back" or "make a return." In some places it may be money. In others it may be justice. In others it may be God's gracious response to an act of faith and prayer. That's what it is here, I believe.

God sees us fasting. He sees that we have a deep longing that is pulling us to fast. He sees that our heart is not seeking the ordinary pleasures of human admiration and applause. He sees that we are acting not out of strength to impress others with our discipline, but out of weakness to express to God our need and our great longing that he would act. And when he sees this, he responds. He acts. We have seen him acting in these last weeks of fasting in some remarkable ways. People who have been hard to the gospel opening up. People closed off to reconciliation opening up. People long lukewarm and indifferent awakening to the greatness of God and their salvation.

## **C) What Is the "Reward" Jesus Promises?**

But what is the "repayment" or the "reward" that Jesus promises from the Father here? Might it be "the praise of men"? We would make a dupe out of God if we tried to use him in some roundabout way to get what we really want instead of him, the praise of men. That's not the reward he gives.

Might it be money? The very next verse (v. 19) warns against laying up treasures on earth (whether God gives them or not) and says to lay up treasures in heaven—where there is no earthly currency except faith and love.

No, the best place to find out the reward of our fasting is to look here in the Sermon on the Mount. For example, the prayer that Jesus just taught us to pray in Matthew 6:9–13 begins with **three main longings: that God's name be hallowed or revered, that his kingdom come, that his will be done on earth the way it's done in heaven. That is the main reward God gives for our fasting. We fast out of longing for God's name to be known and cherished and honored, and longing for his rule to be extended and then consummated in history, and longing for his will to hold sway everywhere with the same devotion and energy that the inexhaustible angels show sleeplessly in heaven forever and ever.**

For sure he gives us many, many specific things through fasting. And it is not wrong to seek specifically for his help in every area of our lives through fasting. **But these three petitions: hallowing his name, seeking his kingdom, and doing his will—these give the test to see if all the other things we long for are expressions of these.** Do we want our sons and daughters saved because this would hallow God's name? Do we want North Korea to open for the sake of the advance of the kingship of Jesus? Do we want upright leaders in government because God's holy, revealed will for his creation is at stake? Do we want Bethlehem revived and awakened with divine power and love and joy because it glorifies the name of God and advances his kingdom and brings about his will?

This is what Jesus is calling us to—a radically God-oriented fasting. So for the sake of your own soul, and in response to Jesus, and for the advancement of the kingdom of God's great saving purpose to glorify his name, join the "Fasting Forty" and fix your hair, and wash your face, and let the Father who sees in secret see you open your heart of yearning to him with fasting. The Father who sees in secret is brimming with rewards for your joy and for his glory.

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