

40 Days of Prayer and Fasting

October 15th

Daily Devotional #15

We Are in the Season of Cleansing

Here we are, day five of the Season of Cleansing, day fifteen of our 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting. My prayer is that all of our prayer lives have increased by double or triple or more, and that's GOD's creative power is beginning His transforming and sanctifying (making us more and more holy) work in us – as individuals and as the Family of GOD called Western Hills.

As promised, today I continue in sharing “wisdom from people” – today's wisdom is from Lawrence Ragan.

As you read Lawrence's thoughts, consider how gutturally honest and open his comments/reflections are. This is *exactly* how we are to approach GOD as we fast, or as we serve Him, or as we wrestle with Him in our daily walk with Him! GOD wants our complete honesty – the joys, the pains, the sorrows, the fears, the triumphs, the defeats, the learnings, the disappointments – *all of it!*

This idea of complete honesty and transparency is one of the things that continues to haunt me about the Prodigal Son parable (Luke 15). Neither son holds back his honest feelings, actions, and reactions. One is coming from a place of extreme humility and true repentance. The other is coming from a place of almost “rote” obedience and anger borne out of a very human need for a perceived unmet recognition/acceptance/appreciation. The Father in this parable treated both with great respect, great love, and, quite miraculously in both cases, great favor!

That is the GOD we serve! He longs for our honesty and transparency! He deeply desires the deepest parts of our hearts, our emotions, our thinking... even when they are not “right on target!”

Why? Why would GOD care about what we think or feel? Why would the ONE who knows the absolute right and wrong, best and worst of any and every situation care about what we, what anyone, thinks or feels?

Why??? Because He deeply loves us, and as our Heavenly, Eternal Father, He loves us with great compassion and commitment. Our honesty is safe with Him. Our transparency is protected with Him. Our belonging is rock-solid in His perfect love and compassion for us. He is GOD. He is Good. And He is our place to run to, to rest in, to heal in, to grow in.

GOD invites us to honesty. Remember, His love endures forever. And in that honesty, He can work His transforming, sanctifying, beautifying Spirit in us.

That's what I love about Lawrence's experience and reflections. He didn't have fun. It was more miserable than pleasurable. But he stuck to his commitment to his Church Family (aka: GOD-Family) and completed his fast. And in that honesty and commitment, GOD was able – even in the suffering – to move, to work, to create something beautiful.

Read Lawrence's reflections and be blessed. I know Heaven was cheering him on throughout his fast, and then exploded in a standing (or perhaps flying!) ovation at the blessing that honesty in suffering brought through our creative GOD's gentle, understanding, perfect love.

Thoughts from Jim shall follow tomorrow... *df*

(The following is an email from Lawrence Regan, used by permission, dated October 5th. Lawrence is honestly reflecting on his fast from October 2nd)

Hi, Danny,

I ate the meal Wednesday evening, and began my fast then. Breakfast is my main meal, so I began feeling effects mid-morning on Thursday. My experience was disappointing in many respects -- I found myself a bit disoriented, dizzy a times, and unable to concentrate on tasks. I started through the study sheet I picked up Wednesday evening, but got lost, as I could not remember where I was, even though I was working in sequence. I had a bad headache. I was afraid to operate machinery, so my usual work around our place was put on hold.

The most positive aspect of my fast was a deeper appreciation of the plight of folks who are hungry by necessity instead of choice. Alecia and I have worked in several organizations and efforts to feed the less fortunate for most of our married lives. We currently work with Dripping Springs Helping Hands. The work had become boring and somewhat burdensome, but fasting fixed that.

When I sat down to the meal that Alecia had prepared to end my fast, the usually somewhat perfunctory "blessing" prayer thanking God for the food, was no longer perfunctory, but heartfelt. I hope to continue in this way.

Thanks,

Lawrence