

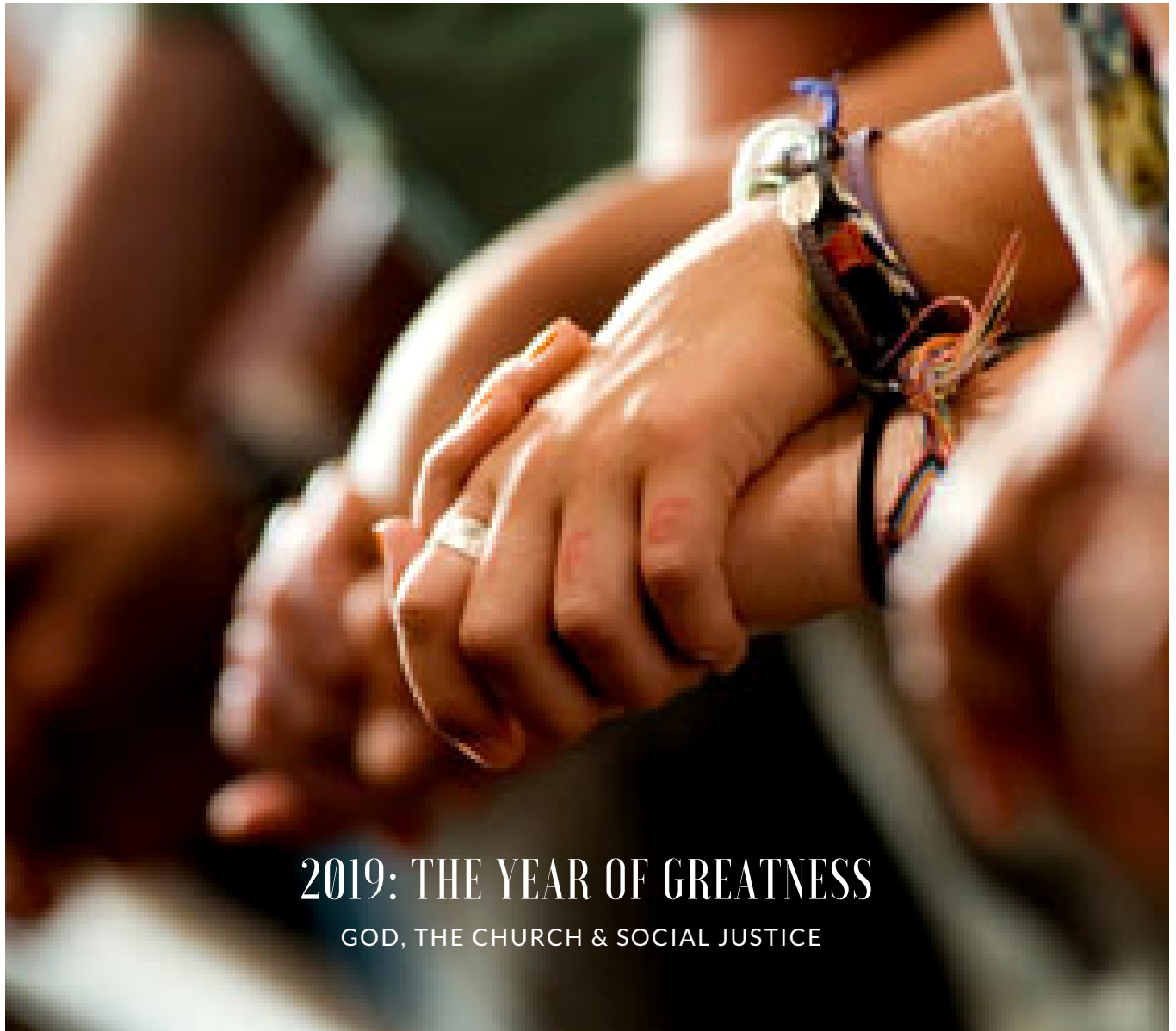
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2019: THE YEAR OF GREATNESS

GOD, THE CHURCH & SOCIAL JUSTICE

FORWARD

Bishop Melvin Williams, Jr.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN SOCIAL JUSTICE

In the days of past, the clarion call and mission of the black church was two-fold: it served as a beacon of hope for the lost-soul seeking grace and mercy, but it also functioned as a oasis for all issues affecting the community. The black church served as a voice in the wilderness, crying out the equality and justice belonged to all persons, despite race, social status, or lived experience. The church operated as a twenty-four-hour, full service institution, affecting change spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and socially.

Above all else, the black church must return to its first love; the social, compassionate, and liberating gospel of Jesus the Christ. The black church must focus on living the commission of compassion, while continuing to preach a message of freedom, justice, equality, and hope for all persons from all walks of life. It cannot become so entangled with a message of riches that overlooks the crucial issues of daily life--deteriorating education, unaffordable housing, rising unemployment, marginal healthcare, and several others.

During this season of fasting, praying, and consecrating, let's travail on behalf of the social ills of this land. The Bible says: Matthew 17:21 (KJV) "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." and in Mark 9:29 (KJV) "And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." There are some situations that are not going to change until the people of God fast and pray. 2 Chronicles 7:14 (KJV) states: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." Our land needs to be healed. It is up to God's people to provoke that healing through prayer and fasting.

Let us take thee 40-days and seek the face of God for change in the upheavals of this land. we are the ones that are responsible for praying for those who cannot pray for themselves. Social injustice is at the epicenter of governance in our country. Only god can correct these wrongs. We must seek him to do just that.

God bless you!

Bishop Melvin Williams, Jr.

WHAT IS FASTING?

Not only do most Christians neglect the discipline of fasting, many do not know the true meaning of fasting or how or why we should fast. Fasting is a voluntary and deliberate abstinence from food for the purpose of concentrated prayer. So many of us abstain from food but forget our primary purpose is to pray. Keep in mind that a fast is a means by which our prayers may be more focused. When we fast, God responds to our sincerity and willingness to humble ourselves. His mercy and grace are released by the voluntary humbling and afflicting of the soul in the individual.

Are your motives pure? When we begin our fast, we should never fast to impress others or for selfish reasons. We should have a proper mental attitude. The fast is not a punishment, even though our bodies may rebel at first. Fasting should be viewed as a precious opportunity to get closer to the Lord and not allowing ourselves to be distracted by the daily concern of eating.

Devotion to God is our purist motive behind fasting. This motivation is what separates the godly person from the “good” or “kind” person. The Prophet Isaiah learned the judgments of God in his spirit as he sought the Lord early in the morning. I have learned that the wisdom of God that comes to me in my early morning devotions allows me to be more effective. It only takes me a few minutes to know what God wants for me in each situation.

I don't have to spend days judging a matter because I have the mind of Christ. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. (Isaiah 26:9)

Our devotional time must not only include prayer, but also personal bible reading. We must read the Bible to be spiritually nourished for our own hearts. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11). God can speak to us from the Scripture if we give Him the opportunity.

The morning hours find our minds clear from all of the conflicts of the day, therefore, we are capable of receiving His direction and instruction that can come from His Holy Word. This means that we must fast and pray not out of tradition or routine but out of your devotion to God which will result in a life that is pleasing to Him.

PREREQUISITES

OF FASTING

FORGIVENESS: If we have been wronged by others, we must forgive even when we don't feel like it. Forgiving a person who has wronged you releases the Holy Spirit to bring conviction to the one who is causing you the problem. Our heavenly Father knows the intentions and motives of the heart. Without forgiveness, fasting is a waste. Don't let pride keep you from obeying God's Word. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matt 6:14-15)

FASTING AND GIVING: One of the fundamental lessons that we continue to learn is that we cannot out-give God! The body of Christ today needs an army of people who are so committed to the Lord that "sacrificial giving" becomes a way of life. God's Law of Reciprocity works! The Word of God says: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." Keep Luke 6:38 fervent in your hearts this year and watch God move miraculously. This passage shows how seriously the Lord God takes a matter of giving. If we want to release the super-abundance of the Kingdom of Heaven, we must first give. His principle will not fail, but we must execute it.

We encourage you to sow your gift this year of \$2019 or \$219 into the kingdom. Do this as an act of faith during this season of prayer and consecration.

Fasting Instructions

Esther Fast (FIRST 3 DAYS) March 6-8

To break all addictions, habits, and bondage (alcohol, drugs, nicotine, food, lust, etc.), the first three days we will ABSTAIN from ALL SOLID FOOD to starve out addiction toxins from every cell of the body. Only water is permitted. Toxins will be released from the body by channels of elimination. *If you choose not to do the Esther fast, please follow phase one instructions below.

PHASE ONE (FIRST 30 DAYS) March 6-April 4

During the first phase of the fast, you will skip breakfast and lunch and will fast from MIDNIGHT TO DINNER. Remember to drink plenty of water. If you feel any weakness or dizziness, a glass of fruit or vegetable juice is permitted. This is normal because the body is ridding itself of stored -up toxins. During dinner, ABSTAIN from eating pork, red meats, and desserts. Avoid drinking soda and coffee.

PHASE TWO (LAST 10 DAYS) April 5-14

During phase two, continue to fast from midnight to dinner. ABSTAIN from consuming ALL MEATS including fish, seafood, chicken, poultry, pork, and red meats until the fast ends on April 14th.

Getting Started

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

1. **PRAY.** Begin praying for your fast a week before it begins. Ask the Lord to reveal any unconfessed sin, un-forgiveness, or rebellion. When He reveals it to you (and He will), confess your sin quickly and repent. Make a verbal commitment to the Lord and allow God to get your heart ready for what He wants to do in your life and during this time of fasting.
2. **READ** bible verses on fasting. Study passages in the Bible that have to do with fasting so that you may gain insight on people who fasted, the ways God responded to their prayers, and what God requires of His people on a fast. Suggested passages are Isaiah 58, 2 Chron. 20:1-4, Ezra 8:21-23, Neh. 1:1-4, Est. 4:15-17, and Matt. 4:1-11.
3. Use your 2018 TOJ fasting and devotional journal. Your journal provides valuable information regarding your fast. Use it to document corporate prayer requests, praises, and answers to your prayer. You will also record what the Lord shows you through His Word.
4. Write down your personal prayer requests; bring them to the altar. What do you want God to do during your fast? Write down your primary reasons for fasting. Record your personal prayer requests in your journal.

PHYSICAL PREPARATION

Start cutting back on restricted foods about two weeks before the fast begins if you can. Reduce your intake of caffeine, meat, dairy, sugar, and processed foods. This will help your body adjust to the fast and help reduce the severity of any unpleasant side effects. Also, increase your water consumption as you prepare to fast. The key to success during the fast is proper planning. It saves time and limits the frustration in having to decide what to eat.

Prayer is essential during the entire 40 days of the fast. We strongly recommend that you choose a prayer partner and set a prayer schedule.

Each morning, wash your face and anoint your head with the blessed oil. Read your daily scriptures and devotions and follow your fasting instructions.

Remember to abstain from the following during the fast:

- Sugar and sweeteners
- Alcohol
- Meat and animal products (including eggs and dairy)
- Deep-fried foods
- Caffeine
- Refined and processed food
- All solid fats
- Leavened breads (anything made with yeast, baking soda, baking powder, etc.) and baked goods.

Daily Scriptures

Jeremiah 22:3 (KJV)—Day 1

Thus, saith the Lord; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.

Proverbs 31:9 (KJV)—Day 2

Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

Micah 6:8 (KJV)—Day 3

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Psalms 82:3 (KJV)—Day 4

Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.

Luke 4:18 (KJV)—Day 5

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

Isaiah 58:6 (KJV)—Day 6

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

1 John 3:17 (KJV)—Day 7

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

Psalms 19:1 (KJV)—Day 8

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

Psalms 27:14 (KJV)—Day 9

Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.

Psalms 27:4 (KJV)—Day 10

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.

Isaiah 12:2 (KJV)—Day 11

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

Matthew 17:21 (KJV)—Day 12

Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Joel 2:12 (KJV)—Day 13

Therefore, also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.

Psalms 32:7 (KJV)—Day 14

Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

Psalms 122:7 (KJV)—Day 15

Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.

1 Peter 2:24 (KJV)—Day 16

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Acts 10:38 (KJV)—Day 17

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

Philippians 4:6 (KJV)—Day 18

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Philippians 4:7 (KJV)—Day 19

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 5:7 (KJV)—Day 20

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Colossians 3:15 (KJV)—Day 21

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

1 Samuel 25:6 (KJV)—Day 22

And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast.

Romans 5:8 (KJV)—Day 23

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us

Psalms 28:7 (KJV)—Day 24

The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.

Psalms 35:28 (KJV)—Day 25

And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long.

Jude 1:24 (KJV)—Day 26

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Philippians 3:13 (KJV)—Day 27

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.

Philippians 1:6 (KJV)—Day 28

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Luke 4:7 (KJV)—Day 29

If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

John 4:23 (KJV)—Day 30

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

Psalms 96:9 (KJV)—Day 31

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

Luke 4:18-19 (KJV)—Day 32

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has set me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'

John 16:33 (KJV)—Day 33

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

2 Thessalonians 3:16 (KJV)—Day 34

Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.

Isaiah 26:3 (KJV)—Day 35

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

John 14:26 (KJV)—Day 36

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

John 14:27 (KJV)—Day 37

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

John 19:17 (KJV)—Day 38

And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

Colossians 4:2 (KJV)—Day 39

Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

John 12:13 (KJV)—Day 40

Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.