

The Tennessee Tribune

Volume 22, No. 10, 3 Sections

THURSDAY, March 10-16, 2011

\$1.00

The Significance of Fasting During the Season of Lent *A Commentary by Jason Curry*



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Biblical scholars have informed us that the rituals of fasting (e.g., refraining from eating a meal for a day) is a spiritual discipline that has been historically associated with the season of Lent for several centuries. Even today, it is not uncommon to hear someone say that they are going to fast or "give up something" for Lent. Jesus discusses the significance of fasting in Matthew 4:1-11. Jesus' discussion takes place early in his public ministry. He had not yet begun the task of calling his first disciples, and many of his miracles, which concerned the masses of the people, had not taken place yet. The text informs of us that Jesus was in the wilderness, and biblical scholars have suggested that this may not have been a physical wilderness with trees and wild animals, but rather a psychological, emotional or spiritual wilderness in which he and devil were present. However,

independent of its geographic distinctions, what we do know is that Jesus was alone, and not in the company of his disciples. From this particular passage of scripture, we also may also determine that Jesus used the spiritual resource of fasting to withstand the temptations of the devil. The second verse of the scripture says: "And he fasted for forty days and forty-nights, and afterwards he was hungry."

If we are going to be successful in dealing with this evil called temptation (e.g., the temptation to use drug, to steal or the lie), we've got to prepare for it before it even comes. One of the best ways to prepare for the act of being tempted is to pray and fast. One may ask: "Well how exactly do prayer and fasting work?" Prayer and fasting are two of the many mysteries of the gospel that have not yet been revealed in their fullness to us. However, in the ninth chapter of the

book of Mark, when the disciples were unable to cast out the demon from the boy, Jesus said: "this can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."

The church, the family, the institution that prays together stays together. As we enter the season of Lent, in preparation, for Easter, let us remember to make the time to pray and fast. Perhaps, Horatio Palmer better captured this idea about praying and fasting to overcome temptation when he wrote: "Yield not to temptation, for yielding in sin, Each victory will help you, some other to win, Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue, Look every to Jesus, He will carry you through"

Ask the Savior to help you, Comfort strengthen and keep you, He is willing to aid you, He will carry you through."