

Dear Family,

May you all have a **joyful New Year** in the covenant mercy of our good God!

Thank you, again to everyone who assisted and attended with our Candlelight Service; we were all truly blessed as the Lord chose to bless. May we see much more of this in 2009. With over 130 in attendance, it was a very encouraging time of worship and fellowship. Several persons commented to me that they were delighted in the overt sense of glory and reverence in that service. I say "Amen" and plead with our Sovereign King for more of the same.

We are planning **another community service** for the week before **Easter**. I will let you know more as information is available. Please start praying for this to another witness of the majesty of the Prince of Peace.

It's not too late to consider some **specific resolutions** as we enter 2009. I URGE YOU TO MAKE THIS EFFORT. Resolutions help keep us focused on what we have determined to be central and foremost. If you have not read Jonathan Edward's resolutions, you can find them here:

<http://www.apuritansmind.com/ChristianWalk/ResolutionsOfJonathanEdwards.htm>

I hope you are embracing the opportunity for our **community fast**. PLEASE make this a personal fast, tailored to draw you near to our Savior. Experiment, tweak, persevere, GROW. I will rarely ask you about your fast because I know the devil quickly would twist my inquiry to slanderous labels such as Bob is the "fast nazi". NOTHING could be farther from the truth. I love you all and desire that you would embrace the ways of God and the love of God. Sometime we have to say no to good things in order to focus on and enjoy greater things. If you fall off the horse, get back on. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Let us appeal to God for a revival and great awakening! There is such desperate need.

John Piper wrote a marvelous book on fasting. Below are some brief excerpts.

Hungering and Thirsting for God: Fasting

Bread magnifies Christ in two ways: by being eaten with gratitude for his goodness, and by being forfeited out of hunger for God himself. When we eat, we taste the emblem of our heavenly food - the Bread of Life. And when we fast we say, "I love the Reality above the emblem." In the heart of the saint both eating and fasting are worship. Both magnify Christ. Both send the heart - grateful and yearning - to the Giver. Each has its appointed place and each has its danger. The danger of eating is that we fall in love with the gift; the danger of fasting is that we belittle the gift and glory in our will-power. (*A Hunger for God*, p. 21)

Joy in God is the strength to walk with Jesus from the wilderness to the cross and into eternal life. But maintaining that joy against its most subtle and innocent rivals is a lifelong struggle. And in that struggle fasting, the humble, hungry handmaid of faith is an emissary of grace. She comes to every fast with the same words: "Though the fig tree should not blossom . . . and the fields produce no food, yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." [Habakkuk 3:17

<<http://bible.logos.com/passage/esv/Habakkuk%203.17>>] (*A Hunger for God*, p. 64)

Fasting is peculiarly suited to glorify God. It is fundamentally an offering of emptiness to God in hope. It is a sacrifice of need and hunger. It says, by its very nature, "Father, I am empty, but you are full. I am hungry, but you are the Bread of Heaven. I am thirsty, but you are the Fountain of Life. I am weak, but you are strong. I am poor, but you are rich. I am foolish, but you are wise. I am broken, but you are whole. I am dying, but your steadfast love is better than life." When God sees this confession of need and this expression of trust, he acts, because the glory of his all-sufficient grace is at stake. The final answer is that God rewards fasting because fasting expresses the cry of the heart that nothing on the earth can satisfy our souls besides God. God must reward this cry because God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. (*A Hunger for God*, pp. 180-181, John Piper)

And dear family, remember the promise of the Captain of our Salvation:

"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "Return to Me with all your heart, And **with fasting**, weeping and mourning; And **rend your heart** and not your garments." Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in loving-kindness And relenting of evil. Joel 2:12-13

<<http://bible.logos.com/passage/esv/Joel%202.12-13>>

This Lord's Day evening we will start our **new Bible Study** as we turn to the **1st Samuel**, chapter 1-5. I am very excited about the history portion of the Old Testament; it is FULL of wonderful displays of God's power, faithfulness, and glory.

Please pray for the Lord's Day worship and fellowship. May our Redeemer make His praise glorious.

Also, pray for **Bill and Peggy Schade** who have been visiting with us; may we be a blessing to them.

And, for **Fitz and Ann Caudle** who are on a two week vacation and cruise! (but I'm not bitter!) Pray for safety, rest, and that they would be faithful ambassadors for Christ every step of the way. . . even if that step is toward the midnight buffet on the lido deck!!!

Happy Birthday Ben Coggins who is 14 (Okay, make that **4**, but the time is passing quickly Steve and Alison, just look at Will!)

With much love and thanksgiving,

iBob