



FAST FOCUS
Fasting Instructions

WE WILL FAST WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017
FROM 6AM TO 12 NOON

PLEASE DEVOTE THIS TIME TO READING YOUR BIBLE AND
PRAYER AS TIME PERMITS

We will observe the fast by abstaining from FOODS EXCEPT WATER, JUICE AND FRUIT

Please consult your physician if you are insulin dependent, an expectant or nursing mother or if you have a pre-existing medical condition. While fasting is a spiritually fulfilling exercise, God would not command a physical exercise that would harm His people physically or emotionally.

We Only Make Itineraries; God Makes Plans
Jeremiah 29:11

We spend a great portion of our days, scribbling notes to ourselves - making notations of meetings to attend, errands to run, purchases to make and the like. Many of us have mastered the craft of making sure every scheduled date is listed with a full itinerary on our walls or cell phone calendars and we even send reminders to ourselves as well as others of upcoming events. In doing so, we place expectations on ourselves as well as others to be on time and to follow the itinerary to the letter.

We call ahead to the proprietor of the nail salon, the beauty shop and the barber shop to make sure the chair is open for us when we arrive at our scheduled appointment time. We arrive at the doctor's office with an itinerary already in motion regarding our activities upon our departure from the doctor's visit. We run, run, run and plan, plan, plan until we are exhausted.

We decide our extended futures in the same manner and mistakenly call them our "life plans." However, oftentimes with all of our planning and arranging, we end up with botched plans and constant readjustments. Our carefully mapped out itineraries are often turned upside down by failed relationships, illness, or other obstacles. Our little cart is turned upside down as that

perfect, neatly planned itinerary is left in shreds. It is then we quickly arrive at the conclusion that all we can make are itineraries and it is God who makes plans.

What do we do? We become frustrated, upset, and often discombobulated. Have we ever stopped to realize, this plan that I have made may not be such a good itinerary after all? On the other hand, have we thought the greater power, God who knows all things, knows something of which we have no clue? Perhaps, there is a greater plan that will work better for us in the long run.

In Psalm 31:15a, King David was talking to God and penned the words, "My times are in your hands."

The passage in Jeremiah 29:11 is usually one that gives us a great feeling of what God has planned for us. It is usually viewed through a lens of positivity. It is seen as the beginning of big plans for us and we will experience only good times. Colloquially, we back it up by saying, "It gets greater later." While this is true, the rearrangement of our itineraries often gives us the feeling of being left out of planning our lives or not being in control of our lives.

This passage in Jeremiah finds God's chosen ones, the Israelites in Judah, residing in the Promised Land. They were many years away from the awful period of bondage in Egypt. They had fought and had been granted victory on numerous occasions as God's chosen people. Thus, one would imagine they could have easily established "itineraries" of living a life of ease and making long range plans for future years. However, looking closely, this passage falls in the middle of God's pronounced judgment of Judah. It is the impending punishment of seventy years of captivity of Judah because of their disobedience - their acts of idolatry.

However, even in their disobedient behavior, God yet had compassion for them despite the necessity to punish them. Exodus 34:7 explains the Lord is "compassionate and gracious" but it also reminds us, "Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished..."

God being a covenant-keeping God, was still looking out for His chosen ones. Although God would pronounce judgment, it would adequately be seasoned with His grace and mercy. God may have rearranged any itinerary they had developed, but He forever would allow them to come to the wonderful plan that was initially in place for them.

With this in mind, whenever our plans are thwarted or totally rearranged, and it seems painful and unfair to us, we should always know that God's love for us is forever. Sometimes our plans may not be in line with the plans that God has for us. Other times, we may deter from God's ways or have impure motives. We sometimes make itineraries for our lives based on our limited thinking with no consideration given to our past behavior or how our future actions may impact others. When this occurs, we are to be reminded that we must be held accountable and often accountability accompanies discipline. Discipline is usually uncomfortable and can be painful.

Hebrews 12:11 tells us, “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” Just like the chosen people, we are His adopted children and we too make itineraries based on limited information that is often out of sync or uncoordinated with God’s plans. As a result, God’s plans will override our itineraries and they are always plans that are best for us.

Reflections and Plan of Action:

1. Over the next week, look back on your life and recall the itineraries that you have made for yourself.
2. Look at the ones which were successfully carried out and the ones that did not go out as planned or totally failed.
3. Consider your behavior and your motives prior to the itinerary being made and ask yourself, “Did my life line up with God’s precepts? Was it a selfish itinerary and how would it have affected others?”

Prayer:

Dear God, you are the one who knows my thoughts from afar off. Dear God, you are the one from whom I cannot hide. I ask you to forgive all my sins and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. I ask you to take my thoughts and let them be pure. Help to think of others more than I think of myself. Help to realize that I can only make itineraries and you make plans for me. Help me to surrender my thoughts and my will to you. Help me to desire the things which will bring glory to you, for it is you only who is to receive glory and praise. Help me to trust you with my whole heart. Moreover, help me to realize that whenever you change my itinerary, you have a better plan in mind or it is for my protection and your provision according to your promise. I will be careful to give you all the glory. It is in the name of Jesus, that I pray, Amen.

Scripture References:

Jeremiah 29:11, Psalm 31:15a, Exodus 34:7, Hebrews 12:11, Psalm 139

Submitted by Pastor Nadolyn Woody-Dunigan