

Home Group notes for the week following Sunday 15th March 2015

LENT 1V : "TAKE ON" , ? TRANSFORMATION

As We Gather

True worship is more than religious ritual, attending church, listening to / reading Scripture and acts of self-sacrifice. Love for God and love for neighbour are two sides of the same coin.

Reading Scripture **ISAIAH 58 : 1 – 7 (12)** **MATTHEW 6 : 16 - 18**

Thinking together

God wants a vital relationship with His people

What comprises a vital relationship with God? Discuss

God is not deceived by the outward show of an empty religion, with no heart of obedience and life of consistency. Genuine penitence and faith are seen in terms of justice and caring love [Micah 6:8].

True worship comprises acts of self-sacrifice done quietly and unobtrusively - giving, prayer, forgiveness, fasting and use of wealth, all done with the right motive

What is the 'right' motive? Discuss

Fasting has always been an essential part of religious life in the east. In the time of Jesus there was only one compulsory fast – on the Day of Atonement [Leviticus 16:31], although many Jews observed private fasts e.g. connected with mourning.

Generally fasting was considered only to have value if part of / evidence of repentance, being an outward expression of an inward sorrow [Judges 20:26 & 1 Samuel 7:6]. Fasting was also made use of in preparation for a revelation [Daniel 9:3 & Matthew 4:3].

Fasting is essentially a matter between self and God – a time of going without in order to spend time in prayer

What are the benefits of wise fasting for the disciple? Discuss

Advertising any form of self-denial is an external and false piety (Matthew 6:16-18), without lasting spiritual benefit. Hypocrisy robs us of reality in Christian living. Nothing that is truly spiritual will violate that which God has given us in nature. It is our duty to enjoy God's gifts of beauty and of bounty, not to reject them.

To overcome hypocrisy we need to be honest with God in our secret (inner) life.

What does this statement mean? Discuss

What does 'being honest with God' entail for you? Discuss

In Closing

Fasting for its own sake is valueless. Jesus condemned the practice of fasting which had become an act of spiritual pride and ostentation.

