

Living The Supernatural Life – Part 1: Introduction

1. Eagles and Turkeys: A boy was hiking and saw an eagle's egg roll off of a high cliff and into some bushes. The bushes broke the fall of the egg and it was unharmed. The boy looked at the cliff and knew there was no way for him to climb back up and place the egg in the nest. He came across a wild turkey's nest and placed the eagle's egg in the nest. The eagle hatched along with the turkeys. He was raised with the turkeys, which do not fly very far or very fast and only get a bit off the ground. One day two eagles soared over head. The young eagle watched them and asked a turkey, "Why can they fly so high and we barely get off the ground?" The turkey answered "because they are eagles and we are turkeys." And so the eagle, who was raised as a turkey, lived as a turkey and never soared as high as his wings were designed to carry him.
 - a. The moral of this story is that as Christians, we are living in a world that is made up of turkeys, figuratively speaking, who live by what they can see, feel and touch. Christians are designed to live a supernatural life, a life with its roots in the possibilities of things we cannot see, feel or touch. Our supernatural life, the life of flying high on wings of eagles, is a life that can only be available to one who has that supernatural life WITHIN him. If you are a turkey by nature, you will never fly very high, because you are limited by your nature. But if you are an eagle by virtue of your new birth in Jesus Christ, then you can do far more than you even dreamed! It is your nature! It is your birthright as a child of God to live a life that is supernatural in its basis.
 - b. Too often we settle for the natural life and miss the possibilities of the supernatural life. We get used to living on an explainable plane of existence that consists of what we can see, feel and touch.
 - c. In fact, I think that we get so used to living like turkeys that we forget how to act like eagles!
2. This morning, I am beginning a new sermon series on “**Living the Supernatural Life.**”
 - a. As I mentioned, as Christians, we are destined to live a life rooted in the supernatural life and power of Jesus Christ, and not in our natural strength. But as I look in the mirror, and as I talk with other Christians, I all too often find that we are on the ground, living natural lives instead of living the supernatural lives we were made to live.
 - b. I have to ask why.
 - i. Why do we live so far below our potential?
 - ii. Why do we live as if God is an appendage to our lives instead of our life?
 - iii. How did we get so comfortable with living this way?
 - c. I have several answers for this as well have found several solutions for this problem in God’s word.
3. I think that **the most prominent problem for most Christians is that we have switched to “autopilot” in our relationship with God.**
 - a. I think that most of us have daily patterns of behavior, routines of conduct, and that we miss out on the freshness of life because we are caught in a rut.
 - i. I read this week a story about Mark Spitz, who would still be the #1 gold medallist (compared to Michael Phelps), but in his first Olympics in 1964, he slacked off, and didn’t put his all into winning. He only won two medals that year. The next Olympics, he gave it his all and won 7 gold medals. He now does motivational speaking and says that most people give less than 80% effort and thereby never become exceptional.
 - ii. We settle for un-exceptional because it is easy, comfortable and the costs don’t seem too high. But there is no reward – at all for an unexceptional life. No crown. Just burnt up treasures at the end of our lives.
 - b. It is sometimes easier to remain in a rut in the road than it is to climb out of it, because of the effort involved. And it is easier to get into a rut than it is to stay outside of it, because you can’t follow someone else’s rut. You make your own path.

- c. And as a church, we go through the motions of worship each week. It seems that it is easy to fall into a rut if we follow any pattern for very long.
 - d. One of the values for our **worship services** at Here's Hope Baptist Church **is that they would be corporate celebrations of God's supernatural work in our daily lives.**
 - i. Did you catch the nuance in that description? Corporate celebrations of GOD's SUPERNATURAL WORK in our DAILY lives!
 - ii. Yet, how supernatural has your DAILY life been lately?
 - iii. Our church has a great testimony time every Sunday morning, yet the testimonies have become shorter and less God-Centered the longer we have done them.
 - iv. I have to believe that this reflects our own personal relationship with God.
 - v. I am not saying that every testimony should be of a healing or a salvation...but we certainly should be hearing more of those kind of testimonies!
 - 1. Here is what I am NOT saying... ***"if you don't have a powerful testimony, don't share anything."*** That isn't what I said...if God touched you, share it, because it is big to you!
 - 2. But this is what I AM saying: ***"if you rarely or never have a powerful testimony, seek God more intimately so that He can produce one IN and THROUGH you!"***
 - e. **This autopilot attitude extends into every area of our lives.**
 - i. It will reveal itself in our tepid prayer lives, the amount of scripture we read, and the frequency that we have "spiritual conversations" with others.
 - ii. We don't fix it by trying harder...we fix it by seeking God's face.
4. In Ephesians 1:17-20 The Apostle Paul writes, *"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms"*,
- a. Have you experienced that "incomparably great power" lately? Why do you think you haven't?
 - b. I read this week that **"Because there are so few supernatural experiences in the church today, most believers have come to not expect them.**
 - i. Once supernatural experiences were the norm for the church, but now they are the rare exception.
 - ii. **"We settle for no supernatural experience because we want to play safe!" However, God has invited us to come boldly to His throne (a place of supernatural encounter).**
 - iii. When I read in Acts Chapter 4, where Peter and John healed a man who had been sick...I see a group of religious folks get all upset because something supernatural occurred in their midst.
 - iv. Peter and John said *"We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard"*.
 - v. I find this an interesting correspondence to the day in which we live.
 - 1. Do we see and hear only the natural or the supernatural?
 - 2. Would we celebrate the supernatural or would we be its first and loudest critics (like the religious rulers were)?
5. Are you a born again Christian? If so it is not enough to be what you are naturally. **If you do not regularly exceed your natural abilities then you are not living out the Christian life!**
- a. I didn't say, "if you don't see people healed or perform miracles"...I said, if you do not exceed your natural abilities, then you aren't living the Christian life, you are living the natural life.
 - b. We are called to live a spiritually centered life, one that is focused upon the power and ability of God and not our own. Yet, our lives rarely if ever, reflect that reality.

6. Here is where I am going with this:
- a. In about a month, on September 20th, our church will be joining together for a day (24 hrs) of fasting and prayer. The primary purpose of this time of fasting and prayer is to hear God clearly concerning what He desires to do through our church in 2009.
 - i. We believe that it will be through the unified and humbled seeking of God's face by our congregation and leaders that we will be able to hear God most clearly and be used by Him in a supernatural way to transform our community.
 - b. There is a secondary purpose to this fast as well: **It is to break our autopilot!**
 - i. We need to crush, destroy, throw away and do away with the autopilot that we live on and move back to living day by day, moment by moment, in dependence and sensitivity and in the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. Dave Griffith used to be a pilot...he used an autopilot on long trips. I guarantee he didn't fly with that autopilot on when he was in turbulence or when trying to take off or land! Neither should we.
 - c. At our last Leadership Meeting and during our most recent Church Business Meeting, the church voted to press forward and to do this day of fasting and prayer.
 - i. It will begin at Noon on Saturday, Sept. 20th and end after worship service on Sunday with a pot luck lunch.
 - ii. I will tell you more about the worship service later, but I will be focusing on the value and use of fasting for the Christian as a tool for living in the supernatural life between now and then. I will explain how to fast and how to hear God over the next few weeks. But for right now, lets look at why do a fast!

7. So why do a fast?

- a. **Fasting reveals our hearts:** Fasting is a brief, voluntary experience of deprivation to reveal what is in our hearts. When we experience this "going without," the Lord reveals what is in our hearts.
 - i. What are we controlled by? It will be made clear by a fast.
 - ii. Richard Foster says, "More than any other single discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us."
 - iii. We cover up what is inside us with food and other good things, but in fasting these things surface.
 1. If pride controls us, it will be revealed almost immediately.
 2. Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, fear—if they are within us, they will surface during fasting.
 3. At first we will rationalize that our anger is due to our hunger then we know that we are angry because the spirit of anger is within us.
 - iv. What are we slaves to? What are our bottom line passions? These are often revealed by a time of fasting and prayer because fasting is God's testing ground—and healing ground
- b. **A fast will reveal the sincerity of your prayer.** How seriously are you praying for something or someone? How important is that request or person to you? A willingness to do without food for a period of time to open your heart up to be able to pray effectively will reveal your sincerity.
 - i. Jerry Falwell tells this story: Over twenty years ago I was in the hospital in York, Pennsylvania, when I heard that the doctor had asked Kathy Hughes to sign the donation papers for the vital organs because in their medical opinion her husband Charles Hughes was functionally dead. His father, Dr. Robert Hughes, went to the hospital chapel to pray for him, and I got on the phone to ask the entire Thomas Road and Liberty family to pray. I called for a day of prayer and fasting, and today Charles Hughes is alive and pastoring a church in Madison Heights. He has come back from the "figurative dead" to complete his seminary degree, his doctor's degree; and today he works for us at Liberty.
- c. **Fasting is an act of humility.**
 - i. Fasting in its core teaches us to rely on God instead of our selves.

- ii. And the aim of fasting is that we come to rely less on food and more on God himself. That's the meaning of the words in Matthew 4:4, "*Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.*" Every time we fast, we are saying with Jesus, "Not bread alone. But you, Lord. Not bread alone, but you, Lord."
- iii. "In Shansi I found Chinese Christians who were accustomed to spend time in fasting and prayer. They recognized that this fasting, which so many dislike, which requires faith in God, since it makes one feel weak and poorly, is really a Divinely appointed means of grace. Perhaps the greatest hindrance to our work is our own imagined strength; and in fasting we learn what poor, weak creatures we are-dependent on a meal of meat for the little strength which we are so apt to lean upon." Taylor, Hudson
- iv. In 1863 President Lincoln designated April 30th as a day of national humiliation, fasting, and prayer. Let me read a portion of his proclamation on that occasion: "It is the duty of nations, as well as of men, who owe their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by a history that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord. The awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has grown, but we have forgotten God."
- d. **Fasting is key to hearing God clearly.**
 - i. Jesus began his ministry with a fast in Matthew 4:1-2
 - ii. For three days, Jonathan Edwards had not eaten a morsel of food, nor closed his eyes in sleep. Over and over again, he cried out "Oh, God, give me New England Give me New England" Because of his total devotion to Jesus Christ, Edwards was able to preside over the greatest revival in American History. Fasting for the purpose of seeking God first will be rewarded.
 - iii. And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting (they were in touch with God), the Holy Spirit said, "*Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.*" Acts 13:2
- e. **Fasting is vital to the power of God in our lives.**
 - i. Matthew 17:16 is an example of this (that we will cover on another week).

8. How does fasting work?

- a. Fasting is an intentional, humbling act of our outward man to be brought under subjection to our inward, Christ man. It is the intentional denial of our flesh to give rule to the Spirit of God within us.
- b. Prayer is reaching out after the unseen; fasting is letting go of all that is seen and temporal. Fasting helps express, deepen, confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God." Murray, Andrew

9. What fasting is not:

- a. Fasting is not a tool to manipulate God into giving you what you want. If it were, we would all be fit and trim!
 - i. In fact, because the benefits of fasting are so spiritual and invisible, fasting is not really very popular. We don't get immediate results, we don't see big fireworks in the sky, and we don't feel like we accomplished very much.
- b. Fasting doesn't guarantee your prayer will be answered the way you want it.
- c. Fasting can easily lead to hypocrisy, "look at me...I'm fasting!" Jesus warned that if you fast that you be silent about it to everyone else. Don't attention to yourself.
- d. Fasting won't make you spiritual but it will make you hungry.

10. Why call our church to a day of fasting and prayer?
 - a. Because we need to hear God. We need to break our dependence upon the flesh both corporately as well as individually.
 - b. Do you need to join us in this fast? It is strictly voluntary. You should pray about whether God wants you to fast from something during this time. Perhaps you are diabetic or have a medical condition that precludes you from foregoing food for that long. How can you participate? Remember, this is a day of fasting and prayer. You deny your body something it loves (tv., books, chocolate, etc) and instead of doing that activity, you spend the time in prayer and in God's word. You seek His face during your deprivation.
 - c. Generally speaking a single day of fasting will not hurt you as long as you don't have a medical condition like diabetes. We eat out of habit more than need. Our hunger pains are mild for 24 hours, simply reminding us that we do rely upon food to survive.
11. Here is my summary:
 - a. Our church, collectively and individually, is living on the natural level. We have learned over the past 15 weeks of the power of God's grace. Now we need to begin to experience that power on a day by day basis. To do so means we must wake up! We have to get off auto pilot! Fasting and prayer is a great tool to help us do so.
 - b. I believe that participation in this day of fasting and prayer in the month ahead, will be a powerful impetus to our church's life. But I also believe that it can be one of the steps we need to take to turn the corner and become more of what God made us to be.
12. Here is your invitation:
 - a. Will you commit to seeking God's face over the next 5 weeks for the purposes of hearing His voice concerning what He would like to do in and through our church family.
 - b. Will you commit to praying and fasting on the 20th of September. I will share in the upcoming weeks how to do so.
 - c. Will you open your heart up to getting off of autopilot with me? If your answer is yes to any of the these three, I ask you to stand.
 - d. Let's pray.