Restoring the Lost Art of Yielding and Merging

Anyone who drives has been in the situation: Your lane is ending up ahead and you need to merge within the next 200 yards. You put your blinker on and wait for the opportunity to change lanes. But instead of letting you in, the car riding your tail suddenly switches lanes, speeds up and almost runs you off the road—all in an attempt to get ahead of you and shave mere seconds off their commute time.

These days it doesn't take much to get people riled up about the lost art of yielding when it comes to driving. In our me-first culture, where the "have it my way" mantra applies to everything from fast food to checkout lines to highway etiquette, we often forget what it means to give way to others first. Yielding requires patience, humility and deference; it's much easier to push your way through rather than wait for someone else—after all, it's all about who's first, right?

On the road, that attitude results in hundreds of thousands of unnecessary accidents and even deaths each year. But in our faith, the results can be just as fatal. When we fail to yield to God, we set ourselves up for disaster by our pride, which directly opposes the character of God. How many times have you rushed ahead with a decision, only to later regret the outcome and wish you'd waited to ask for God's opinion before acting?

As we grow in our relationship with the Lord, He will increasingly allow us to walk into situations where we have a choice: *Do I go ahead and move, or do I yield and give way to His lordship over my life?* The more we submit to His will in those situations, the more He'll entrust us with. And the more He entrusts us with, the more we'll develop a default position of yieldedness to Him, which mimics the posture of our ultimate model, Jesus.

So how do we do this? How do we become more yielded to God and, in turn, see Him move more in our lives?

The good news is that Christ showed us exactly how: through prayer and fasting. By fasting, we remove distractions and declutter our lives—body, soul and spirit—so we are more attuned to what really matters. Fasting is all about yielding our natural desires for the sake of His desires. Prayer, then, is all about joining with God in conversation. We give way to His voice in our lives by engaging with Him in prayer—listening to what He has to say and talking with Him about the things that move His heart.

In driving, the purpose of yielding extends beyond just giving way; the point is to eventually merge into one lane so that you're in the same lane, going the same way. So it is with yielding to God through prayer and fasting. By themselves, neither is an end goal; the two are merely vehicles so we can merge with God and so become one with Him that we move in the same direction as Him at the same time. Fasting is our yielding to God, and prayer is our merging with Him.

The two are inherently connected, yet the American church in recent generations has developed a mindset that not only sees them as separate, but also regards fasting as if it were an optional, supplementary spiritual discipline, only adopted by a few Jesus freaks. Sadly, most of the church is already feeble enough when it comes to praying. Yet like the tailgating car in a soon-to-end driving lane, we've sped up and tried to bypass the discipline of fasting as well, as if we could somehow move ahead and arrive at our final destination any sooner.

We can't. In fact, Jesus, God's own Son, had every right to "bypass" prayer and fasting while He was on earth, yet He showed us that both are not only important, but also essential to walk in step with the Father. In fact, they are the main spiritual tools with which He empowered us to enact His

kingdom on earth. From Old Testament intercessors such as David, Daniel and Nehemiah to New Testament believers like Anna and the Antioch church, it's clear that the greater the obstacle to ushering in God's kingdom, the greater the need for prayer and fasting.

I believe God is reawakening His people today to the importance of prayer and fasting by putting us in situations in which we have no other option but to cry out to Him with more than just words. Desperate times really do call for desperate measures. And as the darkness and chaos grow around us in this day, we must *desperately* seek the Lord. Yet if we want to make way for God to show up in power in our lives, we have to do more than just give a slight hand signal; we must actively yield to and merge with God through prayer and fasting.

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