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A Spiritual Lesson In Toon Language (And
God Said... XI)

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(In God I Trust And Write)

Series: The Smurfs

Episode: Happy Unhappiness Day To You

Topic: Fasting

I) Opening Prayer

II) Today, we are talking about fasting. In your opinion, what is fasting? Do you do it?

The American Heritage Dictionary States:

I) To abstain from food

II) To eat very little or abstain from certain foods especially as a religious discipline.

III) The act or practice of abstaining from or eating very little food

IV) A period of such abstention or self-denial

We are going to see an episode of the Smurfs where they have a fasting day. The idea here is for one day to abstain from favorite activities and foods.

III) Cartoon Show: **Happy Unhappiness Day To You**

IV) Bible Study And Discussion: **What do you see in this cartoon?** The dictionary isn't always correct. Looking at the Bible would tell us that.

The Bible States:

Isa 58:1 “Shout it aloud, do not hold back.

Raise your voice like a trumpet.

Declare to my people their rebellion
and to the house of Jacob their sins.

Isa 58:2 For day after day they seek me out;

they seem eager to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that does what is

right

and has not forsaken the commands of its
God.

They ask me for just decisions

and seem eager for God to come near them.

Isa 58:3 ‘Why have we fasted,’ they say,

‘and you have not seen it?’

Why have we humbled ourselves,
and you have not noticed?’

“Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as
you please

and exploit all your workers.

Isa 58:4 Your fasting ends in quarreling and
strife,

and in striking each other with wicked fists.

You cannot fast as you do today

and expect your voice to be heard on high.

Isa 58:5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,
only a day for a man to humble himself?

Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed
and for lying on sackcloth and ashes?

Is that what you call a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?

Isa 58:6 “Is not this the kind of fasting I have
chosen:

to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?

Isa 58:7 Is it not to share your food with the
hungry

and to provide the poor wanderer with
shelter—

when you see the naked, to clothe him,
and not to turn away from your own flesh
and blood?

Isa 58:8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

Isa 58:9 Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

“If you do away with the yoke of oppression,
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
Isa 58:10 and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the noonday.

Isa 58:11 The LORD will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land

and will strengthen your frame.

You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.

Isa 58:12 Your people will rebuild the ancient
ruins

and will raise up the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

Isa 58:13 “If you keep your feet from breaking
the Sabbath

and from doing as you please on my holy
day,

if you call the Sabbath a delight

and the LORD'S holy day honorable,

and if you honor it by not going your own
way

and not doing as you please or speaking idle
words,

Isa 58:14 then you will find your joy in the

LORD,

and I will cause you to ride on the heights of
the land

and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.”

The mouth of the LORD has spoken.

The Bible States:

Mt 6:16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

Mt 6:17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,

Mt 6:18 so that it will not be obvious to men

that you are fasting, but only to your Father,

who is unseen; and your Father, who sees

what is done in secret, will reward you.

The Bible States:

Mk 2:18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"

Mk 2:19 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them.

Mk 2:20 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.

Mk 2:21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse.

Mk 2:22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the

skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins.” (If wanted see parallel in

Matthew 9: 14-17; Luke 5: 33-39)

What in our cartoon matches or doesn't match God's take on the subject?

This is my two cents; the cartoon shows what a fast is, not its true God-given purpose. The Smurfs are trying to deny themselves happiness in order not to take it for granted.

A true fast is to get closer to the Lord, to repent of one's sins, and to seek God's face on important matters. All of this should envelop the religious discipline that the Smurfs and Pharisees have here and therefore be out of love and concern, not religion only. However, do you see the miracle inside the Smurfs fast? Perhaps in the cartoon way of things, the writers wanted to show that the Smurfs were praying for their lives to be blessed, so that they could give their lives to God and what

He wants them to do. Notice that Gargamel was trying to use the Smurfs' happiness against them. I think that the fact that all Gargamel found was trouble was a cartoon way of showing God's divine protection to the righteous. So in lieu of this, I am going to use the Smurfs here as a genuinely Christian group that is a little misguided in their religious practice and God honored their efforts in order for them to learn better. This lesson would be helpful to the Smurfs if they were real creatures.

We need to see also that the Smurfs were not very good at their fast in a few cases. Brainy, Greedy, and Smurfette all cheated some on this fast. Why? What have we learned? It looks also as if they were at each other's throats sort of at the end of this cartoon, especially Greedy against Brainy. This cartoon is showing that brute willpower isn't usually enough. That's why we need to pray when we fast for strength in the fast, so we don't cheat. God will not honor half-baked effort in fasting any more than He

honors half-baked followers. In the passages of scripture, we see that the Bible says we are not to keep a sinful lifestyle in the fasting time or anytime. We are not to make a big deal of our fasts like the Pharisees. We are not to quarrel when the fast ends because we throw a pity party having been in minor or significant inconvenience. We are to get closer to God and His will for us using our fasting as a tool with God's grace. We are to help people with problems and other things even inside

these fasting times. I believe that when we fast, one of the things that we need to pray for is salvation for the lost and help for the needy. These are very important. If we follow the Lord and His ways, we will be blessed, but it comes through the one and only Jesus Christ. That's it. Stay devoted to Jesus, the Word, and His ways. If you are not who Jesus wants you to be—a follower of Him and only Him, please do so.

Some Christians may not fast. This looks to be not a mandate for salvation, but it is

effective in acting as a kind of loving
sacrifice and needs to be done right for God
to even look at it as honorable. In what
ways will you ask the Lord for His will and
do you think for you that it includes fasting?

V) Closing Prayer