

Adult Discipleship
Spiritual Disciplines
Week 5: Fasting

Historical Quotes:

“Since then the danger in fasting is so great to those who do not know how they ought to fast, we should learn the laws of this exercise, in order that we may not ‘run uncertainly,’ nor ‘beat the air,’ nor while we are fighting contend with a shadow.” John Chrysostom on Matthew 6.

“Is fasting ever a bribe to get God to pay more attention to the petitions? No, a thousand times no. It is simply a way to make clear that we sufficiently reverence the amazing opportunity to ask help from the everlasting God, the Creator of the universe, to choose to put everything else aside and concentrate on worshiping, asking for forgiveness, and making our requests known—considering His help more important than anything we could do ourselves in our own strength and with our own ideas.” Edith Schaeffer in *The Life of Prayer*

“Jesus takes it for granted that his disciples will observe the pious custom of fasting. Strict exercise of self-control is an essential feature of the Christian’s life. Such customs have only one purpose—to make the disciples more ready and cheerful to accomplish those things which God would have done.” Bonhoeffer in *The Cost of Discipleship*.

Introduction:

Definition: “Practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ.” (Whitney, 4)

The Gospel: Our standing with God, in Jesus Christ, by grace through faith is not defined by how well we practice the spiritual disciplines.

Questions:

1. Why are discussions about fasting so limited? Where or when was the last time, you heard teaching on fasting?
2. What are some current reasons people fast and from what?
3. What resources would you use to help a teenager/college student who wanted to fast?

Please consult with your doctor before beginning a fast

Biblical Teaching and Steps for Fasting

What is Biblical Fasting

I. Definition

Biblical fasting is a _____ the Lord by acknowledging His authority as the _____ over us by setting aside or reducing the _____ which sustain our earthly life (i.e., food and water).

Deuteronomy 8:3

Matthew 4:4

II. _____ for the fast

Think through what the reason is for this desired fast. There are two considerations: biblical and personal.

A. _____ and Circumstantial Understanding

- i. Is there a passage that has convicted you lately? (Matt 9:38)
- ii. Are you seeking greater insight into the text? (Dan 10:12)

B. Personal Growth and Development

- i. Seeking Wisdom/Direction (Neh 1:4; Acts 13:2; 14:23)
- ii. Seeking Protection (Ezra 8:21-23; Ester 4:16)
- iii. Repentance of Sin (1 Kings 21:25-27; Daniel 9:3-5; Jonah 3:5-9)
- iv. Request (1 Samuel 1:18; 2 Samuel 2:16)
- v. Worship/Declare God's glory (Luke 2:36-37; 2 Cor 11:23-29)

III. _____ Considerations of the Fast

A. Choose a clear _____ date/time and a clear _____ date/time

i. Long

Days (Esther 4)

Weeks (Deut 9)

ii. Short

All day (1 Samuel 1)

Till evening (Judges 20:26)

There is _____ time for a fast that is necessary to make it an “official” fast.

B. **Extent** of the fast

i. Ask a Doctor!

ii. _____ food

iii. _____ foods

iv. _____ liquids

v. _____ liquids

ii and iv are the most common fasts found in the Scriptures

IV. _____ in a Fast

A. Individual or _____

i. Prayer/Singing

ii. Word of God

iii. Confession/Repentance

iv. Dedication to the Lord

v. Humility

vi. Desire to see the Lord Restore/Work

V. Biblical _____ for a Public Fast

A. _____ to the Lord

1. Repentance/Mercy (1 Samuel 7:3-14; Jonah 3:5-9;
2. Relationship (Joel 1, 2; Isaiah 58)

B. _____ from the Lord

1. Battle (Judges 20)
2. Travel (Ezra 8)
3. Leadership (Acts 13; 14)

VI. _____ in Fasting

When Christian's fast, what do we expect in that season?

- A. To read and meditate on the Bible
- B. To engage in concentrated prayer
- C. To disturb the regular rhythms of our life
- D. To be hungry/thirsty
- E. To recognize physical weakness (creatureliness)
- F. To recognize spiritual weakness (sin) – book quote

Resources:

John Piper: *A Hunger for God*

Next Week: Off

March 12: Evangelism