

Summer With Jesus

Week 6 LIFE Group Study - Fasting

Checking In

What's the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word "fasting"? Chances are, when you hear the word "fasting," you think about one of the following:

1. A health fad that is designed to cleanse your body, control your diet, and help you lose weight
2. An old-fashioned religious discipline that makes you holier through misery

Memory Verse

"That is why the Lord says, "Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning." Joel 2:12

NOTE: THERE IS NO GROUP VIDEO FOR THIS SERIES

FACILITATION FOR THE GROUP LEADER

NOTE: *Use the following as a guide as you prepare to lead your group time. Use what is helpful for you to facilitate the discussion. Discovery questions and the group guide follow this material.*

Fasting is one of the most confusing spiritual disciplines that is taught. We so often get fixated on what we are giving up rather than the reason for fasting. In this passage, Jesus gives us some clarity regarding the outward reactions regarding this useful spiritual discipline.

"Whenever you fast, don't be gloomy like the hypocrites. For they disfigure their faces so that their fasting is obvious to people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting isn't obvious to others but to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

Matthew 6:16-18

Jesus say when...not if!

- This is something every believer should practice. He doesn't say when or how often
- Fasting is about "focus" not giving up something.
- When we intentionally focus on Jesus and his desires he gives us clarity.
- Here are some things you might fast over in order to gain spiritual clarity...
 - Relationships...marriage...kids...
 - Job
 - Sickness
 - Temptation
 - Direction
 - Call of God
 - Practical insight

Fasting is a personal thing between you and God.

- It doesn't make you more spiritual than anyone
- It is about focusing on God not impressing others
- Don't be a hypocrite

God promises he will answer....

- God is faithful and loves for us to focus on Him
- Every time I have fasted God has revealed himself
- There is no prescribed fasting
- What should I surrender in order to fast....
 - Anything that will help you shift your focus
 - Food

- Drink
- Social media
- TV
- Music
- Attitudes or moods
- Activities

Many times fasting is misunderstood and needs to be discussed. There will be times when our whole church will fast (Joel 1:14). Remember it is about focus not giving up something!

Discovery Questions

1. Is fasting an Old Testament practice? Example?
 Is fasting a New Testament practice? Example?
 Is fasting a present day practice? Example?
2. Have you fasted personally? Have you experienced a church-wide fast?
 Can you share with the group an experience of fasting and the results you experienced?
3. If fasting is giving up a physical desire for a greater spiritual need, then you don't need an "official call to fast" from the pastor or church in order to fast.
4. Read Matthew 4:1-11...
 - Is it surprising to you that Jesus practiced fasting? Why or why not?
 - Jesus' time in the wilderness was important preparation for the mission God gave him. What does the passage suggest about the connection between fasting and resisting temptation?
 - Jesus is tempted to indulge his physical needs, manipulate God to his own end, and take a shortcut to power and influence. Are you tempted (in different ways) to do any of those things?

5. Romans 12:1-2 talks about offering our bodies to God - showing us the power of Jesus to transform us.

How would fasting aid us in this “transformation”?

Putting It Into Practice

Here is a wonderful passage that demonstrates God’s answer to fasting: 2 Chronicles 20:1-29

Two key verses: v. 3: “King Jehoshaphat ordered everyone in Judah to begin fasting”.
v. 12: “We do not know what to do, but we are looking to You for help”.

Start small, but aim for consistency. Pair fasting with other spiritual practices. Keep it between you and God.

Be patient. When you finish a fast, try to maintain your focus on God and control your sense of dependence on whatever it is you fasted from.

From what do you need freedom? What kind of fast might benefit you most?

“But first and most importantly seek (aim at, strive after) His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right—the attitude and character of God], and all these things will be given to you also.”

Matthew 6:33 AMP

Prayer Time