



Part 3: The Discipline of Fasting

Matthew 6:16-18

1. Share with the group how the first two disciplines (Scripture and prayer) have encouraged you to keep your spiritual tanks full. _____

2. It is our nature to not like it when things are taken from us and it is our default to be spiritually lazy. Why is it important to understand these things about ourselves as we learn about fasting? _____

3. Read **Matthew 6:16-18**. What does this passage say about our motives for fasting? _____

 - a. Jesus is not saying no one can ever know you are fasting. It is biblical to fast with a group (i.e., your community group or church). So, how can you have the right motives while fasting with others? _____

4. The word “fast” means to intentionally go without food and, biblically speaking, it means to go without food for a spiritual purpose. Fasting is redirecting your hunger for food toward God.
 - a. In the sermon, we learned that people in the Bible fasted for things like breaking free from patterns of sin, experiencing personal/corporate revival, working through sorrow/distress, seeking guidance, protection, healing, and favor with others, etc. Right now, what would be a spiritual reason for you to fast? _____

5. The principle of fasting goes beyond food to taking a good thing out of your life for a time to get closer to Jesus.
 - a. This could include things like sleep, sexual intimacy with your spouse, sugar, social media, video games, the internet, TV, news, etc. Fasting from which non-food things would benefit you most right now? _____

6. In **Matthew 6:16**, Jesus says “And WHEN you fast...” not “And IF you fast...”. Jesus expects fasting to be a part of every believer’s life. Read **Luke 2:37**. What about Anna’s example is encouraging and what is challenging? _____

a. As in Anna’s example, prayer and fasting are always interconnected in the Bible (see **Acts 13:2, 14:23**). What are the benefits of praying while fasting? _____

7. Just like the Disciplines of Scripture and Prayer – Fasting is a way of RESTING more fully in the finished work of Jesus on the cross for you. How does seeing fasting in this light help you understand why God wants us to do it? _____

8. The Bible gives us freedom to determine how often we fast. In the sermon, we were encouraged to consider a fasting goal of at least once/month. How often will you fast in 2021? _____

9. As you look ahead to 2021, here are 5 practical ideas to help you prioritize the DISCIPLINE OF FASTING. Write down how, in 2021, you will use each one to grow closer to God through fasting:

a. **PRAY BEFOREHAND** - Start praying days before for God to prepare you to fast. _____

b. **DECIDE MISSED MEALS** - Some may skip 1 meal, others 2, others all 3, others multiple days. I recommend drinking juice or water. If you have any health concerns – talk with your doctor. ____

c. **UTILIZE MEALTIMES** - Use your mealtimes for extra time in prayer and in the word. _____

d. **REDIRECT YOUR HUNGER** - When you feel hungry – redirect your hunger toward God. Pray, thank Him, meditate on a verse, open your Bible, stay in prayer all day. _____

e. **ANTICIPATE BREAKTHROUGHS** – Seek God in prayer for specific breakthroughs in your life, the lives of others, in our church and for the gospel in Joliet. **Mission statement** – To lead people out of separation from God and into a life-transforming, joy-filled relationship with Him. _____

