
GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer Requests:

Group Discussion: Describe a time when you had to sacrifice and save money to purchase a desired goal like a house, car, etc. How hard was it to guard that savings account and continue to sacrifice?

Read Aloud: Matthew 6:1-18, (vs 1-4 concerns giving, vs 5-15 praying, vs 16-18 fasting.)

Jesus picks these 3 subjects because they were important to Jewish religious life. Which one of those is most important in the American church today, which one is least important, and which one falls in the middle? Why put them in that order and what would happen in your spiritual life if you reversed the order? Which issue below is most relevant to you? Why? Which one least affects you?

The Lord's Prayer dissolves my:

- #1. Inferiority by His Person. 'Our Father
- #2. Insecurity by His Performance. Hallowed be Your name.
- #3. Unhappiness by His Plan. On earth as it is in heaven.
- #4. Worry by His Provision. Give us...our daily bread.
- #5. Guilt by His Peace. And forgive us our debts,
- #6. Resentment by His Pattern. as we...forgiven our debtors.
- #7. Temptation by His Protection. do not lead us...but deliver us
- #8. Hopelessness by His Power. Yours is the kingdom...Amen.

Notice several words in vs. 1-4 are repeated in vs. 16-18? Which words are repeated? The first part of fasting involves repentance. Repentance means to turn around and head toward God.

Another part of fasting is preparing ourselves to meet with God. Do you do anything differently on Sunday morning on your way to church to prepare to meet with God? Do you prepare yourself mentally or do you play Christian music in the car or have some little ritual that helps you prepare for worship?

A third part of fasting is devotion. If an athlete is devoted to her sport how does that impact her life? If a student is devoted to their education? If a husband or wife is devoted to their spouse? If a parent is devoted to their child? If a person is devoted to God how does that impact their life?

Lastly, fasting involves connecting with God. If prayer, worship, singing, reading God's word connects you with God, how does fasting connect you? Make a commitment together to that week choose one day to skip breakfast or lunch and spend that time in Bible reading and prayer. Return next week to your small group and discuss what God taught you through your 1 hour fast.

Family Time: Talk to your kids about the importance of focused time with God. You can use the passages from the sermon in Leviticus and talk about how 1 very important day per year the Jewish people fasted. You may not want to start teaching kids about fasting by skipping an entire meal. Or choose to skip something that is a regular part of their dinner like dessert. Right after dinner sit down and read one of Jesus parables to your whole family and talk about what it means and how to use it. Close your time in prayer. Discuss how God is so important that when we give something up for Him it helps us prove to ourselves He is important to us. One example is parents give up spending all their money on themselves and spend some on their children because they love their children so deeply and they are so important to them.