



Week 6 - Fasting

Series Passage: Matthew 6:5-18

Focus for the Week: Matthew 6:16-18, Matthew 6:5-8, Ezra 8:21-23, 31-32

Discussion Guide:

Prayer is one of the most important parts of the Christian life. If we are not in communication with God, how can we grow in our relationship with and understanding of Him? Prayer is central that Jesus himself took the time to give us an outline of how to pray; the Lord's Prayer.

Pray together: Matthew 6:9-14

Read: Matthew 6:16-18

After laying our foundation for prayer in the Lord's Prayer Jesus then immediately follows up that teaching with a teaching on fasting.

Q: In what areas do prayer and fasting overlap?

Q: What similarities are there between Matthew 6:16-18 and Matthew 6:5-8?

Fasting has become a popular trend within our culture, often marketed as a weight loss program. However, Biblical fasting is about much more than our bodily health. In the passage below the context is that Ezra is assembling those who will be returning to Jerusalem after their 70 years in exile.

Read: Ezra 8:21-23, 31-32

Q: What does this story teach us about fasting?

Q: Why would we be tempted to “ask the king” for help instead of God?

Finishing Well

In his book *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writes this:

“It is always true of the disciple that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, and he must therefore ‘watch and pray.’ The spirit knows the right way, and desires to follow it, but the flesh lacks the courage and finds it too hard, too hazardous and wearisome, and so it stifles the voice of the spirit. . . . Therefore we have to practice strictest daily discipline only so can the flesh learn the painful lesson that it has no rights of its own.”

Q: How has this series on prayer helped you grow?

Q: How does making prayer and fasting a central part of our life help us against our sinful nature?

Q: What assurance does Jesus’ death and resurrection give us in our prayers?

Close in Prayer