

# Improving Our Spiritual Habits

Adult Bible Class  
March 1, 2020  
Fasting & Spiritual Journaling



For the season of Lent and in the spirit of this class, we are going to attempt to combine two spiritual habits – fasting and journaling. Both of those practices may make you groan aloud – or perhaps you already exercise either or both. Let's start with fasting.

## **Matthew 6:16-18**

*<sup>16</sup>And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

## **Mark 9:29**

*And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer [and fasting]."*

## **Psalms 35:13**

*But I, when they were sick— I wore sackcloth; I afflicted myself with fasting; I prayed with head bowed on my chest.*

## Acts 13:2; 14:23

*<sup>2</sup>While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."<sup>3</sup>Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.*

Have you tried any type of fasting before? If so, how did it help you? Was it worth the effort?

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We are suggesting a fast from certain types of language. This is far different from a food fast, but could possibly have more positive and more lasting consequences. But, it is also quite a bit more difficult.

We're suggesting a fast from:

- **Criticism**
- **Complaint**
- **Condemnation**
- **Gossip**
- **Condescension**
- **Judgement**

These types of negative words are not generally helpful, but probably make up more than the majority of our conversations. Think about the TV shows we watch, as they mirror back to us what our lives supposedly look like.

So, would this be easy or difficult for you? Are you willing to even try? I've been working on it since Wednesday, and I find that I don't have much to say!

As a part of this experiment, we are asking you to journal about your experience. Spiritual journaling has been a part of walking with God since the Old Testament.

### **Deuteronomy 17:18-19**

*<sup>18</sup>And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests.*

*<sup>19</sup>And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them...*

### **Biblical Journal Entries →**

#### **Isaiah 38:9-20**

*<sup>9</sup> A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, after he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness:*

*<sup>10</sup>I said, In the middle of my days I must depart; I am consigned to the gates of Sheol for the rest of my years.*

*<sup>11</sup>I said, I shall not see the Lord, the Lord in the land of the living; I shall look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world.*

*<sup>12</sup>My dwelling is plucked up and removed from me like a shepherd's tent; like a weaver I have rolled up my life; he cuts me off from the loom; from day to night you bring me to an end;*

*<sup>13</sup>I calmed myself until morning; like a lion he breaks all my bones; from day to night you bring me to an end.*

*<sup>14</sup>Like a swallow or a crane I chirp; I moan like a dove. My eyes are weary with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed; be my pledge of safety!*

*<sup>15</sup>What shall I say? For he has spoken to me, and he himself has done it. I walk slowly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.*

*<sup>16</sup>O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit. Oh restore me to health and make me live!*

*<sup>17</sup>Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.*

*<sup>18</sup>For Sheol does not thank you; death does not praise you; those who go down to the pit do not hope for your faithfulness.*

*<sup>19</sup>The living, the living, he thanks you, as I do this day; the father makes known to the children your faithfulness.*

*<sup>20</sup>The Lord will save me, and we will play my music on stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of the Lord.*

**Psalm 23** (or any other Psalm you enjoy)

*<sup>1</sup>The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

*<sup>2</sup>He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.*

*<sup>3</sup>He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

*<sup>4</sup>Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

*<sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*

*<sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

The entire book of Psalms are the journal entries of David and other worship leaders. You've read enough of the Psalms to answer this question. What are the Psalms about?

When you mention spiritual journaling (or maybe even journaling of any type) most people land in either the love it or the hate it camp. There seems to be little in between for this exercise. But I would like to suggest perhaps there can be. If you love journaling, why? If you hate journaling, why?

**Type of Journal Entries**

1. Just write out your prayers
2. Bullet points
3. Sketch Noting
4. Stream of Consciousness
5. Copying Scripture or the prayers of others
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_