



Series: “Following The Way”
Week 4 Study Guide
Message: “Hungry For More.”
(The Rhythm of Fasting)

SCRIPTURE

Main Text:	Cross References:
<i>Matthew 9:14–15</i> <i>Matthew 6:16</i> <i>Matthew 4:3–4</i> <i>Matthew 5:6</i>	<i>Biblical Fasting Examples:</i> <i>Repentance –</i> <i>Jonah 3:5, Joel 2:12–13</i> <i>Seeking God's Guidance/Direction –</i> <i>Ezra 8:21–23, Nehemiah 1:4</i> <i>Mourning/Grief –</i> <i>2 Samuel 1:12, 1 Samuel 31:13</i> <i>Spiritual Readiness –</i> <i>Luke 4:1–2, Acts 13:2–3</i> <i>Intercession for Others –</i> <i>Esther 4:16, Daniel 9:3–5</i>

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

(This section focuses on understanding what the text means.)

Read Matthew 6:16

Main Idea: Jesus teaches about the attitude behind fasting.

Commentary:

Jesus doesn't reject fasting. He warns against hypocritical fasting — making a show of spiritual devotion for others to see. True fasting is an internal posture of humility and dependence on God, not performance. This reinforces that *fasting is relational*, not ritualistic.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the “reward” that those who made a show out of fasting received?
2. What do we miss out on when we turn spiritual rhythms and disciplines into something to elevate ourselves?

Takeaway:

Fasting should come from the heart, not the desire to impress others. It's about intimacy with God, not appearances.

Read Matthew 9:15a

Main Idea: Jesus uses the wedding imagery to explain why His disciples do not fast while He is present.

Commentary:

John's disciples were serious about their faith, so seeing Jesus' crew not following the same rules made them pause. They genuinely

wanted to understand. Jesus responds with a metaphor that flips expectations. He calls Himself the Bridegroom (groom) and His disciples the wedding guests (groomsmen). Weddings are celebration! Fasting while celebrating would be weird. When Jesus is present with them, it's time to rejoice! Spiritual practices like fasting aren't one-size-fits-all—they have context. Heart and timing matter. When we do it, it should reflect a real hunger for God, not a checklist or something to impress others.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think John's disciples noticed the difference in fasting?
2. How does the "bridegroom" image help you understand fasting?
3. How does this show that spiritual disciplines depend on the heart, not just the action?

Takeaway:

Fasting is not just a calendar-driven ritual—it is responsive to Jesus's work and presence in our lives. Timing and intent are as important as the practice itself.

Read Matthew 9:15b

Main Idea: Jesus points to the future, when His absence will make fasting appropriate for His followers.

Commentary:

Jesus speaks prophetically: there will come a time when He is no longer with His followers, and fasting will be an appropriate response. This shows fasting is relational—it comes from desire and longing. That longing comes from living in the "right now" and the "not yet." Right now, believers have the benefits of the finished work of Jesus on the cross. We're forgiven, free, made new and being transformed.

But we know Jesus isn't done yet. The world is still broken, evil still exists, there's still darkness and confusion. We're waiting for Jesus to return, and for all of God's promises to be fulfilled. Fasting gives us a way to express our longing for God, to focus on Him when we feel the tension between what we have and what we're waiting for.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can fasting help us live with spiritual longing in a "not yet" world?
2. What does longing for God teach us about our dependence on Him?

Takeaway:

Fasting expresses the hunger in our hearts for Jesus, especially when we are waiting for His Kingdom to fully come.

Read Matthew 9:16–17 (Homework Passage)

Main Idea: Jesus explains the newness of His Kingdom using the imagery of new cloth on old garments and new wine in old wineskins.

Commentary:

Jesus is saying something that might feel simple but hits deep: you can't just patch old habits, old thinking, or old spiritual routines and expect them to hold something completely new— Spirit-filled life! Spiritual practices and rhythms like fasting, prayer, and bible reading become powerful transformative tools that Jesus uses to shape us when they flow from a heart that is "made new" through faith in him! Otherwise, it's just going through motions. Imagine pouring fresh wine into a cracked old container—it'll just burst. Jesus wants us to let His new life reshape the "container" of our hearts so that our practices don't just look religious, but *actually* change us.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does this teach us about the relationship between old practices and new life in God's Kingdom? (*Hint: Jesus isn't destroying old practices, he's bringing them back to the heart of the matter.*)

Takeaway:

Spiritual disciplines aren't just about following rules—they're about being shaped from the inside out. If our heart, mindset, and life patterns are still "old," the practices won't produce lasting transformation. Jesus wants us to let Him make us new from the inside so His Kingdom life can flow through us.

Read Matthew 4:3–4

Main Idea: Jesus resists temptation in the wilderness, relying on God's Word instead of physical needs.

Commentary:

The devil basically says, "Why wait? You have the power! Feed yourself!" Jesus' response: he's not going to fill himself, he's going to stay faithfully dependent on God. Fasting teaches us the same principle. It's not punishment—it's training your heart to rely on God above everything else. It reminds us that God is the ultimate provider, not bread, not distractions, not instant fixes.

Discussion Questions:

1. What can you learn from Jesus' example about hunger and dependence on God?

Takeaway:

Fasting trains our hearts to rely on God, not temporary comfort or self-sufficiency.

Read Matthew 5:6

Main Idea: Jesus promises to fill those who hunger for Him and His goodness.

Commentary:

The hunger Jesus talks about isn't just physical—it's spiritual. Fasting helps wake up that hunger. It creates space in your life to crave God's presence, wisdom, and power. In a world where we're used to instant satisfaction, fasting forces us to pause, feel desire, and lean into God. The promise? Those who really want Him, will be filled. Jesus will meet that longing.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can fasting cultivate a deeper spiritual hunger in your life?
2. What does it mean to be "filled" in a spiritual sense?

Takeaway:

Fasting awakens spiritual hunger, helping you rely on God and receive what only He can give.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. What distractions or comforts keep you from truly craving God?
 2. How have you experienced spiritual longing in the past?
 3. How could fasting help you tune into God's presence and guidance?
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LIVING IT OUT

Commit to fasting.

- 1. Start Small:** Skip a meal, or fast for 1 day.
- 2. Be Intentional:** Decide in advance why you're fasting — ex: *repentance, guidance, spiritual growth, or intercession.*
- 3. Use Hunger as a Reminder.** Let it prompt prayer: *“Jesus, I need You more than this.”*
- 4. Engage Scripture:** Read and reflect while fasting.

**If you have physical limitations and it isn't wise for you to fast from food, consider fasting from another necessity in your life.*

For LifeGroups:

ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER

Share:

1. What distractions make it hard to sit in longing for God?
2. How could fasting help you depend on Him more?

Pray together:

Ask God to awaken hunger for Him in your hearts. Pray for wisdom and intentionality in practicing fasting as part of following Jesus.