

The Purpose of Fasting

Practice the Way of Jesus

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OPENING QUESTION

What is something that you regularly reach for when you need comfort, energy, or a reset during your day?

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Matthew 6:16-18

Mark 2:18-20

Matthew 4:1-4

KEY TAKE AWAY(S)

- **Fasting is not about getting God's attention, it is about giving him yours.**
 - The purpose of fasting is not to prove your spirituality or earn "points" with God, it is to remove something physical so that you can seek Him more fully.
- **Fasting is a normal practice for followers of Jesus, not a spiritual performance.**
 - Sean highlighted that in "modern christianity," people make the mistake of approaching God like a genie - only going to Him in times of need. Instead, a practice like fasting helps us to grow in humility, obedience, and dependence in our walk with God.
- **God frequently calls people to physical action that produces spiritual results.**
 - As we see in the life of Moses (raising his staff, lifting his hands), God often asks people to act in faith before a work of God takes place.
- **Fasting draws us into God's presence, deepens our dependence on Him, and reveals to us what of this earth might be controlling us.**
 - Fasting is not a diet or spiritual performance, it is WORSHIP. By removing the distractions or things we depend on for comfort and/or control in our lives, it allows us to invite God in and fill those voids we experience with His presence and His Word.

QUESTIONS

1. **Jesus says, "When you fast," not "if you fast." What does that reveal to us about fasting as a follower of Jesus? (Matthew 6:16)**
2. **Sean said, "Fasting isn't about getting God's attention; it's about giving God yours." What distractions, comforts, or controls most often compete for your attention? (Matthew 6:18)**
3. **When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He relied on God's Word instead of giving in to His physical hunger. What does this teach us about where our strength comes from? (Matthew 4:4)**
 - a. Is there a specific scripture or truth from God's Word that you have turned to in these moments when you feel weak or face temptation?

4. Sean expressed that fasting is not just about giving something up, but about making room to seek God. What is one practical way that you can use time or hunger (when fasting from food) to turn your attention back to Him? (Mark 2:18-20)

PRACTICE

A Simple 24-Hour Fast with Prayer

This week, choose one 24-hour period to engage in an intentional period of fasting. Remember, fasting is not about spiritual performance, but rather removing distractions and giving God your full attention. A suggested option is to follow the church's fasting rhythm: fasting from Tuesday evening until Wednesday evening.

If you are going to fast from food, we encourage you to first consult with your healthcare provider if you have any concerns. If you are unable to fast from food for any reason, choose another meaningful alternative that might be competing for your attention: social media, entertainment, secular books or music, etc.

During the fast, when you would normally eat or reach for the thing you are fasting from, pause and do one of the following:

- **Pray**
 - God, I give You my attention. Help me to depend on You today. Amen.
- **Read Scripture**
 - Read a scripture pertaining to the importance of fasting like Matthew 6:16-18 or Matthew 4:1-4.
- **Reflect and Journal**
 - Ask yourself, "What am I tempted to run to for comfort, control, or escape rather than God?" Keep a short note in a journal or on your phone of anything that God reveals to you in these times.

Before leaving, pick someone from your Moment Group to serve as an accountability partner for your fasting this week. Check in with each other at the beginning of the fasting period to encourage and/or briefly pray for one another. Then, at the end of the fasting period, check in one more time to share about your experience or highlight one thing God might be speaking to you that you are willing to share.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, I acknowledge that there are times where things of this world may distract me or cause me to turn my eyes away from You. I ask that You would help reveal to me what those things are so that I may be more aware and remove them from my life. As I fast from these things, would my attention remain solely on You and would Your Word and promises sustain me and give me strength when I am weak. Thank you for the work that You are doing in me and through me as I strive to walk closer with You and practice Your ways. Amen.