

Connect Group Discussion Guide – 9/1072023

Matthew 6:16-18 Fall Forward: Fasting

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQvR0S5fB8AzraGYts4eQfg> (Posted on Monday)

Audio Only: On Spotify or Apple Podcasts: Connection Point Podcast

Highlights

- In life you will fall. When you fall, FALL FORWARD.
 - Trying to live out your life with Jesus is hard, you will stumble, even fail sometimes. But when you do, keep moving toward Jesus.
- How do you fall forward? Spiritual Disciplines.
 - Practices put in place to help us journey toward Jesus, whether we are “feeling it” or not.
- **Mt 6:16** – Fasting is choosing not to eat as a deeply spiritual experience.
 - Scriptures almost always describes fasting from FOOD not other things
 - Food is a part of life. So why fast?
- It starts in THE GARDEN!
 - **Genesis 2:15** – Even in perfection and perfect freedom there is something that God says, “hey, follow me...I will sustain you...you don’t need that tree.”
 - **Genesis 3:5-6** – She **took** and **ate**, then she **took, gave, and ate**.
 - **Genesis 3:14** - EAT dust
 - **Genesis 3:15** – your work will be painful, EAT from it.
 - There is some point God is making about food and eating. **What do you think it is?**
- Fasting is deeply connected to seeing God and not ourselves as the provider of life. Fasting is an act of surrender.
- When you say no to food, you say to God, you are my sustainer.
- Examples of people who fasted and recorded in the Scriptures:
 - Moses, Dt. 9 (40 days) Paul, Acts 9 (3 days)
 - David, 2 Sa 12 (7 days) The Elders, Acts 13 (duration not specified)
 - Elijah, 1 Ki 19 (40 days)
- God was moving and these people responded with a fast; acknowledging He is the sustainer of life.
 - They were surrendering to Him as He moved.
 - Fasting is a RESPONSE to the movement of God, not an attempt to make God move.
- **Talk about any experience you have had with fasting. What was your purpose? What happened? Were you trying to “make” God move, or were you fasting in response.**
- Whether in life or death, rejoicing or mourning, fasting is our reminder God sustains us.
 - Even when someone dies, by fasting, we remember God gives life and is in control.
- **Mt. 6:17-18** In first century and before, when you sat for a meal you stunk and were dusty dirty, so you washed your face (think foot washing) and put scented oil on your head.
 - So Jesus is telling us to do that...in other words in those days you wouldn’t stand out or call attention to yourself if you put oil on your head. You would if you hadn’t.
 - Don’t call attention to yourself. If fasting causes you to garner sympathy or attention from the people around you (the world) you’re actually undoing your fast.
 - It changes from me and God to me, God and the world and you’re saying the world sustains me, I really don’t need God.

So why did Jesus make a big deal about fasting?

1. Fasting acknowledges who actually gives us life.

2. Fasting prioritizes our spiritual health, denying physical need.
3. Fasting teaches us when we suffer we need to reach to the one who actually gives us life.
4. Fasting in rhythm helps you fall forward
 - a. God is working
 - b. He has you in the palm of His hand
 - c. The world has no answers for your life apart from Him.

What should you do now?

- **Sometime in the next week or so, commit to a 12-hour fast.**
 - You have to be awake!
 - No food if able, or limited food (just what is necessary) if not able.
 - Seek and acknowledge where God is moving
 - Ask God, “what needs mourned?”
 - End your fast with thankfulness for life and a God who sustains you.

Epilogue

- **Mt. 4** Jesus also fasted for 40 days as He was lead into the wilderness by the Spirit, after He was baptized.
 - 40 days: Just like Moses (the Law) and Elijah (the Prophets), Jesus (the Fulfillment of the Law and Prophets) fasted for 40 days.
 - Then He was tempted by Satan.
- **Mt. 4:2-4**
 - Just like the serpent in the Garden, the “tempter” in the wilderness with Jesus said, “you’re not supposed to eat that, but it’s okay, eat it anyway.”
- **Dt. 8:3** – God and His Words are my sustainer, food does not sustain me.
 - Jesus undid what happened in the Garden
- Jesus begins his ministry (after his baptism) with bread, and ends his earthly ministry as fully man with “bread”
 - Upper Room (**Mt 26**) but the bread is not bread!
 - He says, this is my body, it’s not bread. It’s not food (bread) that sustains you. It’s Jesus. Take HIM in!
- **This is a great opportunity to take communion together as a Connect Group Family.**
- **Encourage your group in the 12-hour fast. Please reach out to Pastor Mark if you have any questions, or anyone in your group does. Leaders, lead by example; share when you are fasting or have fasted.**