

I. Intro

A. Text: **Matt. 6:16-21**

¹⁶ "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ¹⁷ But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Matt. 6:16-21)

B. Definition: *Fasting is abstaining from food. A voluntary yielding of physical/ emotional strength in exchange for the supernatural grace of God.*

1. Refusal to rely on self.

II. Body

A. Jesus Lived A Lifestyle of Fasting and Prayer

1. Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted.

¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. (Matt. 4:1)

2. Before the temptation came, Jesus was prepared through fasting.

²And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

³Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." (Matt. 4:2-3)

- a. A devoted, sold-out, Holy Ghost Filled life will not keep you from encountering trouble.
 - i. A lifestyle of prayer and fasting will not prevent you from the coming tribulation.
- b. But regular prayer and fasting can give you the assurance of who you are (which gives you victory over coming tribulation).

- i. Assurance that God is pleased with you despite your human frailties and weaknesses.
- c. We often point out that Satan encountered Jesus at one of His weakest points (after He'd been fasting for over a month).
 - i. Physically, Jesus was weak... but spiritually...
 - ii. His strength lay in His identity tied to the Father.
- d. No one can question your identity when you've been walking in communion with the Father through tough, lean times.

3. Besides, I don't need Physical Sustenance nearly as much as I need God.

"But [Jesus] answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Matt 4:4)

- a. What God clearly spoke to us in times of weakness, is like oxygen in times of testing.

4. Fasting produces a maturity that is mind boggling...

"...If You are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written, 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. (Matt. 4:6-7)

- a. Jesus not only fasted. He lived a lifestyle that was consistent with fasting.
 - i. Jesus refused to hoard the faithfulness of the Father for His own selfish preservation.
 - ii. **2 Cor. 8:9**: For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.
 - iii. **Phil. 2:6-11**: being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross. ⁹Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the

name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

B. Jesus Invites Us into a Lifestyle of Fasting and Prayer

1. A fasted lifestyle is a lifelong journey of denying self, in exchange for embracing the desires of the Father.
 - i. Vibrant, exciting, faith-filled ride with the Father.
 - ii. A fasted lifestyle sets us on that type of journey.
- b. Jesus invites us into that lifestyle.

2. Jesus Expects Us to Live a Lifestyle of Fasting and Prayer

¹⁶ “*Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.* (Matt. 6:16)

- a. When you fast...
 - i. Non-negotiable
- b. Christian View: Elitism → Super-Spiritual
3. God’s Divine Model: Made in the Image of God
 - a. Spirit → Soul → Body
 - b. The body takes the things of the world and declares them to us.
 - c. The Spirit of God takes the things of God and declares them unto us.
 - i. **1 Cor. 2:9-12:**

⁹ “*...Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*” ¹⁰ *But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.* ¹¹ *For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.* ¹² *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*”

ii. **Jn. 16:13-14:**

“¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”

4. Fasting is a refusal to be dictated by the information gathered by our senses.
 - a. Suppressing of our flesh, ignites a hunger for God that can only be satisfied by God Himself.

C. Fasting Facts

1. Many of the rewards for fasting are eternal (will not be seen in this world).
 - a. Denial of temporary pleasures with a perspective on eternal pleasure and delight in God.
 - b. Laying up of treasures in heaven, where moth or rust can't destroy.
2. Fasting will not change God.
 - a. Immutable, unchangeable.
 - b. God will not be bribed, manipulated or bamboozled.

*Fasting for any other primary reason other than nearness to God, agreement with God, and passionate communion with God is frivolous.

3. Fasting will not change God, but could potentially change you (and I).
 - a. Fasting makes us spiritually tender to the heart of God.
 - i. Our bodies are naturally dull to the things of God (because of sin).
 - ii. As we begin to deny our bodies, we often become aware of our weakness (and repent). It's right then that God releases grace in that place.
 - iii. Though we are weak, we become aware of the fact that He loves us. He's pleased with us. He delights in us.

- iv. We develop an immovable, steadfast identity of who we are (despite weakness) that refuses to bow in the face of adversity.
- b. Fasting increases in our desire for righteousness.
 - i. Our bodies are naturally attracted to sin and repulsed by righteousness.
 - ii. As we deny self, we become aware of the desires
 - iii. We begin to hate what He hates and love what He loves.
- c. Fasting positions our hearts to receive revelation.
 - i. Senses are dull. Natural understanding is cloudy. Clarity is non-existent.
 - ii. Gives Holy Spirit the right of way (1st place) when peering into the Word. Ripe for Illumination, revelation, etc.
 - iii. Perfect place for dreams, visions, prophecies.
 - iv. Prime place for God to reveal truths about His heart.

*God doesn't start speaking because we enter a fasted lifestyle. He's been speaking.

- v. We simply develop the capacity to hear with spiritual senses that were left dormant before.
- d. Fasting Increases Our Capacity To Experience God
 - i. Fasting from ordinary pleasures, points our hearts toward supreme pleasure (found only in the tangible Presence of God).
 - ii. The more we experience God, the more we intensely crave Him.

As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? (Ps. 42:1-2)

III. Conclusion

A. Fasting is a mourning of sorts, mourning that things aren't okay the way they are right now.

1. It's a Holy discontentment and refusal to settle for waiting for Jesus to show up in all of His glory in the age to come and at the same time, a cry for Him to do it now.
2. Fasting is a refusal to be captivated by lesser substitutes, lesser pleasures... than the God of pleasures forevermore.