

DEEPER THE DISCIPLINE OF FASTING



ACCOUNTABILITY

- How have you simplified your life this week? What was the result?

INTRODUCTION

- Ask group members whether or not they've fasted, and what it was like.

SERMON REVIEW

- Four essential elements of depth through the spiritual disciplines:
 - *Maturity*. It is deepening our understanding and application of the truth.
 - *Spirituality*. The discipline begins within.
 - *Consistency of practice*. They are developed as habits.
 - *Longing and general accessibility*. Anyone can practice the disciplines - a theological degree is not required; all that is required is desire for God.
- Fasting has always been integral to discipleship.
- It impacts all three aspects of our being: body, soul, and spirit.
- Fasting is abstaining from something, especially food, for a specific amount of time and for spiritual purposes. In Scripture, to fast is to forgo sustenance.
- Fasting is choosing to "feed on" God.
- Fasting positions us to receive from God.
- Develop the practice progressively - one meal per week, then two consecutive meals per week, then one day per week, then even three consecutive days per month!
- The most important facet of fasting is the state of the heart.

DISCUSSION

- Read Matthew 6:16-18 together. What commands does Jesus make regarding the discipline of fasting?
- Why does Jesus concern himself with the appearance of his disciples during their fasts? What does this tell us about his idea of fasting?
- How do the actions of the Pharisees reveal their misunderstanding of the discipline?
- Read Isaiah 58 aloud. Which portions of this chapter grab your attention?
- What does this passage tell us about the purpose and the practice of fasting? How does this differ from a superficial understanding of it?
- Read Matthew 4:1-4 and John 4:31-34. What is the relationship between fasting and following Jesus?
- How does biblical fasting connect physical circumstances with spirituality?
- In what ways does fasting seem to help the disciple grow, mature, deepen, etc.?
- With all of these verses in mind, how will you practice the spiritual discipline of fasting?

CHALLENGE

- Fast one meal per week through the end of the month, and dedicate that mealtime to communion with God.

CLOSING PRAYER