



WELCOME TO THE

table



FOR ME

Practices of Grace from the Giver of Grace



The Discipline of Fasting

The whole point of us being a spiritually formed people is that we are becoming more like Jesus; living as he lived.

Fasting is something Jesus modeled and has been a long standing practice in every major religion until more recent western culture has become a feasting culture with little to no fasting.



The Discipline of Fasting

“Most of us are used to approaching our spiritual formation and life with God through the door of our mind — by thinking, talking, praying, reading, or hearing teaching and preaching. But very few of us are comfortable approaching our spiritual formation through our stomach, or our body as a whole.”

-John Mark Comer



What is Fasting?

Matthew 6:16-18

Fasting

*[16] “And **when** you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. [17] But **when** you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, [18] that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will **reward** you.”*


Because it was already an established cultural practice there is no need for command, simply Instruction “when you fast...”



What is Fasting?

Fasting had been around since Exodus when Moses fasts 40 days on Mt. Sinai. After which, the Israelites were commanded to fast on the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur.

Later Jews had a regular rhythm of fasting 2 days a week.

So what is FASTING? in its simplest form  To not eat food



Misconceptions with Fasting

1. **Abstinence: that it is just abstaining from (_____)**
2. **A Restricted Diet ie Daniel “fast” or modern day lent**



The Discipline of Fasting

HOW LONG?

The most common practice was from waking to sundown.

We also have examples of 2 day, 3 day, 7 day, 21 day and 40 day fasts.

What we do see is fasting as both Rhythm and Response

Rhythm = regular consistent practice (2x/week)

Response = usually in response to a great or urgent need for an answer from God



Biblical Background For Fasting

- **1 Samuel 31 King Saul dies and the people fast for 7 days**
- **Jonah 3 the King of Nineveh calls for the city fast and plead for forgiveness and God Spares the city**
- **Esther 4 Queen Esther calls the Jews to fast for 3 days when faced with the possibility of total annihilation and God rescued.**



- So in Matthew 6 Jesus is not just addressing the HOW but also the WHY.
- HE IS ADDRESSING THE HEART OF FASTING
- THE WHY (from *Practicing the Way* JM Comer)
 1. To Offer Ourselves to Jesus
 2. To Grow in Holiness
 3. To Amplify Our Prayers
 4. To Stand With The Poor



1. To Offer Ourselves to Jesus

- **Early Christians changed their rhythm from fasting on Mondays and Thursdays to Wednesdays and Fridays**
- **B/c Wednesday Jesus was betrayed and He was crucified on Friday. It was a way that they could “share in the sufferings of Christ”**
- **A way they could be reminded of being brought from death to life. Their hunger and sacrifice would give way to “life” as the break fast.**



- ***John Piper*** - “Whole body hungering for God”

Romans 12:1

[1] I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.



Fasting is one of the best disciplines we have to reintegrate our mind to our body, and offer our whole selves to God in surrender.

Comer

So... “in view of God’s mercies” we sacrifice in response as worship



2. TO GROW IN HOLINESS

Romans 7:15-24

[15] For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. [16] Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. [17] So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. [18] For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. [19] For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. [20] Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.



2. TO GROW IN HOLINESS

Romans 7:15-24

[21] So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. [22] For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, [23] but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. [24]

Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?



2. TO GROW IN HOLINESS

Augustine called the flesh our disordered desires

Our fight is not against the body but rather for the body.

Col 3:5 put to death the flesh

BUT HOW? by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us as we walk in the ways of Jesus.



3. To Amplify Our Prayers

Prayer is the medium for communication with God

SPEAKING & LISTENING

Fasting is A WAY TO HEAR GOD AND BE HEARD BY GOD



The Miracle of Dunkirk Friday May 24 1940



3. To Amplify Our Prayers

Acts 13:1-3

[1] Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. [2] While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” [3] Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.



3. To Amplify Our Prayers

Fasting and prayer go together. Like two wings of a bird, together they take flight. You can pray without fasting, and you can fast without praying, but when you combine the two, there's a noticeable amplification of our prayer before God. This comes as no surprise, since fasting is a kind of praying with our body. When the request of our heart is coupled with the yearning of our body, our prayer is purified of its dross and presented like a precious metal before the Father, for him to do as he will. JM Comer



4. To Stand with The Poor

Isaiah 58:3-4

[3] ‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not?

Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’

**Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,
and oppress all your workers.**

**[4] Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with a wicked fist.**

Fasting like yours this day

will not make your voice to be heard on high.



4. To Stand with The Poor

Isaiah 58:5-6

[5] Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself?

Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and

ashes

under him?

Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD?

[6] “Is not this the fast that I choose; to loose the bonds of wickedness,

to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free,

and to break every yoke?



4. To Stand with The Poor

Isaiah 58:7-8

[7] Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

[8] Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up speedily;
your righteousness shall go before you;
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.



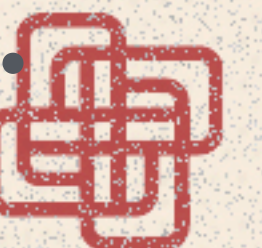
4. To Stand with The Poor

So We are to:

- Fight Injustice
- Free the Oppressed
- Share Food
- Provide Shelter
- Clothe the Naked
- Practice Generosity

Fasting and works of mercy are where we see God moving in scripture.

Fasting is way to love God and love our neighbor at the same time.



Our Hope

**That we begin to present our whole selves as a living
sacrifice.**



Think Rhythms and Response

- 1. Pick a day and start small**
- 2. BE CONSISTENT**
- 3. Keep going even if you miss**

- 1. Be open to hear from the Lord**
- 2. Ask for the Spirit's help**





FOR ME

Practices of Grace from the Giver of Grace

