



PERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP

SESSION 8: FASTING & DISCIPLESHIP

Fasting is an important and yet overlooked spiritual discipline. While most disciplines encourage people to do something, fasting encourages people to do without something.

Fasting is the voluntary denial of physical food for spiritual purposes.

Understanding a Biblical Fast

1. Fasting is not
2. Fasting is not
3. Fasting is not
4. Fasting is
5. Fasting is

The Scripture is full of examples reminding us that we must learn how to deny our physical cravings for spiritual purposes:

- "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41).
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied (Matt. 5:6).
- but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified (1 Cor. 9:27).
- For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (Rom. 8:13).
- And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me (Luke 9:23).

Different Types of Fasting

The next two lists are an edited form of Donald Whitney's list in *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*.

1. **fast** - abstaining from all food but not from water (Matt. 4:2; Luke 4:2)
2. **fast** - limitation of one's diet but not abstaining from all food (Dan. 1:12; Matt. 3:4)
3. **fast** - denial of all food and liquid (Ez. 10:6; Est. 4:16; Acts 9:9)
4. **fast** - extraordinary fast of all food and liquid for 40 days done by Moses (Deut. 9:9) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8)
5. **fast** - ensuring not be noticed by others (Matt. 6:16-18)
6. **fast** - focused fast by a worship gathering (Joel 2:15-16; Acts 13:2)

7. **fast** - when a ruler calls for one due to extreme need (2 Chron. 20:3; Neh. 9:1; Est. 4:16; Jon. 3:5-8)
8. **fast** - appointed holidays focusing on a fast (Lev. 16:29-31; Luke 18:12)
9. **fast** - called on for a special occasion (Matt. 9:15)
10. **fast** - while biblical fasts always involved dying food, Scripture does teach the benefit of occasionally denying something other than food for spiritual purposes (1 Cor. 7:1-5)

What Fasting Seeks to Accomplish

1. To strengthen prayer (Ezra 8:23; Neh. 1:4; Dan. 9:3; Joel 2:12-17; Acts 13:3)
2. To seek God's guidance (Judg. 20:26-28; Acts 14:23)
3. To express grief (Judg. 20:26; 1 Sam. 31:11-13; 2 Sam. 1:11-12)
4. To seek from God deliverance or protection (2 Chr. 20:3-4; Ezra 8:21-23; Esther 4:16; Ps. 109:21-26)
5. To express repentance and the return to God (1 Sam. 7:6; Joel 2:12; Jonah 3:5-8)
6. To humble oneself before God (1 Kin. 21:27-29; Ps. 35:13)
7. To express concern for the work of God (Neh. 1:3-11; Isa. 58:6-7; Dan. 9:3)
8. To minister to the needs of others (Isa. 58:6-7)
9. To overcome temptation and dedicate yourself to God (Mt. 4:1-11)
10. To express love and worship to God (Lk. 2:37)

Jesus' Reminders of Fasting

1. Fasting should be helpful as _____ for _____ (Matt. 4:1-3).
2. Fasting should be as normal as _____ and _____ for the disciple (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16).
3. Fasting should be done for God's _____ rather than for man's _____ (Matt. 6:16-17).
4. Fasting should be done as denying the _____ rewards for _____ rewards (Matt. 6:16-17).
5. Fasting should be done to help us enduring until his _____ (Luke 5:33-35).

Next Steps for Fasting

1. **Determine the _____ of Fasting** - If you can't do a food fast, think of another way to deny yourself.
2. **Decide the _____ of Fasting** - Pick a convenient time to start with a small fast and work your way from there. You won't fast by accident.
3. **Develop the _____ of Fasting** - Begin with smaller goals and work your way towards more as you develop.