



Life Group Discussion Questions

Sermon Title: Fasting Like Jesus

Sermon Date: 3-3-19

Theme: Examining the spiritual discipline of fasting and how it can benefit us!

In a culture where people enjoy visiting the Golden Arches and an assortment of Pizza Palaces, *fasting* seems totally out of place. In fact, fasting has been in general disrepute both in and outside the Church for many years. Yet, here are some general observations about fasting:

- It was taught in the Old Testament (Lev.16:31; Zech.8:19);
- It was practiced by Jesus (Matt.4:1; 9:14-15);
- It was practiced by the early Church (Acts 13:1-3; 14:23).

Here in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus assumes that His followers would practice fasting. He says, "*When you fast...*" This is the same formula He used to introduce His remarks about giving (6:2-4) and prayer (6:5-15). He is therefore assuming that this spiritual activity, which seems out of step with the times, would be as much a part of our lives as giving and prayer. With this in mind, let's examine some questions about fasting.

Gathering Together (Icebreaker)

Have you ever abstained from something for a time?

Have you ever fasted? For what reason did you fast?

Growing Together (Truth/Equipping)

Read: *Matthew 6:16-18*

1. In verse 16 Jesus assumes that Christians will fast, yet few American Christians do. What factors do you think contribute to this?
2. What's the difference between abstaining and fasting?
3. In what ways might hypocrites fast today (see vss.16-17)? How should we fast (see vss.18)?
4. Before refrigeration and microwave ovens, one purpose of fasting was to free the person from the need to prepare a meal in order to spend time with God. What are some contemporary activities from which we might abstain for the same reason?
5. Under what circumstances might fasting be a helpful spiritual discipline for you? See Exodus 24:18; Nehemiah 9:1; Acts 14:23.

Getting Real with One Another (Accessibility)

How will you seek to apply the teaching of Jesus on fasting as a spiritual discipline? Take a few moments to respond to the statements below. Then, share your responses with others.

1. WHAT: I am considering fasting from...

Food	Video games
Cell phone use/Text messaging	Working out
Facebook	Socializing
Recreational shopping/Malls	Talk radio
TV	Internet
Checking email	Other:

2. WHEN: I am considering fasting...

Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Yearly
Other:
Never

3. WHY: I am considering fasting...

To demonstrate repentance
To express self-discipline
For an important decision
To share with others
Other:

In light of Jesus' teaching, should all Christians fast? If God is not leading you to fast, do you feel guilty? Explain.

How hard has it been/would it be for you to go on a fast and not let other people know?

How has this sermon changed your thoughts about fasting?

Group Prayer Time (Supplication)

Pray together as a group for the changes God wants to accomplish in your heart and life regarding fasting.

For Further Reflection

Read: *Isaiah 58:1-9*

How does this reinforce the teaching of Jesus on fasting? Can you think of a time when you fasted without realizing you were?