

May 26, 2019
A Hunger For God
Matthew 6:16-18

This week, Pastor David continued the Sermon on the Mount series with a look at Jesus' most sustained teaching on fasting.

- How does fasting as a cultural trend differ from fasting as a spiritual practice and/or expectation?
- Have you ever participated in a time of fasting? Why or why not?
- The definition of Biblical fasting is "*the intentional giving up of food (and, for shorter periods of time, water) to more fully seek God*". How could fasting connect your physical life to your spiritual life?
- How might Satan distort God's instructions regarding fasting (and, potentially, other spiritual disciplines)?
- Have you considered fasting to seek God's guidance, repent of sin, seek deliverance or protection, express your love and worship, overcome temptation? If not, is your refusal to fast a sign that the idol of self-sufficiency, pleasure and comfort is what is most important to you? Explain.
- What would it take to make you willing to participate in a time of Biblical fasting?

ADDITIONAL DISCOVERY:

For More Information on the Christian purpose and practice of Fasting, Pastor David Recommends the Following Resources:

- Guide to Prayer & Fasting - <http://www.dawsonchurch.org/prayer-fasting>

An Overview of Fasting:

- John Piper, A Hunger for God
- Donald Whitney, Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, Chapter. 9 “Fasting... for the Purpose of Godliness”

The Purpose of Fasting:

- David Mathis, “The Secret Benefit of Fasting”
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-secret-benefit-of-fasting>
- “Ask Pastor John?” What is the Purpose of Fasting?
<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-the-purpose-of-fasting>

Practical Tips for Fasting:

- Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, “Fasting: A Practical Guide”
<https://renovare.org/articles/fasting-a-practical-guide>

“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. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 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.” Matthew 6:16-18

Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with

them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.” Matthew 9:14-15

Donald Whitney, Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life provides a helpful biblical overview of fasting’s spiritual purposes that include:

- seeking God’s guidance (Judges 20:26; Acts 14:23)
- expressing grief (1 Samuel 31:13; 2 Samuel 1:11–12)
- seeking deliverance or protection (2 Chronicles 20:3–4; Ezra 8:21–23)
- expressing repentance and returning to God (1 Samuel 7:6; Jonah 3:5–8)
- humbling oneself before God (1 Kings 21:27–29; Psalm 35:13)
- expressing concern for the work of God (Nehemiah 1:3–4; Daniel 9:3)
- ministering to the needs of others (Isaiah 58:3–7)
- overcoming temptation and dedicating yourself to God (Matthew 4:1–11)
- expressing love and worship to God (Luke 2:37)

“Fasting had become a device for having people look at them, talk about them, admire them, and say in astonishment: ‘Oh, what wonderful saints these people are! They do not live like the other, ordinary people. They go around in gray coats, with their heads hanging down and a sour, pale expression on their faces. If such people do not get to heaven, what will become of the rest of us.”

Martin Luther, Sermon on the Mount

Watch this week’s sermon at www.dawsonchurch.org/SOTM

