

MC Discussion Guide

January 22, 2023

Sermon Title

"Follow Me: Fasting"

Sermon Text

Matthew 6:16-18

01. Truths I'm Affirming

““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

What does the Bible say about fasting?

- Biblical fasting is the act of depriving oneself temporarily of food in order to pursue greater devotion to God.
- Considered passages like 1 Corinthians 7:5, biblical fasting can be widened to include any voluntary and intentional abstention for the sake of greater devotion to God.
- Jesus's teaching here suggests that, while fasting isn't commanded, his followers are expected to regularly practice fasting as a spiritual discipline.

Why should we fast?

- Primarily, fasting teaches us to depend upon God.

"Surely then, one of the purposes of fasting is to shatter the illusion that we are somehow self-made, self-dependent, self-fulfilling creatures. By temporarily depriving ourselves of food, technology, or any of the hundreds of other things we are tempted to trust in, our taste for God and trust in him, instead of ourselves, might be revived." -Robert McKinney

- Fasting, like all other spiritual disciplines, cultivates Christ-likeness and godliness in us for the sake of God's glory and our joy in him.
- Fasting also reacquaints us with the reality that our world is broken, but it will not always be this way.

When should we fast?

1. When we are at crossroads moments in our lives.
2. As a sign of repentance and grief over our sin.
3. In response to grief and calamity in our lives.
4. As a means to catalyze social justice. (Isaiah 58)

02. Questions I'm Asking

- Why is fasting as a spiritual discipline such a foreign concept in our modern church context, particularly here in the United States?
- Have you ever attempted a fast? What motivated you to commit to fasting? How did it go?
- What are some barriers that might prevent you from developing the spiritual discipline of fasting?
- How might understanding the purpose of fasting help you push past those barriers and begin to cultivate this important spiritual discipline?

03. Actions I'm Taking

- Pastor Robert offered several practical steps to pursue the spiritual discipline of fasting:
 - Start small
 - Know your limits
 - Don't make fasting a performance
 - Show one another grace
 - Challenge: Set aside one day over the next 6 weeks to fast for one of the four reasons mentioned. Keep it purposeful and private. Stay prayerful. See what God will do!
- What are some other practical steps you can take to begin cultivating the spiritual discipline of fasting?
- What are some other actions steps you feel God is calling you to take in response to the Scriptures this week?

