

The Spiritual Discipline of Fasting

Discussion Guide

Use this guide by yourself, with a friend, or in a group to help you pursue a deeper relationship with Jesus this week!

Open

This past week on Wednesday marked the beginning of the season of Lent, a yearly 40-day focus that helps Jesus' followers prepare themselves for Easter Sunday (which also serves as the final day of celebration). The practice of Lent has been observed by Christians around the world since the early centuries of the church, and the goal is to encourage Jesus' followers during this time to fast, pray, and give generously. Our study today will specifically look at the discipline of fasting, so to get started let everyone in the group share - what is the one thing that they would want to take with them if they were stranded on a deserted island and why...

BIG THOUGHT

Periodically choosing to replace time spent eating a meal, going out, browsing social media, etc. with time spent focusing on God can be a helpful tool in helping us follow God more closely.

Dig

1. Fasting (going without food) was considered a normal part of Jewish life, so it's not surprising that it came up as a part of Jesus' teaching. Read Matthew 6:16. What was apparently happening when some people would enter a time of fasting? Have you ever seen anyone use their spiritual devotion to try to gain status or approval? What happened? What do you think Jesus means when he says that people's admiration is the "only reward they will ever get."?
2. Now read v. 17-18. How does Jesus say we should look when we're fasting? How would this also apply to any time we're engaged in a spiritual discipline like serving, praying, or giving?

3. Now read v. 18. Who does Jesus *not* want us to get noticed by when we fast? But who does Jesus say *will* notice? As a group, see if you can come up with a list of what God's rewards might be...
4. To keep the role of fasting (and all spiritual disciplines) in perspective, read Colossians 2:16-19. Where does Paul remind us to keep our focus? (v. 17) Who is ultimately responsible for our growth? (v. 19) In your opinion, do you think Paul still believes fasting can be helpful? (see v. 16) Explain your thoughts...
5. To finish, read Colossians 2:20-23. What attitude does Paul remind us to maintain about our spiritual disciplines? (v. 23) Now read Romans 14:17-19. What should be our main focus?

Take it Further

Talk with God about whether replacing time spent eating a meal, watching tv, browsing social media, etc. with time spent focusing on Him could be helpful for your spiritual growth, and if the answer is yes then get started!

Daily Readings

Day 1: Luke 2:36-37
Day 2: Acts 13:2-3
Day 3: Psalm 69:10

Day 4: Acts 14:23
Day 5: Nehemiah 1:4
Day 6: Jeremiah 29:13

Memory Verses: Matthew 6:17-18



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