

**Summer School -**

**Title – Why Christians Should Fast**

**Prayer**

**Purpose/Review**

**As we continue in our series this morning...**

**I want us to explore...another theme that runs throughout the bible**

**And that theme is fasting...**

**SERMON TITLE – Why Christians Should Fast**

**What is fasting...**

**Cambridge Dictionary**

**Fasting** - the practice of eating no food or not eating particular foods for a period of time

**Why do people fast...**

**Encyclopedia Britannica**

People fast for various reasons, including health, ritual, religion, and ethics.

**Why would people fast for health...**

Fasting can have health benefits, such as increased weight loss and better brain function.

## **Healthline.com**

Promotes blood sugar management by reducing insulin resistance

Promotes better health by fighting inflammation

May enhance heart health by improving blood pressure

Aids weight loss by limiting calorie intake

May aid in cancer prevention

## **What about Christians... are we supposed to fast...?**

### **What does the bible say about fasting...?**

Scripture does not command Christians to fast. God does not require or demand it of Christians. At the same time, the Bible presents fasting as something that is good, profitable, and beneficial... **Gotquestions.org**

**And this is what we will explore this morning...**

## **Reading**

### **Matthew 6**

16 Whenever you fast...

## **Doctrinal**

**As we have done throughout this series is to look at our reading in context...**

But before we do I want to point out something in our reading that speaks volumes...

**This is Jesus speaking... Whenever you... or some translations have...When you...**

**NOTE-**

Jesus does not say "if" you fast.. but "whenever" you fast.  
Jesus takes for granted that His disciples will observe the custom of fasting.

In other words.... it's one of those subtle phrases...  
That if we can connect the dots... that is teaching us something  
Without actually taking the time to teach

**A message within a message without stating it... so to speak...**

This is what we have in our reading...

**Whenever you fast...**

Jesus uses this technique two other times in His teaching....

**Just before our reading Jesus stated...**

**Matthew 6**

5 When you pray...

**Prayer was a given... it was to be part of our Christian heritage...**

*And at the beginning of this chapter we read...*

**Matthew 6**

2 So when you give...

**NOTE-**

Yes...It is assumed that giving or tithing is to be part of our walk with Jesus

**Giving... Prayer... and Fasting... are all intrinsically linked to our Christian faith...**

**So with that foundation...**

**OPEN YOUR BIBLES TO Matthew 6:16-18**

### **Matthew 6**

16 Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face 18 so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

**Notice the warning that Jesus gives...**

**Whenever you fast... make sure that you don't...**

#### **NOTE-**

Jesus gives us a warning to check our motives... our reasons for fasting  
Don't be like the hypocrites that fast to be noticed by men

**Instead... fast in secret... with this promise attached...**

**18... your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you**

**More on this in a moment...**

#### **NOTE-**

What we should begin to see is that praying... or giving... or fasting  
Are not about fulfilling a command... but about a heart issue

**What are your motives for prayer... for giving.... For fasting**

**This is an extremely important question to ask ourselves**

Why am I choosing to fast...?

Why do I want to spend time in prayer...?

Why do I choose to tithe...?

**Am I seeking God... or am I seeking to manipulate God...?**

Jesus warns us about our motives with all three

**Jesus gives us the same warning when we pray as He did with fasting...**

**Matthew 6**

7 And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

**The same warning... when we give or when we tithe...**

**Matthew 6**

2 So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men.

**NOTE-**

And with all three Jesus mentions the same promise

**Your Father in heaven will reward you...**

What are your motives...?

Are you seeking the approval of men.... Then that's what you'll receive

Or are you seeking the approval of God... Then that is what you'll receive

**NOTE-**

It's very important to understand an important truth  
Jesus is not saying that we will be rewarded in the same way

He is not saying that if we tithe faithfully that we will be rewarded financially  
That is the false teaching of the Prosperity Gospel

**God will reward you according to His purpose... not ours**

**NOTE-**

There is something else to understand about Fasting... and Giving... and Prayer....

**Are all to be a form of worship...**

We are not to fast or give or offer up prayers out of compulsion

Nor out of obligation... but out of love for God...

**Luke 10**

27 And He answered, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind...

***We are to love God with everything that we have... With every fiber of our being...***

**NOTE-**

A couple of months ago we did a deep dive into prayer

***I do not believe that anyone of us would disagree that prayer is a form of worship....***

**Tithing to God... or giving to God is a form of worship...**

When we tithe... we are placing God first

**We are worshiping Him by trusting Him instead of trusting ourselves**

*This morning we are looking into fasting...*

**NOTE-**

Some may have the wrong assumption that fasting is an Old Testament practice  
And that the New Testament doesn't command us to fast

**That will be the first of our bullet points...**

Is Fasting a New Testament practice

When Should We Fast

How Should We Fast

**Application**

**So let us begin with our first bullet point...**

**Why Christians Should Fast**

**1) Is Fasting a New Testament practice**

**NOTE-**

As I said... nowhere in the New Testament are we commanded to fast  
One might use the argument that when Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount

The New Covenant (The Lord's Supper) had not been implemented yet  
Therefore... during the period of the Gospels they were still under Jewish law

**Was fasting in practice while the New Testament was being written...**

**NOTE-**

Then the best place to look is the one book of the bible  
That describes the history of the early church

When the church was seeking the Lord and fasting...

Saul and Barnabas were called to begin their first missionary journey...

### **Acts 13**

2 While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. 3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

When Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch we read...

### **Acts 14**

23 When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

**What accompanied fasting within these two examples... prayer**

Fasting and prayer are often linked together (Luke 2:37; 5:33). Too often, the focus of fasting is on the lack of food. Instead, the purpose of fasting should be to take your eyes off the things of this world to focus completely on God. Fasting is a way to demonstrate to God, and to ourselves, that we are serious about our relationship with Him. Fasting helps us gain a new perspective and a renewed reliance upon God...**GotQuestions.org**

**Which leads us to our Second Bullet point...**

### **Why Christians Should Fast**

1) Is Fasting a New Testament practice

2) **When Should We Fast**

## **When should we fast...?**

What we discover in all of the New Testament examples  
Is a seeking of the Lord for direction

During an extremely traumatic moment in Paul's life  
We see that he fasted for 3 days when he was blinded by his encounter with Jesus

### **Acts 9**

8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

**If you desire a deeper, more intimate and fruitful relationship with God, or if you need His help in a time of real need, fasting is an important means of grace to practice.**

Immediately after being baptized Jesus spent 40 days fasting seeking God...

### **Luke 4**

1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness 2 for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days...

**The day before the Pilgrims left the Mayflower, they held a day of fasting and prayer...**

I proclaimed a fast that we might humble ourselves before God, and seek of Him a right way for us... **William Bradford (Of Plymouth Plantation)**

**Which brings us to our third bullet point...**

## Why Christians Should Fast

- 1) Is Fasting a New Testament practice
- 2) When Should We Fast
- 3) How Should We Fast

### NOTE-

It is not the mere performance of fasting that God desires  
But the proper motive of the heart

## What is the definition of fasting...?

**Fasting** - the practice of eating no food or not eating particular foods for a period of time

### NOTE-

If we choose to fast... we must follow the biblical methods

Although the purposes for which we seek God may vary, going without food does not. This is an important distinction, because today there is a tendency to expand the word fasting to include things other than food, such as television, movies, internet, social media, or cell phones. Although it is certainly right to abstain from any number of things that are hindering our relationship with God, that is not what the Bible means by fasting...**Thomas A. Tarrants C.S. Lewis Institute**

## *What then should be our motivation to fast...*

### Ezra 8

21 Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions.

## **NOTE-**

There is only one motivation that can be the basis for fasting  
That motive is simply to humble ourselves before God

And that true desire to humble ourselves before God  
Ought to result in a life characterized by fasting and prayer

**Our desire to humble ourselves before God should contain two aspects...**

First... humbling ourselves should involve confession and repentance

Second... that it be done before God

### **Joel 2**

12 Yet even now, declares the Lord,  
Return to Me with all your heart,  
And with fasting, weeping and mourning

## **NOTE-**

Fasting should be accompanied by prayer with a desire to seek God's face  
A deep desire to know God more

**Why should Christians fast...?**

Because God is the source of everything we need for life...

Water, air to breathe, food to eat...

Our appetite is what we sacrifice on the altar...

We fast to see God more clearly...

We fast draw strength from His presence...

**CLOSE**