

Summer Focus - Essentials

“Fasting”

Matthew 6:16-18

Sunday, June 16, 2013

INTRODUCTION:

A. What is Fasting?

1. To do without something (i.e. food) for a period of time for the purpose of seeking spiritual satisfaction
2. Regular practice of God's people (OT / NT)
3. What fasting is not
 - a) A religious performance
 - b) A promotion of self (independence)
 - c) Asceticism (doing without to gain righteousness)
 - d) The way we're talking about it today, fasting is strictly a Christian exercise
4. What fasting looks like
 - a) Normal
 - b) A promotion of God (dependence)

B. Why Fast?

1. Ultimately, we fast so that we hunger for God
2. OT reasons
 - a) One fast in the OT given as part of the Law was that practiced on the Day of Atonement (**Lev.16:29-31**)
 - b) For humility, seeking God's favor (**Ezra 8:21; Neh. 1:4**)
 - (1) Killing pride by increasing dependence upon God
 - (2) Confessing sin
 - (3) Pursuing restoration
 - (4) Examples: **Psalms 69:10; 109:24; Isaiah 58:4; Daniel 9:3; Joel 2:12**
 - c) For repentance (**Ezra 9:5; Neh. 9:1**)
 - d) For mourning (**Esther 4:3; Psalm 35:13**)
 - e) For obedience to His Word (**Jer.36:6**)
3. NT reasons
 - a) For obedience (**Matthew 4:1-2**)
 - (1) Led by the Spirit to the wilderness
 - (2) Parallels the Exodus
 - (3) Tempted in every way, yet without sin (**Hebrews 4:15-16**)
 - b) For anticipation (**Matthew 9:14; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33**)

- c) For focus (**Luke 2:37**)
- d) For worship (**Acts 13:2-3**)
- e) For commissioning (**Acts 14:23**)

C. How to Fast?

1. Decide to do it
 - a) The Bible doesn't give a frequency plan
 - b) The frequency, however, appears to be regular

2. Plan on it
 - a) Prayerfully plan why you need the fast
 - b) Plan what you'll do without
 - c) Plan how long you'll do without it
 - d) Plan your schedule around it
 - e) Plan how you'll break your fast

3. Do it
 - a) Like prayer, you learn to fast by fasting
 - b) Take the time you're fasting to pray
 - c) Journal your fast
 - d) Memorize scripture during your fast

4. Keep doing it

Resources:

- The Bible
- *Hunger for God*, by John Piper
- *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life*, by Don Whitney
- *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, by Henry Scougal

D. Closing