



WEEK 3 FASTING & FEASTING

After **fasting** forty days and forty nights, Jesus was hungry.
Matthew 4:2 NIV

The Son of Man... **feasts and drinks**, and you say, 'He's a glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and other sinners!'
Luke 7:34 NLT

WHAT IS FASTING?

_____ from something, usually food, for a limited time in order to more fully engage in a spiritual practice.

WHY IS FASTING IMPORTANT?

- It's all through _____
- It's all through _____
- It's _____ (physically and spiritually)

WAS FASTING IMPORTANT TO JESUS?

- Jesus _____ (Matthew 4:2)
- Jesus _____ (Matthew 6:16a)
- Jesus _____ (Matthew 6:16b-18)

WHY DID PEOPLE STOP FASTING?

- It seems _____
- It seems _____
- It seems _____

HOW IS FASTING GOOD FOR ME?

- Teaches me _____

So prepare your minds for action and exercise **self-control**.

1 Peter 1:13a NLT

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and **self-discipline**. 2 Timothy 1:7 NLT

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, **self-control**; and to **self-control**, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.

2 Peter 2:5-7 NIV

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It **teaches us to say “No”** to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live **self-controlled**, upright and godly lives in this present age.

Titus 2:11,12 NIV

Their destiny is destruction, **their god is their stomach**, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. Philippians 3:19,20a NIV

- Focuses my _____

“Be careful to celebrate the Day of Atonement ...as an official day for holy assembly, a day to **deny yourselves** and present special gifts to the LORD.” Leviticus 23:27 NLT

Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. **With prayer and fasting**, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. Acts 14:23 NLT

- Develops empathy for the _____

“This is the kind of **fasting** I want... **Share your food with the hungry**, and give shelter to the homeless.” Isaiah 58:6,7a

THREE PROBLEMS TO AVOID

- Fasting as mere _____

“Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: ‘When you **fasted** and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, **did you really fast for Me—for Me?**’” Zechariah 7:5 NKJV

- Fasting as magic _____

“‘We have fasted before you!’ they say. ‘**Why aren’t you impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves**, and you don’t even notice it!’ I will tell you why! ...You humble yourselves by **going through the motions** of penance... and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the Lord?”
Isaiah 58:3-7 NLT

- Fasting as a means _____

Jesus said, “And **when you fast**, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled **so people will admire them for their fasting**. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. Matthew 6:16 NLT

THREE WAYS TO START FASTING

- Pick something to fast from

The traditional option: food. You may also choose to fast from sugar, alcohol, caffeine, social media, TV, your phone, or something else. What craving has a hold on you?

- Sundown to sundown

The traditional 24-hour fast goes from sundown to sundown--from dinner to dinner--skipping breakfast and lunch. Consider a weekly rhythm, such as sundown Sunday to sundown Monday.

- Start with one meal

If fasting sounds intimidating, try skipping one meal--maybe lunch--and replacing it with prayer and meditation.

NOTE: If food is a trigger, be wise

If you have an eating disorder, consider fasting from something other than food: phone, social media, etc. As always, use wisdom and grace, do not be legalistic about this.

DON'T FORGET TO FEAST!

And Nehemiah continued, "Go and celebrate with a **feast** of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!"

Nehemiah 8:10 NLT

Happy is the land whose king is a noble leader and whose leaders **feast** at the **proper time** to **gain strength** for their work, not to get drunk.

In Jerusalem, the Lord of Heaven's Armies will spread a wonderful **feast** for all the people of the world. It will be a delicious banquet with clear, well-aged wine and choice meat. Isaiah 25:6 NLT

REMEMBER:

Fasting & feasting are not ends to themselves; their purpose is to help us _____.

Resources

- Aaron Damiani, *The Good of Giving Up*
- Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*
- David Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For reflection & discussion

1. What is your attitude toward fasting, or self-denial? Have you ever fasted?
2. Why do you suppose that learning self-denial is one of life's most important lessons?
3. Has self-denial ever brought you something good, or taught you something valuable?
4. Why do you think fasting and prayer are mentioned together so frequently in the Bible? How might fasting focus prayer?
5. In what way will you try fasting during the weeks of Lent leading up to Easter?