

Strengthening Fasting – Matthew 6:16-21

1. What has your past experience with fasting been?
2. Is it good news or bad news that moderate fasting is probably good for your health?
3. Why have you or haven't you fasted in the past?
4. Most people are tempted to look for the Bible passages that support our point of view but why is this an unhelpful temptation and how can we fight against it?
5. Read Matthew 6:16-18. What are the first three words of verse 16 and what did Jesus mean by them and what does that mean for us? What is Jesus looking for in a good attitude towards fasting?
6. Read Moses fast (Exodus 34:28-29) and Jesus fast (Matthew 4:1-4). What are circumstances in which these two figures were fasting? What did Moses and Jesus experience during these times of fasting? How has fasting helped them get serious with God?
7. What are the biblical connections between the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-6) and Jesus fasting in the desert? In both cases what is the devil attempting to do?
8. Are there any ways that we could fast together or encourage each other as we fast?
9. *“So let's sum up; despite my very great desire to ignore fasting, God's word has really been challenging me about how fasting can strengthen my Christian walk because it strengthened Moses walk and it strengthened Jesus walk. That there is something very powerful about choosing to deny ourselves, it speaks volumes into our spirit, it helps us achieve freedom from our appetites and clarity in our fight against the powers of this dark world. Fasting is a good choice for the believer who wants to get serious with God. Because at the end of the day fasting is our spirit saying yes to God. That's why God is not at all interested in proscribed fasts, why God is not at all interested in ritual fasts (Isaiah 58), why God is not at all interested in fasting as a religious thing, God is actually interested in us.”* Discuss

Additional questions if you have time

- Read Matthew 9:14-15. What does Jesus say is the purpose of fasting?
- Read Isaiah 58. What insights does God give us about the type of fasting that He desires?