

INTRODUCTION: Message - "Fasting - Introduction" (Matthew 5:6)

Striving for holiness involves a lifetime of practicing a set of disciplines that help us to grow spiritually. Fasting is one discipline that gets very little attention. There are many examples of fasting in the bible. What is fasting and why should Christians care? How will it benefit my spiritual journey with God? Let's see what God has to say about this subject...

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. (Hebrews 12:14): "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:". How you recognize holiness? Can you identify things that are UNHOLY?
2. Compare John 13:2-12 with John 21:1-8. In a solemn and private setting, Jesus stripped down to the level of a slave person (13:4), then put his clothes back on (13:12). Yet Peter worked at night with little or no clothing BUT clothed himself before greeting the Lord. They all had been a very close-knit group for over three years. Then why did Peter feel it was necessary to cloth himself before greeting the Lord (21:7)?
3. Ronnie Floyd, author of "The Power Of Prayer and Fasting" observes that scripture shows that: *"Fasting is the abstinence from food with a spiritual goal in mind OR for a spiritual purpose"* (pg 3). Do you have any personal spiritual goals to attain OR spiritual battles to overcome? Are you struggling with sins that are difficult to overcome?
4. Read Luke 5:33-35 (also compare with Matthew 9:14-15 and Mark 2:18-20). What did Jesus expect would happen when he was gone?
5. Read Matthew 6:1-18. This is sometimes referred to as the three big "Whens". When you give (v2), when you pray (v5), and when you fast (v16). Is fasting a discipline to be considered on the same level as giving and praying?
6. Read Joel 2:12-13. What part does fasting play in God's command in these verses?

SO WHAT?:

Fasting is one of the three big "Whens" that Jesus talked about. Jesus does not indicate that this discipline was ever optional, but expected fasting to be a normal discipline on the same level as giving and praying. Use a good concordance (such as Strong's Concordance) to look up the word "fasting". Think about the importance of this discipline.

THINK ABOUT IT:

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14, KJV)