

**Gospel of Matthew “Fasting and Feasting”**  
**Matthew 6:16-18**  
**August 7, 2022**

Matthew 6:1

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 6:16-18

16 “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Fasting is the abstinence from food with a spiritual goal in mind or for a spiritual purpose.

Jesus says don't fast to be seen. Be normal in appearance when we are being spiritual in practice.

*Why should we fast?*

Fasting is a way to sharpen the dull edge of our spiritual walk.

Arthur Wallis

“Fasting is calculated to bring a note of urgency and persistence into our praying, and to give force to our pleas in the court of heaven.”

Matthew 9:14-17

14 Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” 15 And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. 16 No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. 17 Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”

Fasting empowers, fosters dependency and purifies.

Luke 14:16-20

16 But he said to him, “A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. 17 And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant[c] to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me

excused.' 19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' 20 And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'

The greatest competitors in our spiritual walk are some of God's best gifts.

**Philippians 3:18-19**

18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

Fasting fosters empathy for those who needs Jesus' help.

### **Grow Group Discussion Questions**

- What did God say to you during our Sunday gathering?
- Have you ever fasted from food or from something else for a period of time to pursue God? What did you fast from? What were some of your concerns going into the fast and what benefits did you experience?
- As Jesus talks about fasting in Matthew 6, it is third example of how we might wish to be esteemed for being spiritual. How does Jesus get you thinking about being a normal person versus being super spiritual? What do you hear Jesus saying in regard to showy spirituality?
- The sermon highlights different reasons for fasting from empowering our prayers, dependency on Jesus, subduing impulses and idols, and creating empathy for those that hurt. Which one of these "why's" of fasting is a good challenge for you?
- Discuss the idea of fasting as a group, perhaps taking a particular meal time and spending it in prayer with one another or for one another. What are your some of your thoughts on how to implement a personal or group fast?