



Exploring the Kingdom of God in Matthew:

The Power of a Fasted Life!

Feb 4, 2018

TEXT: MATTHEW 6:16-18

1. First, please note that Jesus says “when” not “if” you fast! (Matt 6:16) This implies that followers of Jesus would fast, and perhaps fast often.
2. Jesus instructs that fasting is to be done before God; that is, done specifically to please the LORD and not to be seen of men in an attempt to impress. Again, this is a heart issue.
3. When fasting personally, Christians are to give no outward appearance of fasting. It is to be done in secret.
4. This is why CRCC often gives fasting “guidelines” but not “rules.” Ultimately, whether you fast and how is between you and God.
5. However, please know that fasting promotes a surrendered life of self-denial, and is a powerful weapon in the Christian’s arsenal against the world, the flesh, and the devil!

WHAT IS A “FASTED LIFE?”

First, let’s define biblical fasting. *Fasting is spiritual discipline wherein a believer abstains from food to seek the LORD. It is an act of asceticism or severe self-discipline where the desires of the flesh are denied that the realities of the Spirit might become clearer and more manifest. The basic purpose in Scripture for fasting is the cleansing of soul...the crucifying of the flesh.*

Many also see benefits to “fasting” in areas other than food, especially in our modern, self-indulgent, consumer-based culture. Fasting television, social media, addictive drinks are common examples.

A Fasted Life then is a life lived with a progressive or increasing sense of cross-carrying and self-denial. It is a life wherein a follower of Jesus realizes he/she cannot live as the world lives, think as the world thinks, or do what the world does AND grow in sanctification and grace at the same time. Disciples of Jesus who live in this manner deny themselves daily, carry their cross, and follow the Master who saved them by His blood.

BENEFITS OF A FASTED LIFE!

1. A more joyful **Perspective!**
 - Fasting and a fasted life allows the Kingdom citizen to focus more on Christ and those things that Christ values and blesses. (Isa 58:10-11)
2. A more repentant or **Penitent** style of living
 - There is something about struggling to deny oneself in order to pray and seek God that creates the desire to repent. Later, please read Dan 9:2-19.
3. **Purity**...an increased practical holiness!
 - How many of you would benefit from less carnality and more spiritual power? I would!
 - A fasted life can be described as a less worldly life.

4. Power in **Prayer!**

- Dan 9:20-23; Acts 10:30-33, 44-48; Acts 13:1-3; Matt 17:19-21

5. **Productivity**...more Kingdom work accomplished!

- A fasted life would incorporate the fruitful **benefits** of biblical fasting into daily living. Can you imagine being more consistent in “loosing bonds of wickedness” or letting “the oppressed go free” or sharing your bread with the hungry through hospitality? (Isa 58:6-8)
- All of these things require tremendous love-based discipline day to day.
- Thankfully, God gives promises to those living this way: speedy healing, a more holy testimony, and divine protection! (Isa 58:8)

THE MAIN OBJECTION TO A FASTED LIFE: LOVE OF SELF

We live in a **self**-indulgent, **self**-actualizing, **self**-serving, **self**-gratifying, **self**-promoting culture. Denying self is the opposite of just about every popular message, from sex to savings. I agree with Reneé Ellison who said:

*Growing up in this day and age, we have a difficult time with any notion of submitting to anything if it causes us discomfort, cramps our style, or requires personal sacrifice. “You deserve a break today” is written all over the fabric of society. Any infringement on our space is intolerable. So we brand uncommon obedience with legalism. We tend to view the Bible as a book of suggestions. We don’t know how to process the word commandments. **Our own single great commandment tends to be self-indulgence.** I know the mentality well, for it is in my own heart.*

May the LORD forgive us and help us mature!

APPLICATIONS FOR EDIFICATION (BUILDING UP) AND ENCOURAGEMENT

(ROM 14:19; EPH 4:9; 1 THES 5:11; JUDE 1:20)

1. There are so many benefits to fasting and living with more discipline. This week, discuss what *permanent* changes you might make to take our 2018 consecration into the rest of the year.
2. If Israel would walk in greater consecration, here is what the LORD said:

Isa 58:12 And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

In other words, the fruitful, joyful reformation and revival so many of us long for is connected to our willingness to die to ourselves. Take a moment and dream about better days, stronger churches, more Spiritual power, more souls saved, generations raised up in the fear of God, and the Name of Jesus held in higher honor in the world!

3. Discuss the difficulties of living “set apart” in Jesus. In your circle of family, fellowship (church), and friends, how might you help each other better?