

How to **SUPERSIZE** Your Prayers and Worship: What Jesus Said about Fasting

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“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. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 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.” -Matthew 6:16-18

I. Why you should fast

- A. Fast to obey Jesus, Matthew 6:16; 9:15; Luke 5:34-35
- B. Fast to pursue true righteousness, Matthew 5:20
- C. Fast as an “act of righteousness,” Matthew 6:1, cp. 6:2-18
- D. Fast as part of your private worship of the Father, Matthew 6:1-18
- E. Fast to follow the example of Jesus and many others, Matthew 4:1-2; BONUS SECTION #2
- F. Fast to mourn, 1 Samuel 1:12
- G. Fast to humble yourself, Psalm 35:13; 34:18; 51:17; 138:6; Nehemiah 9:1-2; Isaiah 58:3; 57:15; 66:1-2; 2 Chronicles 34:27; James 4:6
- H. Fast for answered prayer, Matthew 6:18; Isaiah 58:4

II. How you should fast

- A. Not to exaggerate your difficulty, Matthew 6:16-17
- B. Not to impress others, Matthew 6:16-18a; 6:1
- C. Fast to God, Matthew 6:18; Zechariah 7:5
- D. Fast in purity, Matthew 6:18; 5:3, 8; Isaiah 58:3-7, 9; Psalm 51:6, 10, 12
- E. Fast with hope, Matthew 6:18

BONUS SECTION #1

How to do acts of Righteousness: The Structure of Matthew 6:1-18

Common Command: “not to be seen by men”

Common Bottom Line: “reward”

6:1 Summary Statement

6:2-4 Wrong and Right Giving

6:2 When you give, do not

6:3-4 When you give, do

6:5-15 Wrong and Right Praying

6:5 When you pray, do not

6:6 When you pray, do

6:7-8 When you pray, do not

6:9-15 When you pray, do

6:16-18 Wrong and Right Fasting

6:16 When you fast, do not

6:17-18 When you fast, do

BONUS SECTION #2

Biblical Examples of Fasting

1. Jesus, Matthew 4:1-2
2. Paul, Barnabas, the church leaders, and the church, Acts 13:2-3; 14:23
3. Anna, Luke 2:36
4. Disciples of John the Baptist, Mark 2:18
5. Moses, Deuteronomy 9:9, 18
6. David, 1 Samuel 1:12; 12:16-23; Psalm 35:13; 69:10; 109:24
7. Elijah, 1 Kings 19:8
8. Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20:3
9. Daniel, Daniel 9:3, 10:3-4
10. The Israelite Army, Judges 20:26; 1 Samuel 7:5-6
11. The Jewish people, Ezra 8:21-23; Nehemiah 1:4; 9:1-2; Esther 4:3, 16
12. Nineveh, Jonah 3:5

NOTE: The Whopper Passage on fasting is Isaiah 58:1-12. It’s a monster. Read it.

Zechariah Chapters 7-8 is a *lengthy* passage on fasting, and quite good. But Isaiah 58 takes the prize.

BONUS SECTION #3

Guidelines for Fasting

1. **DON’T** attempt a 40-day fast! It could be physically harmful. Start by fasting one meal. After you have done that a few times, then try two meals, or fast till sundown. Then fast longer if you wish. But be careful.
2. Another type of fast is a partial fast, like Daniel’s in 10:3, where he ate only coarse bread. In this type of fast, you avoid specific foods for a day or an extended period of time.
3. Always drink plenty of water.
4. If you are fasting more than a meal or two, watch your health.
5. Watch your breath. You will see what I mean. Just sayin’!
6. Always keep the purposes of the fast in view, especially humbling yourself and praying.

Jack Littlefield teaches middle school English at a public school in Watts. A graduate of Talbot Theological Seminary, he served as a senior pastor for over 20 years (Hollywood, San Francisco, Accra, Cleveland, Downey, and, from 1998-2002, at the Long Beach Alliance Church!). He was a missionary in West Africa for three years. He has two adult children, Jeremy and Jacqueline. Jack and his wife Amy currently live in North Redondo Beach. You can contact Jack by emailing him at littlefieldjack@yahoo.com.

MATTHEW 5-7 THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

PURPOSE: To encourage true righteousness as the standard of the Kingdom of heaven in contrast with the false righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

KEY VERSE: "FOR I SAY TO YOU THAT UNLESS YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS SURPASSES THAT OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, YOU WILL NOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." MATTHEW 5:20

THE SETTING, 5:1-2		INTRO- DUCTION	I. TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE LAW	II. TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND GOOD DEEDS	III. TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND POSSESSIONS	IV. TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND RELATIONSHIPS	CONCLUSION: TIME TO RESPOND!
KEY WORDS	KEY VERSES	THE CHARACTER OF TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS, 5:3-12 THE NEW TEACHERS OF TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS, 5:13-14 THE NECESSITY OF TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS, 5:17-20	• ANGER, 5:21-26 • VOWS, 5:33-37 • LUST, 5:27-30 • REVENGE, 5:38-42 • DIVORCE, 5:31-32 • LOVE, 5:43-47 • SUMMARY, 5:48	SUMMARY, 6:1 WHEN YOU GIVE ALMS, 6:2-4 WHEN YOU PRAY, 6:5-15 WHEN YOU FAST, 6:16-18	TYPES OF POSSESSIONS, 6:19-21 SINGLE-MINDEDNESS AND POSSESSIONS, 6:22-24 WORRY AND POSSESSIONS, 6:25-34	JUDGING, 7:1-5 THE UNAPPRECIATIVE, 7:6 PRAYER, 7:7-11 FAIR TREATMENT, 7:12	TWO GATES, 7:13-14 TWO TREES, 7:15-23 TWO HOUSES, 7:24-27
		5:3	5:21	6:1	6:19	7:1	7:13
KEY WORDS	KEY VERSES	5:20	5:48 5:20 5:17	6:1	6:33	7:12	7:24-27
		"Blessed" "kingdom of heaven"	"You have heard" "But I say to you...."	"not... as the hypocrites" "your Father... in secret will reward you"	"Do not worry"	"This is the Law and the Prophets"	"These words of Mine"
KEY WORDS	THE RESPONSE, 7:28-29						

GROWTH GROUP GUIDE • WEEK 4: MATTHEW 6:16-18

SERMON REFLECTION

What were your thoughts on Sunday's message? Discuss with your group questions you had, things that stood out to you, and impressions you had.

Living like Jesus takes community! Obedience to Christ requires that we do it in the context of relationships. Because of that, we are going to look at various elements of INTENTIONAL GOSPEL RELATIONSHIPS.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is a character trait made up of many other character traits. In order to be called trustworthy, you must be seen to have a collection of characteristics combined together:



What else would you add underneath the umbrella of trustworthiness?

SCRIPTURE

1 Timothy 1:12, 1:15, 3:1, 3:11, 4:8-9 Psalm 19:7 Psalm 145:17

What makes God trustworthy?

How has God's trustworthiness been proven to you?

MAKING ROOM TO MAKE DISCIPLES

How do you think your ability to share the gospel with your neighbors relates to your trust in people? Have people been kind to you? Do you believe they will respond well to you? Do you find it intimidating to share about the intimacy of your relationship with God with people?

DISCUSSION

1. We have been talking recently about hypocrisy in our giving, praying, and fasting. Hypocrisy is basically living in a way that does not conform to your standards or beliefs. What do you think hypocrisy looks like in the context we live in today?
2. Romans says love must be without hypocrisy (or positively, love must be genuine). 1 John says perfect love casts out fear. What do you think love that is imperfect, disingenuous, or hypocritical produces in people?
3. It seems that the key to living without hypocrisy is the heart condition of trust. If we trust God, we will believe that He sees what we do in secret and rewards us. If we trust that He is good, we will trust that following His way is His way will really lead to flourishing. If we trust others, we can be open and honest about who we are. How have you seen hypocrisy and distrust relate in your life?

INTENTIONAL GOSPEL RELATIONSHIPS