

Fasting

Bible Study at a Glance:

Jesus said he expects us to fast, and he modeled it for us by doing it himself. There are several benefits of fasting, including humbling ourselves before God, exercising our will over our flesh's desires and acknowledging our dependence on God.

(Explain to the Group) = You don't have to read this word for word, but this is the general idea of what to explain before moving on.

- **Q: These are questions to ask the whole group**
 - A: Hopefully the group arrives at most of the answers on their own, but if they don't, redirect the discussion towards these answers, and be sure to tell the group the answers if no one quite got it.

CCC/Verses and quotes to read out loud are in boxes.

Matthew 4:1-2: *Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. ² He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. ³ The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." ⁴ He said in reply, "It is written: 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.'"*

Matthew 6:16-18: *"When you fast,[[] do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that you may not appear to others to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you."*

Joel 2:12: *Yet even now return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning.*

(Explain to the group) Notice in the first passage how Jesus uses the word "when" not "if" we fast.

- **Q: What is the point of Jesus fasting?**
 - A: There are some theological explanations behind the 40 days but suffice it to say for our purposes that a main point we can take away from it is that Jesus modeled for us the need to fast. We can't say we shouldn't fast if Jesus himself did it.

- **Q: What do you think are some spiritual benefits from fasting?**

- A:

- *Embracing an attitude of humility before God*
 - *Disciplining our own flesh to be subordinate to our spirits*
 - *Acknowledging our dependence on God for all things*
 - *Joining with Christ in his sufferings and his example*

- **Q: Why would you say it's important to humble ourselves before God? And how do you think fasting helps with that objective?**

- *A: Humility is very important in the Christian life. It is the opposite of pride which is what led Satan to rebel against God in the first place. Humility allows us to be in a rightly ordered relationship with God, that of creator and created, not two equals.*

- **Q: How can fasting help us overcome temptations?**

- *A: It's like building a spiritual muscle. As we exert our will over our hunger, we build up the strength to overcome other desires of the flesh, including sexual temptation or gluttony, or other examples.*

- **Q: What has your experience with fasting been like? Can you share any success or failure stories? Have you had times where you experienced some of these spiritual benefits?**