

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

— *Lorton* —

Questions

1. Read Matthew 6:16-18. What does it mean that your fasting is obvious to your Father? Does that affect how you approach fasting?
2. Jesus expected His followers to fast (Matthew 6:16 and 9:15) and Acts 13:2-3 and 14:23 show the early church fasting (along with many verses in the Old Testament that describe fasting by God's people). And yet the rest of the New Testament is silent about fasting. Have you been encouraged to start fasting, or to fast more, or fast less? Why?
3. Think about hunger from fasting and the desire for intimacy when there is mutual marital abstinence (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). How can such hunger/desire point you to a far greater spiritual need?
4. What might be a consideration or a caution for a believer who is weighing whether to fast by giving up a thing or activity other than food?
5. Based on our study, what are some reasons for fasting?
6. Would you consider fasting a meal or more this week ahead of Thursday night, and even fast and pray weekly over the next month?

For further reading:

A Hunger for God: Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer (1997) by John Piper

*Need prayer?
Someone will be up front by the piano
to pray with you after the 1st & 2nd services.*

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Whenever You Fast (pt.2)

Various Scriptures

Doug Sachtleben, Lead Pastor

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Fasting is rooted in a deep sense of humility before God and is a means by which we draw into more undistracted fellowship with the Lord. Today, we'll consider some practical steps we can take to grow in the practice of fasting.

Review:

Jesus fasted and taught about fasting (Matthew 4:1-4; 6:16-18; 9:14-15)

Fasting can be a humble expression of:

Confession and repentance.

Seeking from God

Fasting As an Act of Devotion

1. It frees up time ordinarily spent on eating.
2. The resulting hunger can press me toward the Lord.

Matthew 4:4 – Man's hunger demands more than food.

Matthew 6:18 – Fasting is seen by "your Father." It is an act of devotion to the Lord.

As with other acts of worship, like giving, the New Testament shows there is liberty to some of the particulars of our fasting, though within the other biblical principles we've already seen. While Jesus assumes believers will fast (Matt. 6:16) and even says that His disciples should fast until He returns (Matthew 9:15), the New Testament does not give commands about when we should fast or how long we should fast.

Does biblical fasting only pertain to food, or can I fast something other than food?

Fasting in the Bible is almost always about food. Biblical fasting seems to be about giving up something that is necessary.

The nearest equivalent is marital intimacy in 1 Corinthians 7:3-5.

In fasting, we set aside something that is necessary for life, while in mutual marital abstinence (for the purpose of prayer) we set aside something that God says is necessary for marriage.

Both practices can point us to what should be our greatest hunger/desire: My need to find ultimate satisfaction in Jesus.

If I fast from something other than food, it's worth considering if or how the lack of that thing points to my desperate need for Christ.

Remember, there is some liberty in the practice of fasting, especially for those who know that fasting food could cause physical harm. The question remains, am I trusting God such that I can step away from something that is good and important in order to dedicate more time to prayer and hearing from God through His Word.

Should I only fast in private or is corporate fasting allowed?

There are multiple biblical examples of corporate fasting. The warning of Jesus in Matthew 6 is against twisting an act of devotion into something that focuses attention on self. Our ultimate guide in this is 1st Corinthians 10:31.

Application: Could we as a body of believers fast and pray weekly over the coming month for private concerns and for some of these corporate desires:

- God to use our church on Easter to faithfully proclaim His gospel and see His Spirit bear much fruit.
- God's Spirit to help us, as a body, walk and grow in unity as a holy people who turn from sin and pursue the righteousness of Christ.
- God to provide a contractor and a lender that He would use to make our building project possible.
- God to give us boldness to live for Jesus in our homes, and workplaces and neighborhoods
- God to grant us gladness and thanksgiving at whatever His will is for Grace Bible Church.
- Christ's kingdom to be visible in this part of Northern Virginia through Grace Bible Church.
- And could we fast and pray that God would increase our hunger for Himself, that we would want Him more than food, more than play, more than sex, more than money, more than fame, more than applause, more than ease?