

Fasting: A Few Common Sense Resources for an Enigmatic Practice

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by David Schrock

As we consider the topic of fasting this week, here are a few articles and books that you may find helpful. At the end of this resource blog is also a website called [The Common Rule](#), that offers some common sense practices for creating habits (including fasting) that are aimed to cultivate godliness.

Articles

- [Drinking Deeply from Our Father in Heaven: Nine Observations about Giving, Praying, and Fasting \(Matthew 6:1-18\)](#) – As we consider the spiritual discipline of fasting, we should remember to read Jesus's words in the context of the whole Sermon on the Mount. Hopefully this article will help.
- [Fasting](#) by Randy Alcorn – A short guide on how to fast.
- [Fasting: The Benefits of Giving God More of Who We Are](#) – A conversation between Catherine Gates and Francis Umesiri M.D.
- [A New Covenant Perspective on Fasting](#) -- The advent of Jesus Christ changed everything, including fasting. But how? This article tries to answer that question.
- [Fasting for the Father's Reward](#) by John Piper -- sermon audio and sermon manuscript on Matthew 6:16-18

Books

[Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life](#) by Donald Whitney – In his book, professor and long-time pastor, Donald Whitney provides at least purposes for fasting. You can find them summarized in this [Christianity.com](#) article, "[Nine Reasons to Fast](#)." These nine reasons include,

1. To strengthen prayer
2. To seek God's guidance
3. To express grief
4. To seek deliverance or protection
5. To express repentance and a return to God
6. To humble oneself before God
7. To express concern for the work of God
8. To overcome temptation and dedicate yourself to God
9. To express love and worship to God

[A Hunger for God: Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer](#) by John Piper -- This has been the most helpful book I've read on fasting. It covers the personal practice of fasting and the corporate call to fast. And chiefly, it teaches that fasting from food is for feasting on God.

[*Fasting for Life: Discover Lasting Health Benefits of This Spiritual Discipline*](#) by Francis E. Umesiri -- I have not read this book, but based on the aforementioned interview with Dr. Umesiri, an [outspoken Christian](#) and assistant professor of chemistry at John Brown University, as well as the table contents, it looks like a faithful read.

The Common Rule

A "rule" is rhythm of life, ordered to cultivate habits of holiness. While "rules" are often associated with various monastic traditions, there are many others today who are seeing the need for such measured approaches to maintaining Christian priorities in the face of a chaotic world.

Enter Justin Early, who has developed what he calls The Common Rule. In his words, "The Common Rule is a set of daily and weekly practices designed to form us in the love of God and neighbor." Among these practices, there are both positive practices (things to do) and negative practices (things to resist). There are some that are private, others that are practiced in community. In total these practices include: working and praying, reading, eating, practicing presence, resting, friendship, beauty and justice, and fasting.

You can find more about each of these practices at his [website](#) and in his coming book, and you can learn more about fasting [here](#).

I appreciate The Common Rule's common sense approach. Surely, like all "rules" it could be turned into a slavish form of legalism. But approached rightly, for those who long to order their lives according to their heart-felt love for God, this may be a practical way to take concrete steps towards God and away from the chaos of this world.

For His Glory and your joy,
Pastor David