



**Title: Biblical Fasting**

**Date: May 22, 2022**

**Scripture Text: Matthew 6:16-18**

**Sermon Series: Inside-Out**

## SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

We continue our walk through the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus addresses the issue of *fasting*. As with giving and prayer, fasting was practiced by the religious leadership to gain the attention of others. They were missing the true intent of anything we do for God. It should be done as an act of obedience, with a focus on Him and not others. When we respond to Him in this way, His way, we will enjoy His reward.

### **I. Problems While Fasting (Matthew 6:16)**

The Pharisees in Jesus' day were more interested in being recognized for their religious piety than quietly obeying God's instructions. They made sure others knew they were fasting by their appearance and manners. As a result, their reward was the recognition of others, but NOT of God.

- What did the Pharisees do so that others knew they were fasting?
- How might someone appear in public today so others would know they were fasting?
- In this part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addresses the issue of giving, praying, and fasting for the attention and recognition of others. What are other things we might be tempted to do to seek the approval or recognition of others?
- What can you do to make sure you are obeying God with the right motives (doing it for God and not others)?

### **II. Proper Fast (Matthew 6:17-18)**

Jesus is instructing that when you fast, to appear normal before others. Comb hair, brush teeth, etc. We are not to draw attention to ourselves.

The act of biblical fasting is abstaining from food. You can fast (abstain) from other activities, i.e., cell phone use, social media, television, if you want to develop other disciplines, but in the context of what is taught in the Bible, food is the element of abstention. It is expressing the serious nature of the heart when the believer is seeking to know God in a deeper experience. It is to be done as an act before God in the privacy of one's own pursuit of God. You are communicating to God, "I need you more than food", replacing physical nourishment with spiritual nourishment.

**Morningside Church**

If you have a need or a prayer request, contact the church office.

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Questions concerning fasting:

- When do you fast?
  - Fasts are voluntary
  - Determined by your situation and leading by the Holy Spirit
- How long do you fast?
  - Various lengths are recorded in the Bible
    - 1 meal
    - 1, 3, 7, 14, 21, 40 days
- Why do you fast?
  - For preparation for a task/ministry
    - Jesus fasted 40 days before starting His public ministry
    - Examples for our church could include:
      - Montana mission trip, Youth/Children's camp, VBS, etc.
  - Direction in times of decision
    - Paul & Barnabus fasted before appointing elders in [Acts 14:23](#)
    - Examples could include education, occupation, marriage, etc.
  - Protection
    - Esther asked for the people to fast 3 days before she entered the presence of the king to save her people
  - Penitence
    - Ninevites in [Jonah 3](#), asking God to relent on His judgement on the city
  - Intercession
    - For enemies ([Ps. 35:13](#))
    - For family and friends ([Neh. 1:1-4](#))
- Can you think of other reasons to fast?
- Describe a time when you fasted for one of the reasons listed.
  - What was the experience like?
  - How were you able to have a deeper experience with God?
- What keeps us from fasting?
- At the end of [vs. 18](#), what is the promise of proper fasting?

Remember, fasting is always coupled with prayer. To fast without praying is more of a weight loss program than to experience God.