

PENINSULA CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Matthew 6:16-18

Fasting

Jesus begins His foundational teaching by indentifying **eight godly attributes** resident in people that contain God's blessing.

He then reveals **true righteousness** in God's law, contrary to the example set by the Pharisees.

Next, He exposes **sinfulness of the heart** that is contrary to what they've been told; "You have heard that it was said", contrasting them with, "But I say to you" several times.

He is then warning us to **not live** the actions of our faith in order **to be recognized** for it. He promises that recognition will be **the only reward** for such people.

He faithfully follows those warnings with **promises of God's reward** for lives of faith lived for **His notice** alone.

He is moving deeper into our relationship with God when He teaches about prayer, and starts with "When you pray..."

He follows teaching about prayer with fasting. The two are often mentioned together throughout God's Word. So, next He says...

"When you fast..."

When He begins with "When you", He supposes we do.

The question can be asked, "Why do American Evangelicals fast so little?"

The most obvious answers are:

- 1) It's not taught often
- 2) It inconvenient

Yet – fasting is mentioned almost **80 times** in The Bible

Motivations to fast

- 1) – Discerning God's will
 - **Exodus 34:28**, Moses for 40 days (10 Commandments)
 - **Acts 13:2-3**, "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away."
- 2) - Seeking God's favor
 - **I Samuel 1:7**, Hannah (No child)
 - **II Samuel 12:16**, David for 7 days (Sick child)
 - **Ezra 8:21**, Travel protection
- 3) - An expression of mourning
 - **I Samuel 31:13** & **II Samuel 1:12**, Saul & Jonathan die

- **Nehemiah 1:4**, Learning of Jerusalem's destruction
- **Esther 4:3**, Mordecai learns of the plot

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4) – Repentance

- **I Kings 21:27-29**, Ahab learns of God's judgement
- **Nehemiah 9:1-3**, Israel returns to God's law
- **Jonah 3:5**, Nineveh believes God

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5) - Spiritual Discipline

- **Matthew 4:1-11**, Jesus 40 days in the wilderness
- **Luke 2:36-37**, Anna's faithfulness
- **I Corinthians 9:24-27**, Paul's testimony

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What is Christian fasting?

- Voluntarily giving up a necessity to become more like Christ
- **Food**: A partial fast, (**Daniel 10:3**), one meal a day...
An absolute fast, (**Moses & Jesus**)
- **Non-physical things**: Sleep, time, entertainments, news...

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How long to fast?

- One day, 2, 3, 21, 40...

How often? Where? Individual or corporate?

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What is the purpose of fasting?

- Fasting is longing for Christ (**Matt. 9:14-15**)
- Satisfied **IN** Him, Feasting **ON** Him (**Matt. 5:6**)
- Fasting reveals the **things that control us**

Prayer & Fasting have Power

- **Mark 9:14-29** (Down from Mt. of Transfiguration)

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Benefits of fasting

- Fasting grows faith
- Gives more time to pray
- Heightens our awareness (News fast)
- Disciplines us to focus
- Expresses urgency & expectancy (Ranch at Tonasket – our life in ministry)

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Some suggestions for fasting

- Fast **routinely**
- Do it **now** (make it a priority)
- Fast **w/each other** (Life Groups, Congregation, Ministry team, family)
- Fast **eagerly & in Hope** (C.E.w/P.)