

Fasting



Fasting

abstain from all or some kinds of food or drink, especially as a religious observance.

Read: Matthew 6:16-18

And Whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

1

QUESTION

Describe a time when you have fasted. (medical or spiritual)

2

QUESTION

Do you believe in fasting as a spiritual practice? Why or why not?

3

QUESTION

What do you think that this passage is saying about spiritual practices before God?

The Spiritual Discipline of Fasting

What do you know about fasting? What are ways of fasting that I could partake in to consider this spiritual discipline?

Fasting was a fairly common practice in Old Testament times and in the early church (1 Samuel 31:13, Exodus 34:28, Matthew 4:1-2, Acts 13:3). Early Christians used fasting to mourn, to prepare to hear from God, to focus during times of intense prayer and to humble themselves in repentance.

When you make a decision to fast from something, you are not really making a choice to be healthier, or to cut a bad habit, or to punish yourself. Rather you are giving something up to say to God that “you are bigger than these things in my life” - not as proof to God but rather as a reminder to yourself.

Whilst fasting from something may not be right for you, there are many options out there for you to pick something up rather than letting something go, reading daily, or taking



You're giving something up to say to God, “you are bigger than these things in my life”

your lunch in the park, or praying thanks at the beginning of each meal. All of these things put God first in each moment, hopefully spilling over to every other moment in your day.

*resources collected from Relevant Magazine article “The most neglected Spiritual Discipline” by Thomas Christiansen February 8, 2016)

FURTHER READING

1 Samuel 31:13, Exodus 34:28, Matthew 4:1-2, Acts 13:3

ACTIVITY

Think about other faiths and other groups of Christians that may have times, or ways of life that include fasting. What do you think this means for them? How do you think it changes their lives? How much fasting as a spiritual practice be implemented in your own life?

