

Seeking God through Fasting

Matthew 6:16-18

When you need to drive a nail, you grab a hammer. When you need to tighten a nut, you find a wrench. There are appropriate tools for the job that needs to be done. When it comes to seeking God, there are “tools” that God has given to us to help us do that as well. In this *Seeking God* series, we are talking about three of them: the Scriptures, fasting, and prayer. A couple weeks ago we saw in 2 Chronicles 7 that God said, “*If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land.*” If you are desperate for God to hear some prayer of yours, or to cleanse you from some sin, or to heal you in some area of your life, fasting can help you humble yourself and pray and seek his face and turn from your wicked ways. Fasting, which is a voluntary abstaining from food for a period of time for spiritual reasons, is a “tool” that can help you seek God more fervently.

Opening Discussion: Up to this point in your life what has been your experience with fasting for spiritual reasons?

Read Matthew 6:1, 16-18

1. What is the context?
2. What in this passage suggests that Jesus assumes His followers will fast?
3. What are we to avoid when we fast? Why?
4. What does this passage say about motives as they relate to fasting?

5. What do the following Scriptures add to our understanding of fasting and reasons for it (Neh. 1:4, 9:1-3; Dan. 9:3; Joel 2:12; Jonah 3:6-9; Act. 13:1-3; 14:21-23)?

Steve said:

To clarify, I'm not merely saying that we want you can "get good at going without food for a period of time." You can learn to go without food for twelve or eighteen or twenty-four hours with little or no thought for God. I'm saying that we want you to get to the place where seeking and finding God is more important to you than anything else - more important than breakfast. . . and lunch. If seeking and finding God in some area of your life is just one more thing to shoehorn into your busy life, fasting will seem irrelevant or annoying or worse. But if you're convinced that the God of the universe notices and responds when you seek him with all your heart, fasting might just be a tool that you use because it helps you seek him more fervently.

6. Whether or not you have ever fasted up to this point, from what you now understand, how might fasting help you seek God more diligently?
7. How are you currently thinking about using the "tool" of fasting to help you seek God? Are there any current issues in your life that make you think that using this "tool" to help you seek God might be helpful right now?

Important Note on Fasting from Steve's Sermon: I want to acknowledge up front that it's not advisable for some people to fast from food. You might have a medical condition such as diabetes that makes fasting inadvisable. Or you might be pregnant. Or you might have an unhealthy relationship with food. I talked with someone recently who actually *wants* to seek God through fasting but decided they shouldn't fast because of their history with an eating disorder. That decision is wise and discerning. Do not fast if doing so would be harmful to you medically or mentally. Instead of fasting from food you might instead abstain from something else - something good/permissible - in your seeking of God. It needs to be something you'll notice, something that disrupts your normal routine to remind you that you're seeking God.

Practicing the Rhythms of Rooted this Week

Daily Devotion | Prayer | Repentance | Sacrificial Generosity | Serve the Community | Share Your Story | Worship



Prayer: This week consider a short fast. Decide the purpose of your fast and how you will fast. You could skip breakfast, or breakfast and lunch. And then during those times use the time you would have spent eating in prayer instead. As well, throughout the time of your fast, when you feel hunger pangs, let that remind you to turn briefly to God in prayer.