

# DISCIPLINES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

June 20, 2021

Week 10: Fasting

Scripture: Psalm 40, Matthew 6, Psalm 69:10

When we discipline our heart, soul, and mind, we grow in God's grace. This transformational process takes practice. When we work at these spiritual disciplines, we can experience peace, joy, and freedom through Christ.

## **Fasting**

This week we looked at the ancient discipline of fasting, which helps refocus our life on God. Fasting can be a regular part of our worship, allowing us to trust God more deeply and rely on him as our source of strength. When understood and practiced correctly, this discipline has excellent benefits to help us grow spiritually.

## **Introduction Questions**

1. When eating brunch, which do you prefer: the lunch foods or the breakfast foods?
2. Have you ever fasted? Was it for spiritual reasons or another reason? What was it like?
3. Have you ever fasted from something other than food? What was it, and why?
4. Did anything change for you this week after learning about the discipline of celebration?

## **Scripture Study**

Read Psalm 40:1–5. Discuss these verses.

1. What stands out?
2. What does it mean to “wait patiently for the Lord”? How can we do this while fasting?
3. What does it mean to “put your trust in the Lord,” as opposed to other things? How can we trust in the Lord while fasting?

Read Matthew 6:1–18. Discuss these verses.

1. What stands out?
2. Why is it important to avoid “theatrics” when we fast or practice other spiritual disciplines?
3. What are some theatrics of Christians in 2021?
4. Why is it hard to be humble?

Read Psalm 69:10. Discuss this verse.

1. What stands out?
2. Do you get “hangry” or know someone who does?
3. What emotions usually surface for you when you are tired, afraid, hungry, or embarrassed?
4. What is at the heart of humility, and why do you think Jesus wants us to be humble?

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## Challenge

1. Choose one meal to fast from this week. Replace the time you'd spend preparing and eating your meal to read scripture and pray. (Try reading Psalm 1 or Psalm 40.) Pray that God would speak to you. When you feel hunger pains, remind yourself that God is the one who truly satisfies. Journal about your experience and share it with your group. Did God speak to you in this time?
2. Choose one thing to fast from this week for at least one day. (For example: TV, social media, shopping, reading the news.) Replace this time with reading the Bible, praying or having a spiritual conversation with a friend. Journal about your experience and share it with your group. Did God speak to you in this time?

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

Below are some curated resources from the Renaissance Church staff that have been helpful in our journey through studying and growing in spiritual disciplines. These are just a few of the resources out there! To find more, check the bibliography and endnotes of each resource. That is where the true gold is found!

### Spiritual Disciplines:

- *Celebration of Discipline*, by Richard J. Foster
- *Sacred Rhythms*, by Ruth Haley Barton
- *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

### Prayer:

- *Discovering How to Pray*, by Hope MacDonald
- *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, by Richard J. Foster

### Study:

- *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- *How to Read the Bible Book-by-Book*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- The BibleProject: This has great scripture study resources and is produced by a great scholar and pastor in Portland, Oregon. Helpful for setting the context, diving into specific passages, and providing personal encouragement. [bibleproject.com](http://bibleproject.com)

### Solitude:

- *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, by John Mark Comer
- *Silence and Solitude*, by Ruth Haley Barton

### Guidance:

- *Soul Friend*, by Kenneth Leech—provides a great overview of spiritual direction and the links to psychology

- *The Dark Night of the Soul*, by St. John of the Cross—a classic on the spiritual life showing God's guidance and teaching in the experience of stillness and quiet

### Worship

- *Wholeness in Worship*, by Thomas and Sharon Neuffer Emswiler
- *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, by Eugene H. Peterson (presents the core tenants of a life of a Christian disciple).

### Confession

- *Celebration of Discipline*, chapter 10, by Richard Foster
- *The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective*, by Richard Rohr and Andreas Ebert.

### Simplicity

- *Freedom of Simplicity: Finding Harmony in a Complex World*, by Richard J. Foster
- *The Wisdom Pyramid*, by Brett McCracken
- *Be the Parent, Please: Stop Banning Seesaws and Start Banning Snapchat: Strategies for Solving the Real Parenting Problems*, by Naomi Schemer Riley
- *An Experimental Mutiny Against Excess*, by Jen Hatmaker