

DNA DISCUSSION GUIDE

SERMON ON THE MOUNT SERIES 2: THE WAY OF JESUS



THE WAY OF JESUS: FASTING

This week we looked at the final section in our Way of Jesus series, Matthew 6:16-18. In this passage, Jesus introduces the idea of fasting and outlines two ways to fast, the way of the world, and the way of Jesus. He begins by saying, “when you fast”, a statement of expectation that may or may not be true for us. This little section (6:1-18) outlines Jesus’ teaching about three key spiritual disciplines: giving, prayer and fasting. Jesus assumes that those who are following him are practicing spiritual disciplines so his teaching is primarily about his disciples’ internal motivations.

In this passage in particular, he challenges his disciples to fast in such a way that doesn’t draw attention to themselves. He says, “when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others.” The point isn’t to fast in secret per se, but to protect from a heart motivation to fast for attention or to gain spiritual credibility.

Alternatively, Jesus calls his disciples to wash their face and anoint their heads with oil, a cultural sign of health. Again, the point isn’t to hide our spiritual lives, otherwise Jesus would be contradicting his teaching in 5:13-16, where he taught his disciples to be a “light to the world”. The point is to aim our fast at God and not at those around us who might think better of us if they knew we were fasting.

1. Our definition of fasting was “intentional withholding something from your life for some greater purpose”. Have you ever fasted before? Describe your experience.
2. Justin described fasting as “intentional suffering” because of its ability to reveal the ways that we wrongly rely on the things of this world to provide what only God can give. How has suffering in your past opened your eyes to idolatry or the over-valuing of people or things in your life?

3. What is the danger of fasting in such a way as to gain credibility or prominence among the people around you?
4. Justin read a quote from David Martin Lloyd Jones in which he said, " Our Lord's principle is always this: "Forget other people altogether." In order to avoid looking sad, don't put a grin on your face. Forget your face, forget yourself, forget other people altogether." What do you think Lloyd Jones is trying to say and why is it so hard to do?
5. Jesus teaches us that the right way to fast is to focus our fast towards God and not other people. What are some possible effects of taking intentional time each day to focus on how God satisfies better or more fully than some thing or person or experience? (Justin likened it to walking outside to be in the sun and then returning indoors only to notice for the first time how dull the lights are.)
6. Jesus ends this passage by promising rewards from the Father if we faithfully fast, what might some of these rewards be?