

Prayer and Fasting

May 31, 2020

Matthew 6:5-18

Warming Up

1. What's the longest period of time you had gone without eating? Was that voluntary or involuntary? What were the circumstances? How did you feel during the time of not eating? How does your body, emotions, attitudes react when you are low on food?

Knowing the Gospel...

2. In Matthew 6:5-8, what types of prayers does Jesus warn against? Does this mean prayer should never be public or that we shouldn't repeatedly pray about the same things? Why? Why not? Ezra 10:1, 1 Kings 8:22-23, Jn. 6:11, Mark 8:6, 2 Cor. 12:8, Luke 18:1-7. What do you think is Jesus' main point about prayer in verses 5-8?

3. In verses 16-18, what types of fasting does Jesus warn against? What do you think is significant about the way that Jesus begins Matthew 6:16?

4. Check out these examples of group fasts. What seems to be the reason for these corporate fasts? Esther 4:15-16, Joel 2:15, 2 Chron. 20:1-4, Jonah 3:1-10, Ezra 8:21-23, Acts 13:1-3, Matthew 9:15.

Living the Gospel...

5. Check out these passages and identify the purposes or benefits of fasting in each. Luke 2:37, Acts 13:2, Matthew 4:4, Jn. 4:32-34, 1 Cor. 6:12, 9:27, Ps. 35:13.

6. If one of the purposes of fasting is to worship and seek God in a more intense way than normal, what are some practical things you can do, (or have done) during a fast to worship and seek God instead of eating? Share with your group your experiences (or lack of) with the practice of fasting. In what ways does Biblical fasting seem a bit different than many people's approach to Lent? What seems to be the focus of each?

7. What are the different subjects or categories that Jesus encourages us to pray about in verses 6:9-13? End your group time together by praying through the model prayer that Jesus gives. Don't just pray the exact words but pray through each subject specifically as it relates to your lives today.

Challenge each other in your group to take up the call to exercise special periods of prayer and fasting over the next month.

Telling the Gospel...

8. Consider this question and discuss as a group: If a non-believer asked you, "If God CAN stop the pandemic, why DOESN'T he?" what would you say?

Next Week: Letters to the churches: Revelation 2:1-7