



# SPIRITUAL FORMATION

*Fasting reveals the things that control us....We are not so much abstaining from food as we are feasting on the word of God. Fasting is feasting! – Richard Foster*

## GETTING STARTED

What do you think of or feel when you hear the word “fasting”? Is your response positive or negative? Why?

### QUESTION ONE

What does fasting mean to you? How do you define it?

**FOLLOW UP:** Have you ever fasted before? If so, what was your experience?

### QUESTION TWO

Read Leviticus 16:31, Zechariah 8:19, Matthew 4:1 & 9:14-15, and Acts 13:1-3 & 14:23. Fasting was taught in the Old Testament, practiced by Jesus, and continued by the early church. Considering fasting is a discipline God's people have always been invited into, why do you feel it's so often neglected?

### QUESTION THREE

Read Matthew 6:16-18. Does Jesus expect his followers to fast? Or is he simply commenting on how to do it?

**FOLLOW UP:** If we fast, what should we do and how should we look?

### QUESTION FOUR

In Matthew 6, Jesus addresses the motivation behind fasting. What are the practical indicators that we might be fasting to gain attention or affirmation vs. fasting solely to seek God?

### QUESTION FIVE

Why do you think Jesus addressed hypocrisy when talking about fasting?

**FOLLOW UP:** How might the hypocrites of today fast?

### QUESTION SIX

Read Isaiah 58:1-9. How do these verses reinforce what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount?



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## PRAYER & APPLICATION

Within Scripture, we see a multitude of reasons God invites His people to fast. Read through the following reasons and pick a few of the passages to read as a group:

- AGAINST SPIRITUAL WARFARE (2 Corinthians 10:4)
- AVERTING GOD'S WRATH (Judges 20:24-28 | Jonah 3:6-10 )
- BEING OBEDIENT TO GOD (Acts 10:30-32)
- CALLING ON GOD'S POWER & DRIVING OUT DEMONS (Mark 9:28-29)
- CORPORATE FELLOWSHIP CALLING ON GOD'S POWER (Acts 13:1-2)
- DURING TIMES OF SEVERE EMOTIONAL DISTRESS (1 Samuel 1:10-11 | 1 Samuel 20:34 | Acts 27:21-33 | Psalm 35:13-14 | Psalm 69:10)
- HUMBLING ONESELF BEFORE THE LORD (2 Chronicles 7:14-15)
- IMITATING THE FAITH OF THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US (Hebrews 13:7)
- NATIONAL DAYS DEDICATED TO GOD (Leviticus 16:29 | 1 Samuel 7:5-6)
- NEEDING HELP FROM GOD (2 Samuel 12:15-23)
- RECEIVING GOD'S BLESSINGS (Daniel 6:8, 12, 17 | Matthew 5:4 | Luke 2:37-38 | Hebrews 11:6)
- SEEKING GOD'S DELIVERANCE (Esther 4:16)
- SEEKING GOD'S PARDON (Psalm 35:13 | Joel 2:12)
- SEEKING GOD'S PROTECTION (Ezra 8:21)
- SEEKING THE LORD'S WILL (Daniel 9:2-3, 21-22)
- SETTING APART LEADERS IN THE CHURCH (Acts 13:1-3, 14:23)
- TIMES OF WORSHIP (Luke 2:36-37 | Acts 13:2, 14:23)

Are you feeling led as a group to practice what we've learned? Share with each other, make a plan, check in throughout the week, and pray for one another.