

**QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION
& SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION
FOR NOVEMBER 20 THRU 26, 2022**

—Last week I noted that we'd be drawing this series based on Matthew 6:1–34 to a close and with a slight change in our schedule, we'll be doing that next Sunday. (November 27, 2022) The reason involves the impact this week's study had on me as I reflected on all the reasons why fasting is an important spiritual discipline for us to consider. So, once again, in order to introduce this week's discussion questions, we're starting off with a few quotations (some from the Bible and others from prominent Bible teachers) that should promote (& provoke) some beneficial conversation, and might help us see why fasting is a beneficial gift that God provides for us.

—“We often fail to understand God's Word as fully as we ought simply because, unlike those great people of God, we do not seek to comprehend it with their degree of intensity and determination. Skipping a few meals might be the small price we willingly pay for staying in the Word until understanding comes.”

—a comment about fasting by John MacArthur

—“Fasting is feasting on fellowship with God.”

—multiple pastors & Christian leaders

—“Our spiritual need for God is far more fundamental than our physical need for food and water.”

—multiple pastors & Christian leaders

—“We fast to seek and submit to God's will.” —David Platt

—“Fast before God lays it on your heart. If you say ‘I will fast when God lays it on my heart,’ you never will. You are too cold and indifferent to take the yoke upon yourself.” —D.L. Moody

—“Scripture doesn't command Christians to fast. It is not something that God requires or demands of Christians. At the same time, the Bible presents fasting as something that is good, profitable, and expected. Fasting and prayer are often linked together.” —

—“Let us say something about fasting, because many, for want of knowing its usefulness, undervalue its necessity, and some reject it as almost superfluous; while, on the other hand where the use of it is not well understood, it easily degenerates into superstition. Holy and legitimate fasting is directed to three ends; for we practice it either as a restraint on the flesh, to preserve it from licentiousness, or as a preparation for prayers and pious meditations, or as a testimony of our humiliation in the presence of God when we are desirous of confessing our guilt before him.” —John Calvin”

—“In Shansi I found Chinese Christians who were accustomed to spend time in fasting and prayer. They recognized that this fasting, which so many dislike, which requires faith in God, since it makes one feel weak and poorly, is really a divinely appointed means of grace.”

—Hudson Taylor

—“The greatest saint in the world is not he who prays most or fasts most; it is not one who gives alms, or is most eminent for temperance, chastity or justice. It is one who is most thankful to God.”

—William Law

—“One way to begin to see how vastly indulgent we usually are is to fast. It is a long day that is not broken by the usual three meals. One finds out what an astonishing amount of time is spent in the planning, purchasing, preparing, eating, and cleaning up of meals.”

—Elisabeth Elliot

—“Fasting is abstaining from anything that hinders prayer.”

—Andrew Bonar

—“The abstinence is not to be an end in itself but rather for the purpose of being separated to the Lord and to concentrate on godliness. This kind of fasting reduces the influence of our self-will and invites the Holy Spirit to do a more intense work in us.”

—Bill Thrasher

—These questions are designed to motivate us to dig deeper into God’s Word and to consider how to apply the truths presented in this study. Please observe/use Matthew 6:1–34 as a resource. Other scripture passages are mentioned within some questions.

- 1) On a personal level, what is your greatest hindrance to being “devoted to prayer with a sense of thanksgiving and alertness to the pressing needs being faced by those around us.”? Would fasting be a help in changing this?
- 2) According to Matthew 6:16-18 and the rest of Scripture, what’s involved in fasting in a proper manner?
- 3) According to Jesus, what practices were associated with the hypocrites and their fasting? How would this be related to our actions and attitudes?
- 4) What are some common reasons for fasting, as seen in Scripture? In addition to Matthew 6, Isaiah 58 might help with this.
- 5) Some people and also some church groups suggest that during the Easter season, it’s beneficial to “give up” certain things for a time. Would you consider this a proper way of fasting?
- 6) What personal thoughts or perspectives do you have about fasting?
- 7) Jesus emphasized the idea that fasting should be done in secret, without any public display. Why is this important? How does this influence the possibility of asking a church group to fast for a specific reason that might be hindering the ministry?

8) What should our motives be in getting involved in fasting? Why is it important for us to recognize that we are never commanded to fast, but Jesus seemed to indicate there are times when it might be beneficial?

9) Please note the four applications given in the sermon notes. What personal thoughts do you have about these principles?

—1— Fasting can provide a **FILTER** that will help us **ELIMINATE SINS & IDOLS THAT DOMINATE OUR LIVES!**

—2— Fasting is an **ACTIVITY OF WORSHIP** that **draws us closer to our Lord God Almighty!**

—3— Fasting is a **STATEMENT** of our **TOTAL TRUST & DEPENDENCE** on God!

—4— Fasting provides us with additional **TIME** to **pray & focus on God.**