The Spiritual Discipline of Fasting

A. When do we eat?

B. Why do we eat?

C. Definition:
   Fasting is voluntarily going without food — or any other regularly enjoyed, good gift from God — for the sake of some spiritual purpose.

D. Scripture
   Matthew 6:16
   Matthew 9:15

E. General Info
   “We fast in this life because we believe in the life to come. We don’t have to get it all here and now, because we have a promise that we will have it all in the coming age. We fast from what we can see and taste, because we have tasted and seen the goodness of the invisible and infinite God — and are desperately hungry for more of him.” – David Mathis, Desiring God. Org

   • A battle with our physical needs, to emphasize a recognition of our spiritual need.
   • Fasting is not done when in the presence of the bridegroom. First and second advent, therefore, it is a discipline that can be participated in only in this life.
**F. How Do You Fast?**

1. **Start Small**
   
   One meal for several weeks, then expand (2 meals, a day, a juice fast, never abstain from water.)

2. **Consider Your Purpose**
   
   This is not just self-deprivation.

   What positive spiritual pursuit will you undertake? Prayer, meditation? Scripture reading/memory? Serving others?

   No food and no purpose is just going hungry.

3. **Consider Affect on Others**
   
   Be careful not to be consumed with your own feelings and neglect others.

   Don’t put on a show (mtt 6).

   If you get Hungry, it is evidence that food has far too much control over your disposition. Your spiritual response to your physical tendencies will be the greatest discipline of the endeavor.

   Be considerate of others who are expecting you for a regularly scheduled meal. Don’t announce fasting as the reason.

4. **Alternate the Practice**
   
   Fast privately. Fast with a partner. Fast with a small group or church congregation. But always do so with specific purpose.

5. **Fast from Other Things**
   
   Regular and legitimate enjoyments can be given up for a given length of time, but do so as with food, with spiritual purpose, not simply to deny yourself for the sake of deprivation.

6. **Turn to Jesus**
   
   When a desire arises for the thing which you are fasting, it is an alarm in your mind, a reminder to turn your focus again to the goodness of Jesus Christ, and the gift of grace and salvation you have received.