

# Paradigm Discipleship

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*The purpose of this resource is to provide some guidance for you as you encourage your disciple to develop habits and disciplines that draw you closer to God.*

*The following resource is a guide that provides some basic structure to developing a study on “Fasting”.*

*We encourage you to do your own study, using this resource as a guide, to develop a learning experience for you and your disciple that will help you both develop a better understanding of fasting and an ability to seek the Lord through fasting in a way that honors Him.*

## **FASTING**

Opening Question: What is the purpose of fasting?

\*Possible responses:

- \*Deny dependence on food
- \*Demonstrate how serious you are about seeking God
- \*Preparation for what is ahead – i.e. Jesus in the desert
- \*Seeking direction for life changing decisions
- \*Feasting on God
- \*Deepen your relationship with God
- \*Focusing on Jesus by removing something from your life
- \*In order to hear His voice in a way that doesn’t come without sacrifice

Follow up Question: Should we fast? Is it a New Testament expectation?

\*Let your disciple try to answer this question – make sure they are using scripture to back up their response.

\*Possible texts that answer this question:

- \*Acts 13:2 – early church practiced it – heard directly from God during a fast.
- \*Matthew 6:16-18 – Jesus’ words: “When you fast...” not “if” you fast.
  - Important characteristics of fasting that Jesus teaches in this passage:
    - Not for the approval of man
    - But for your relationship with God
- \*Mark 2:18-20
  - No need to fast if Jesus is there.
  - There will be a time when He is gone, that is the time to fast.
  - Therefore we can deduce that the purpose of fasting is to connect with Jesus. (You could turn this into a question for your disciple: **According to Jesus in this passage, what is the purpose of fasting?**)

Charles H. Spurgeon, a famous pastor in England, once said, *“Never have we been closer to God than when we have fasted.”*

John Wesley, founder of the Methodists, counseled, *“When we fast, our attention is fixed on God and our purpose is to glorify God.”*

Study Question: Therefore, in light of this, when should we fast?

\*This actually connects back to the opening question. Brainstorm this with your disciple. Here are some possibilities:

- \*When you want to draw closer to God because:
  - We have a question that needs an answer
  - We feel that we have drifted away
  - Something is controlling us
  - In preparation for something big

- \*As a habit of denying self and developing dependence on God
  - Fasting reveals what controls us, we may not know it until we try to go without it
  - Helps us discipline ourselves and practice self-denial
  - The challenge is to keep the proper attitude in fasting – seeking God

### Concluding Question: How do we fast?

\*A couple of great books on the subject are:

\*Hunger For God, John Piper

\*God's Chosen Fast, Arthur Wallis

\*Basically, it is abstaining from something – anything that could be a hindrance to your walk, for the purpose of saying: “I want God more than \_\_\_\_\_.”

\*Fasting from food is classic example:

-24 hour fast, eating dinner at a normal time, skipping breakfast and lunch the next day, eating dinner the next night at a normal time (be sure to drink water).

-Longer fasts require some research and planning. Make sure there are no health concerns, **but** also don't be intimidated by the prospects of a longer fast. Our bodies are much more resilient than we generally think.

\*In other areas, there aren't the same kinds of safety concerns, like fasting from internet, or TV, or video games, for instance.