

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.