



Paradigm Discipleship Lesson

The purpose of this resource is to provide some guidance for you as you encourage your disciple to develop a strong devotional relationship with God.

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 move deeper in your understanding and experience of interacting with a God who desires a deep, intimate relationship with you.

Fasting

GOAL: To help us understand what Christian Fasting is, why we do it, and how to do it. Fasting is never commanded in scripture. But it is assumed and there are clear benefits in scripture.

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS:

- What have you heard about Fasting?
- Have you fasted before? If you have fasted, what did that look like?

OPENING QUESTION: What is Fasting? How is it different from a diet?

- God made us physical creatures. Fasting reminds us what we need, which is food to survive. We are limited and needy creatures. Daily food is required. We are also spiritual creatures. We need God daily. God is the only one who can satisfy our souls. Fasting is a physical act that reminds us of our spiritual need for God.

STUDY QUESTION: What are the benefits of Fasting today?

Possible Answers:

- Strengthening prayer (Acts 13:2-3)
- Seeking God's Guidance (Acts 14:23)
- Expressing grief (2 Samuel 1:11-12)
- Expressing repentance and returning to God in humility (Jonah 3:5-10)
- Overcoming temptation and dedicating yourself to God (Matt. 4:1-11)
- **Expressing love and worship to God** (Luke 2:37) - this one encompasses all the others and gets at the essence of what makes fasting such a mighty means of grace.

F.A.S.T. Acronym:

- **F**ocus on God
- **A**bstain from Food
- **S**ubstitute time spent eating with God in prayer and His word
- **T**aste and See that the Lord is Good! - Ps 34:8-10

READ Matthew 6:16-18 - What can we learn about Fasting in this passage?

- Jesus assumes we will fast.
- We do not fast to look holy or appear close to God.
- We fast to be with and close to God. God is our reward.

READ Matthew 9:14-15 - What does Jesus teach here about Fasting?

- When Jesus was present with his disciples, it was a time of feasting, but when he leaves there will be a time of fasting. Jesus' answer for if we should fast today is yes!
- The Early Church fasted Acts 9:9, 13:2, 14:23

PRACTICAL QUESTION:

How should we Fast?

1. Start small - start with one or two meals a day. Or a partial fast, which means fasting from food but able to drink juice or fruit/vegetables only.
2. Plan what you'll do instead of eating - if your time isn't spent with God, then it isn't Christian Fasting.
3. Consider how it will affect others - is there anyone who needs to know or be told beforehand? EX: Weekly lunch w/a friend
4. If you are not able to fast from food, try eating bland/plain food or eat later than you normally would so that you feel the hunger. (**NOTE:** there is something very unique about fasting from food. Christian fasting is about food.)

When should we fast?

1. Do prepare and plan what you will do instead. If you know you will be busy or traveling, then plan to wait until you have time to focus on God. Do you have time to spend time with God when you are not eating?
2. Look back at the benefits list. Are you in a season of grief, repentance, needing guidance, etc?

Who should not fast?

- Don't fast when you are sick or have a current health condition that requires you to eat. If your doctor says not to, then listen to your doctor.
- If you have a history of an eating disorder or are tempted to sin because of it. There is hope and redemption of course (we are new creations). If they share this is a current struggle, please talk with a staff member about next steps and wisdom.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Christian fasting turns our attention to Jesus or some great cause of his in the world. It is not some magical guarantee that God would move or answer in the way we want.

APPLICATION: If able, plan a time with your disciple to fast from one meal this week, and then talk about it. Make a plan together, help them prepare, and follow up with them.