

**Introduction:**

- Let's look at the topic of fasting!
- *"A fast is not necessarily something we offer God, but it assists us in offering ourselves"*  
~ Jen Hatmaker
- We start fast next Wednesday, January 3-24 for 21 days.
  - Our main focus on our fast will be for the salvation of souls in Brevard County and the City of Viera.
  - We are also fasting for the activating of the Saints to go into the fields that are white to harvest. Jesus said, ask for labors who will go so we are going to ask. (Mt 9:38)

**I. When Jesus Repeats Himself Listen**

A. When Jesus repeats himself it must be important.

1. *"You have heard but I say"* - found in Matthew chapter 5 was about having a right heart before God. Because a right heart produces right behavior by design.
2. *"When you give,... when you pray,... when you fast... don't be like the hypocrites."* in Matthew chapter 6, Jesus leads us to how actual spiritual disciplines are to be practice. The three he mentions are: giving, praying, and fasting. He is directing the people to understand what 'righteous' religious practices look like.
  - a) giving deals with possessions
  - b) praying deals with relationship with Father
  - c) fasting deals with appetites

B. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is after the heart of the people not the behavior!  
When the heart is right the actions will then be of a righteousness that exceeds the religious people of the day.

1. Jesus does not want the people to practice religious behaviors that draw attention to themselves. Those who do such practices he calls 'hypocrites'. They are actors and not the 'real deal.'
2. The hypocrite is concerned in how he looks by putting on a front for the external to be seen.
3. Jesus is looking at the heart, and wants the people to know that what God sees in secret He rewards. Those who put on the show for men have already received their reward. (Paid in full, nothing more to be expected.)
4. Jesus does not have an issue with people doing these discipline. Rather, He expects them to do them. He wants them to be done but with a right understanding.

**II. What is Fasting?**

- A. Simply put, fasting is the voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes.  
Fasting is the intentional afflicting of one's self for the purpose of encountering God.

1. It is important to note that fasts have a spiritual purpose - it is not just missing lunch because you are too busy. A fast can last anywhere from one meal to 40 days without food.
  2. There are different types of fasts - the most typical is to go without any food, some people will fast from food and water - although you can only do this for a short time. There are limited fasts, when people will allow themselves juice or other liquid sustenance during their fast. There are partial fasts, where you will give up certain types of food for a period of time.
  3. The first M,T,W of each month is the global bridegroom fast. We also encourage people to fast on Wednesdays. We usually start the year with a 21 day fast.
- B. The majority of Biblical fasting focuses on:
1. Repentance - *"But when Ahab heard this message, he tore his clothing, dressed in burlap, and fasted. He even slept in burlap and went about in deep mourning."* (1 Kings 21:27, NLT)
  2. Crisis - Jehoshaphat 2 Chron 20:3 Jehoshaphat - singer and musicians out front.
  3. Hunger for God - Mt 9:15 When Bridegroom is away then they will fast. John Piper writes in his book, A Hunger for God, "If you don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great. God did not create you for this. There is an appetite for God. And it can be awakened. I invite you to turn from the dulling effects of food and the dangers of idolatry, and to say with some simple fast 'This much, O God, I want you.'"
  4. Here is the basis of all fasting-Humility.
    - a) Humility - *"Yet when they were ill, I grieved for them. I denied myself by fasting for them, but my prayers returned unanswered."* (Psalm 35:13, NLT)
    - b) Repentance

### III. When You Fast

- A. When you fast do not make it obvious. 6:16
1. The hypocrites do this. The actors want to be seen by a big audience.
  2. They want to be admired for their religious effort.
  3. They disfigure their faces. The word used there is aphanizo - to make invisible, to destroy.
  4. That is all the reward they will get...admiration by the fickle crowd.
- B. When you fast...
1. Comb your hair - literally reads, "anoint your head with oil".
  2. wash your face - means what it says. The point is: if you anoint your head and wash your face you look just like the next person who is going to work. There is no

reason for you to stand out to the crowd. By doing this you are living to an audience of One! There is only one crowd you want to see you fasting - GOD! I.e. Again, don't be legalistic about this either. Your fast is not ruined because somebody else knows unless your purpose is to draw attention to yourself.

3. Then no one will notice you are fasting...except Father
- C. And Father who sees everything (including what is done in secret) will reward you openly.
  1. 'Reward you openly' - *phaneros* can also be translated as visible, reveal,
  2. The hypocrite hides his face but God visibly reveals Himself in rewarding the one who fasts, gives and prays.

#### IV. Observations of Fasting in the Scriptures Mt 17:21(NKJV) by prayer and fasting.

- A. Fasting seems to always precede a breakthrough.
  1. Victory in war. 2 Chron 20:3 **And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.** NKJV
  2. Victory in establishing the Kingdom. Ezra 8:21 **Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava** NKJV Right before their return to Israel to rebuild the walls, city, temple.
  3. Charles Finney an evangelist in the 1800's. 20 years after his meetings there were more people still committed to the faith than any other revivalist experienced. Why? His partner in ministry would go into a town weeks before Finney arrived and would fast and pray.
    - a) "Daniel Nash at age 48 he decided to give himself totally to prayer for Finney's meetings. Nash would come quietly into towns three or four weeks in advance of a meeting, gather three or four other like minded Christians with him and in a rented room start praying and bringing heaven near. It is reported that in one town all he could find was a dank, dark cellar, but that place was soon illumined with holy light as he made it the place of intercession. In another place as Finney relates: When I got to town to start a revival a lady contacted me who ran a boarding house. She said, "*Brother Finney, do you know a Father Nash? He and two other men have been at my boarding house for the last three days, but they haven't eaten a bite of food. I opened the door and peeped in at them because I could hear them groaning, and I saw them down on their faces. They have been this way for three days, lying prostrate on the floor and groaning. I thought something awful must have happened to them. I was afraid to go in and I didn't know what to do. Would you please come see about them? "No it isn't necessary," I replied. "They just have a spirit of travail in prayer."* <http://www.evanwigg.com/revival/portrait/nash.html> Finney left the evangelism field four months after Nash died and started pasturing a church. `

- B. Fasting seems to always precede a move of God (Note: there will be some overlap in these)
  - 1. We need something, we fast in order to position ourselves before God.
  - 2. Repentance - Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel etc. all during times of fasting repented not only for their own sins but also for the sins of their nation.
  - 3. Invitation from God to go to a new or deeper place.
    - a) God prophesies through the prophet Joel to Judah to consecrate a fast. It was an invitation to draw near to God. Joel 1:14; Joel 2:15—both say, consecrate a fast.
- C. Fasting seems to almost always be done by people who are in a place of desperation.
  - a. Often the word fasting is used with the following words: weeping, mourning, humility, etc.
  - b. Desperation seems to be the thing that invites/pleads for God to show up.