

the SPIRITUAL PRACTICE of **FASTING**

"Through self-denial we begin to recognize what controls us. Our small denials of the self show us just how little taste we actually have for sacrifice or time with God."

Adele Calhoun

In Scripture

Isaiah 58:1-7

- ¹ "Cry aloud; do not hold back;
lift up your voice like a trumpet;
declare to my people their transgression,
to the house of Jacob their sins.
- ² Yet they seek me daily
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that did righteousness
and did not forsake the judgment of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments;
they delight to draw near to God.
- ³ "Why have we fasted, and you see it not?
Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?"
Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,
and oppress all your workers.
- ⁴ Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with a wicked fist.
Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be heard on high.
- ⁵ Is such the fast that I choose,
a day for a person to humble himself?
Is it to bow down his head like a reed,
and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?
Will you call this a fast,
and a day acceptable to the Lord?
- ⁶ "Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?"
- ⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"

Make some initial observations on what fasting should and should not be.

In Jesus' Life

Matthew 5:6

⁶“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

Matthew 6:16-18

¹⁶“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

What common characteristics of acceptable and unacceptable fasts do you notice in Isaiah 58 and Matthew 6?

Acceptable fasting

Unacceptable fasting

What seems to be the main purpose of fasting in the life of a Christian?

Should we fast today, or was this just an ancient practice for followers of Jesus?

In My Life

How might Jesus use this practice to mature, deepen, and transform my life to look more like His?

Practically, what could this practice look like in my life this week?