

HOLY HABITS

Week 6: Fasting

» NEXTSTEP

1. What is fasting?

- Technically, fasting is the **voluntary abstinence** from food, either from **necessity** or **desire**.
- The Holy Habit of fasting is the voluntary abstinence from **[food]** for **spiritual purposes**.

2. Should I fast?

- It was a common practice for the **Jews**.
- It was a common practice for the **early church**.
- It seems to be **expected** of followers of Jesus.

3. What fasting does in/for us:

- It is a pathway to **blessing** .
- It **reveals** that which **controls** us and helps us break its **power** over our life.

Fill-ins: voluntary abstinence, necessity, desire, food, spiritual purposes, Jews, early church, expected, blessing, reveals, control, power

1. Read Matthew 6:16-18. Why do you think Jesus said “when you fast”? How is his statement about fasting similar to his statements about generosity and prayer earlier in the chapter (Matthew 6:1-4 and Matthew 6:5-15)? Based on this part of the Sermon on the Mount, do you think fasting is something Jesus expects that his followers will do?

2. Think About It: Why do you think Jesus said that when you fast no one should be able to tell from your appearance (face, clothes, attitude) that you are fasting? If you fast for people to notice, what is your reward? If you fast in secret, what is your reward?

3. Think About It: What’s the difference between fasting for spiritual purposes vs. out of necessity or desire? What does fasting for spiritual purposes look like?

4. Try This: This week, try a fast... you might fast for one meal; Or maybe you’ll fast from after dinner on one night to dinner the next night; Or you might try a fast from coffee all week. Whatever your fast, use the time you would spend preparing and eating (or drinking) and use it for a specific spiritual purpose: Scripture reading, prayer, silence, seeking God guidance for a particular issue. When you fast, remember to pay attention to how you react against fasting. This will reveal an area that has or is attempting to control you. Thank God for revealing this to you and use the fast to break its power over your life.