

Feb 2nd 2025 Holy Habits – Prayer and Fasting – Matthew 6

This guide is designed to give helpful hints in preparing for your group discussion.

Quick Review

Look back from your sermon notes – Was there anything that particularly challenged you from this sermon? Anything you didn't understand, agree with or connect with?

Introduction

What comes to your mind when you think of fasting? What has shaped your understanding of it? A popular thing in our culture today for health and dietary purposes is the practice of intermittent fasting. Is that different than what the Bible talks about when it comes to fasting? Why or why not?

Digging In

Question 1: Read Matthew 6:1. Before going into either prayer or fasting, Jesus talks about an overall principle concerning both. The first principle that Jesus goes into is understanding the motivation underneath the “practicing your righteousness.” Pastor Jeff asked the question, “how do you practice your righteousness? Is it hypocritical or holy? In what ways can you determine your motivation for practicing any holy habit?”

Question 2: Read Matthew 6:5-8. Pastor Jeff went through these verses to look at how Jesus teaches us to pray! There are three different times in these few verses where Jesus says, “when you pray.” The expectation is that prayer should be happening regularly in the life of a Christ-follower! What is your prayer habit? Why do you think Jesus emphasizes where our prayers should happen (v.5-6)? The last part emphasizes why we pray and how. The first part of this goes back to our motivation! Are you praying for others to see or to inform God? How do you pray? Do you pray with many words and repetition, or genuine words from your heart/mind?

Question 3: Read Matthew 6:16-18. Pastor Jeff talked about the practice of fasting. Fasting is the giving up of food for the purpose of wholeheartedly seeking God! This is not a command but a common practice that is always connected to prayer.

Focus on the reasons why we fast. Which ones of these reasons immediately resonate with you? Have you seen this happen in your life before?

- I am willing to forgo the earthly to focus on the heavenly
- I am hoping to deny the flesh to depend more on the Spirit
- I am giving up a physical need to gain a spiritual need
- I am not asking God to change but asking God to change me

Similar to praying, the Pharisees and hypocrites wanted others to see when they were fasting (**v. 16**). Jesus assumes that His disciples will fast (“when you fast.”). How can you protect your heart from being motivated to do “holy habits” for the wrong reasons?

Praise / Prayer Requests

Pray for your group with these things in mind:

Adoration – How can I praise God for what this teaches me?

Confession – What sin can I confess because of what this teaches me?

Thanksgiving – How can I thank God for what Jesus has done?

Supplication – What do I need to ask of God in order to grow in light of this?

Is my practice of praying and fasting hypocritical or holy?

1. What is prayer?
2. When do I pray?
3. Where do I pray?
4. Why do I pray?
5. **How** should I pray?

Matthew 6

9 “This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,

10 your kingdom come,
your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us today our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 **And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.’**

God’s praise

God’s priorities

God’s provision

God’s pardon

God’s protection

Is my practice of praying and fasting hypocritical or holy?

1. What is fasting?

- Giving up food for the purpose of wholeheartedly seeking God.
- In the NT fasting is not a command, but a common practice
- You can pray w/o fasting, but you cannot fast w/o praying
- **Fasting is more about gaining focus, than giving up food**

holy

Is my practice of praying and fasting hypocritical or holy?

1. What is fasting?

2. Why do I fast?

- a. I am willing to forgo the earthly to focus on the heavenly
- b. I am hoping to deny the flesh to depend more on the Spirit
- c. I am giving up a physical need to gain a spiritual need
- d. I am not asking God to change but asking God to change me.

e. The purpose of the sacrifice is to be more like my Savior

holy
HABITS

Is my practice of praying and fasting hypocritical or holy?

1. What is fasting?
2. Why do I fast?
- 3. How to fast?**
 - a. Pray first
 - b. Set a time frame
 - c. Establish a purpose
 - d. Prepare your heart**