



## Fasting

October 26

**INTRODUCTION:** In today's passage we carry on from the forms of piety in giving and praying to learn about practicing true righteousness in the form of fasting.

**KEY POINT:** genuineness; God dependency

**CHALLENGE:** In one sitting, read the whole sermon often over the coming months.

**A.M. SERMON RECAP** (Eph 6:5–10, Witness in the Workplace)

- What employment relations existed in the Roman world?
- How radical then were both the commands in Eph 6?
- Giving real life examples where possible:
  - Slaves/employees- How should we handle ourselves?
  - Masters/employers- How should we handle ourselves?
  - In both cases, how does Jesus call us to be witnesses in the workplace?

**P.M. SERMON RECAP** (WWBW: Abortion)

- How are abortion statistics sobering?
- What reasons do pro-choice groups give to support their claims?
- Beyond a difference of opinion, how do these represent a different worldview?
- Why do Christians value life?
- When did Christ take on human nature?
- How is abortion a sacrifice to the god of self? (c.f. Molech)
- Other FAQs

**READ:** Mt 6:5–15

**QUESTIONS:**

1. **What comes to mind when you hear the word fasting?**

2. **V.16- Like giving and praying what does Jesus expect of His disciples through the words “when you fast”?**
3. *Biblical survey of fasting.*<sup>1</sup>
4. **How is fasting a spiritual discipline that cultivates humility (dependence upon the Lord)?**
5. When might it be medically unadvisable to fast? What about micro-fasts?
6. *“History is silent about revivals that did not begin with prayer [and fasting]” — Edwin Orr. Most revivals, e.g. the Great Awakenings, were accompanied by fasting.*
7. **How often do you fast? Do you fast at all? Discuss the importance of incorporating this spiritual discipline into your life.**
8. *V. 16b- One can fast for some 40 days before doing irreparable harm to your body. In Jesus' days, many fasted so that the outward signs of fasting (“disfigure their faces”) could be seen and people would think, ‘this person is very pious.’*
9. **V. 16b- Why is it hypocritical and without eternal reward to fast for men?**
10. **V. 17- Cutting against the trend, what is the brilliance in how Jesus said we should practice righteousness when fasting?**
11. **V. 18- Why does fasting in secret lead to a greater reward?**
12. While encouraging fasting, how might we honour fasting in secret?

**Next Week:** Fasting, Mt 6:16–18

<sup>1</sup>Types of fasts in the Bible: Fasting is mentioned some 132 times. It was commanded in the Law, Lev 16:29, 23:27. Many people of faith fasted: **Moses** (before R 10 C, Dt 9:9–18), **David** (fasted in repentance and for his child's life, 2 Sam 12:1–23), **Elijah** (when fled fr: Jezebel, 1 Ki 19:4–8), **Esther** (for the safety of the Jews/before going to King, Est 4:15–17), **Darius** (for Daniel's safety, Dan 6:18–23), **Daniel** (to understand a vision, Dan 10:1–3), **Ezra** (before he set off, Ez 8), **Jesus** (before temptation by Satan, Mt 4:1–2), **Paul** (after conversion, Acts 9:1–9), **early church elders** (before sending missionaries, Act 13:1–3), etc.

There are different reasons for fasting: (NOT A FORM OF WEIGHTLOSS!): Ezra fasted for protection; in distress and grief (Jud 20:26), in repentance (1 Sam 7:6, Joel 2:12–13), for spiritual strength: to overcome temptation or to dedicate yourself to God (Mt 4:1–11), to strengthen prayers (Mt 17:21), to encourage love and worship (Lk 2:37), for guidance/ help in important decisions (Acts 14:23), help build intimacy with God (James 4:8), develop spiritual self-discipline (1 Cor 9:27).