

Practical Questions to Consider

1. Do you see the wonderful opportunity afforded to us in prayer?
2. Do you have an organized prayer list? A prayer list is a wonderful resource to help us maintain focus in our prayers and to remain honest with those we have committed to pray for.
3. Have you ever fasted? Are you convinced that it is a needed spiritual discipline for us all? On what occasions will you fast?

Recommended Reading

- Bible Reading: Matthew 9, James 5, Matthew 21
- Edward M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1999).
- R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, 10th anniversary ed.; rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 95.
- Donald S. Whitney, *Simplify Your Spiritual Life: Spiritual Disciplines for the Overwhelmed* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2003)

Five Spiritual Disciplines Schedule

8/1 – Introduction & Overview

8/7 - Bible Reading/Study

8/14 - Giving

8/21 - Church Attendance

8/28 – Prayer & Fasting

9/4 - Annual Missions Conference

9/11 - Witnessing

 CORE SEMINARS

The Five Spiritual Disciplines

Seminar 5: Prayer & Fasting

August 28th, 2024

The **Spiritual Disciplines** are those personal and corporate disciplines that promote spiritual growth. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity practiced by the people of God since biblical times.

What is Prayer?

Prayer is personal communication with God.

What we call “prayer” includes requests for ourselves or others (petitions and intercession), confession of sin, adoration, praise and thanksgiving, and the Holy Spirit guiding us to His response.

Why does God want us to Pray?

1. Prayer expresses our trust in God and is a means whereby our trust in Him can increase.
 - a. It is not so He can find out what we need. Matt. 6:8
 - b. Primary emphasis in prayer in faith. Matt. 21:22, James 5:14-16
 - c. First words of the Lord’s Prayer acknowledge dependence on God as a loving and wise Father
2. Prayer brings us into deeper fellowship with Him.
3. God allows us as creatures to be involved in eternally important activities.
 - a. Failure to ask deprives us of what God has for us. James 4:2
 - b. Only possible through our mediator, Jesus Christ. Heb 10:22. We can come in His name. John 14:13-14

In what manner should we pray?

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; Eph. 6:18

1. **In the Spirit**
How does prayer in the Spirit occur? Romans 8:26, 27, Jude 20
2. **Praying always**
Is continual prayer possible? Yes and no. Acts 1:14, 1 Thess 5:17
3. **All prayer**
How can our prayers be varied? 1 Timothy 2:1
4. **All perseverance**
How did Jesus encourage the disciples in this regard? Mark 14:38
5. **For all saints**
Do you believe prayer can help you? Eph. 6:18-20

What is Fasting?

Fasting is voluntary abstinence from physical nourishment—food and drink—for special spiritual purposes.

Degrees of Abstinence

1. Normal Fast. Esther 4:15-16, Acts 9:8-9
2. Partial Fast. Daniel 1:12

Number of Participants in the Fast

1. Private Fast Matthew 6:17-18
2. Small Group or Congregational Fast Acts 13:1-3

Length of Fast

1. Part of a day Judges 20:26-28
2. One day Jeremiah 36:6
3. Three days Esther 4:1, Acts 9:8-9
6. Seven days 1 Samuel 31:13
7. 21 days Daniel 10:2-3
8. 40 days Deuteronomy 9:9, 1 Kings 19:8, Matthew 4:1-2).
9. Fasts with lengths not mentioned Luke 2:37, Acts 13:3

Frequency of Fasts

1. Regular Fast Leviticus 16:29-31, Luke 18:12
2. Occasional Fast Acts 9:8-9
3. Continuous Fast Matthew 3:4

Should Christians Today Fast?

Let us first consider how the Bible speaks about food. Food is spoken of as a good gift from God. 1 Timothy 4:1-5 Christian fasting, to be clear, is not asceticism (severe self-discipline) Colossians 2:20-23

Fasting is not to be a legalistic routine. It is a privilege and an opportunity to seek God's grace.

Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? 15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. Matthew 9:14-15

Who is the bridegroom? When is He taken away from His disciples? Jesus means that He will return to his Father in heaven after his death and resurrection. During that time, the disciples will fast.

In this age there is an ache inside every Christian that Jesus is not here as fully and intimately and as powerfully and as gloriously as we want Him to be. We hunger for so much more. That is why we fast.

Reasons to Fast

1. Fast to Strengthen Prayer Ezra 8:21, 23
2. Fast to Seek God's Guidance Judges 20:26-27a
3. Fast to Seek Deliverance or Protection 2 Chronicles 20:2-4
4. Fast to Express Grief 2 Samuel 1:11-12
5. Fast to Express Repentance and a Return to Trust in God Joel 2:12
6. Fast to Humble Yourself Before God 1 Kings 21:27-29
7. Fast to Express Concern for the Work of God Daniel 9:2-3
8. Fast to Minister to the Needs of Others Isaiah 58:6-7
9. Fast to Overcome Temptation and Dedicate Yourself to God
10. Fast to Express Love and to Worship God

Why is there no intercessor?

Isaiah 59:16 And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor..