

DAY 4 FAST

Matthew 6.17-18

"But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

I don't know if you are like me, but I have always had a mixed relationship with the practice of fasting. It was often relegated to some sort of legalistic practice. Or something for only the hyper-spiritual. My own experience is pretty limited. At times I have

But notice the manner in which Jesus talks about fasting here in this excerpt from the Sermon on the Mount. "But when you fast..." For Jesus, the assumption is that his disciples will, in fact, practice fasting, not if they will. The practice itself was an implied reality for his followers.

Jesus and his followers are not alone in this either. So many of the influential followers of Jesus before us also had a regular practice of fasting throughout the ages. There is something about the manner in which we are able to restrict one of our strongest urges (hunger) and aim it toward feasting on the word of God for a season that is deeply formative.

Historically, fasting is not eating for a short period of time to carve out space for our desires to be shifted toward God. And so, framed in this light, fasting as a spiritual practice is much different than many of the fad diets and popular approaches to fasting we see in our world today. Because fasting is ultimately about feasting, it is about locating our desires on God as our sustenance.

"It provides us with the opportunity to feast on God's overwhelming goodness and love for us." When we practice fasting, we quickly become aware of the power of our desires for food.

One of the reasons we can have a hard time with fasting is that it is a way for us to get to God through our body and not simply our mind. We are comfortable and familiar with encountering God through our mind. But fasting presents us the opportunity to use our physicality to connect with God. And hunger is a powerful force that drives our action.

So Jesus invites us to use one of our foundational experiences as a human to encounter God. But Jesus also instructs us to not draw attention to ourselves. To not look "somber" when we fast because we may mislead people into thinking we are something that we are not. So we guard against a false spirituality.

Daily Practice

Refrain from eating today between mealtimes—or choose a day to fast. Allow your desires for food to deepen your consciousness of the spiritual resources that God gives you to endure other difficult deprivations. Remember this: Fasting means feasting on the words of God.

The below reflections are written by congregants & staff of CPC. All reflections are following Trevor Hudson's book *Pauses for Lent* and are both heavily influenced and borrowed from his work. Any quotes without attribution should be credited to him.