



21 Days of Seeking God First

| KEY THOUGHTS

- **As humans, we're both material and spiritual beings.**
 - Because we're created in God's image, we have a longing to connect with Him and are designed to depend on Him.
 - The desire to know Him increases when we're faced with unusual stress or challenges.
- Satan likes to attack us by throwing us off balance, but **the Holy Spirit can use these attacks to lead us to seek God.**
- In the Bible, fasting usually means abstaining from food for a period of time; but people in the scriptures would occasionally fast from other things as well, such as sex within marriage, or alcohol.
- Using the wedding metaphor, Jesus said it wasn't appropriate for His disciples to fast while the "bridegroom" (Jesus) was with them; **but the expectation was that when He was gone, His disciples would fast.**
- In the Old Testament, fasting was associated with sorrow, such as mourning a loss or repentance of sin.
- **Jesus introduced a new kind of fasting:**
 - not based on sorrow over sin, but on **God's forgiveness of sin;**
 - not prompted by mourning over loss, but by **the desire to gain a closer relationship with God.**
- This new Kingdom culture doesn't fit into the old container of religion; anyone who tries will ruin both, and only the ignorant would attempt it.
- In the Old Testament culture of fasting, the focus was on what you've done; in the Kingdom, **the focus is on what God has done.**
- **New Testament fasting is a return to our roots, learning to rely on God as we were created to do.**

| SCRIPTURE

¹⁴ Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” ¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

Matthew 9:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁶ “...don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting.... ¹⁷ But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. ¹⁸ Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father...”

Matthew 6:16-18 (NLT)

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you...

James 4:8 (ESV)

| PRACTICAL

- There are four kinds of fasting:
 - A complete fast - abstaining from all food for a period of time;
 - A selective fast - eliminating certain elements from our diet, such as sweets or alcohol;
 - A partial fast - cutting out one meal a day, or foregoing food during a period of time during each day;
 - A soul fast - cutting out something other than food, such as social media, TV or movies, or some other thing that's normal in life.
- Fasting isn't merely removing an activity, but it involves replacing it with something else:
 - This could be studying the scriptures, praying, or serving;
 - You don't have to do this alone, but can study, pray, or serve with others.
 - For help with scripture and meditation, you can choose one of the two reading guides at www.mylighthousecommunity.com/21days/ .
 - You can make your decision known by checking the "Count me in..." box on your connection card, and we'll pray for you as you fast.

| REFLECT

- The question is not, “Why would I start the year 2022 fasting?” but rather, “Why *wouldn't* I?”
- Fasting is a statement to both God and to yourself: I want God more than food, and I'm willing to set aside the normal things in life in order to obtain the thing that's most important.
- How do I know what kind of fast I should begin?
 - If I consider things to give up and think, “I could never do that,” that's probably the thing I should fast from;
 - I must make up my mind that my relationship with God is more important than... (whatever it is) and make that statement to myself and to God.
- Fasting itself isn't the point.
 - Fasting isn't pulling a lever to get God to do what I want;
 - With fasting, God is the point, and what He wants to do in and through His people in the process.

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