

V. Conclusion

“We ache and yearn—and fast—to know more and more of all that God is for us in Jesus. But only because he has *already* laid hold of us and is drawing us ever forward and upward into ‘all the fullness of God.’”(Piper)

Recommended reading: John Piper’s “*A Hunger for God*”

Class Schedule Overview

Teachers:

1	Introduction
2	All of life worship
3	Bible Intake I
4	Bible Intake II
5	Prayer
6	Confession of sin
7	Fasting
8	Evangelism
9	Serving
10	Stewardship
11	Cultivating Spiritual Fruit I
12	Cultivating Spiritual Fruit II
13	Perseverance

Core Seminars—How to Grow Class 7: Fasting



I. Introduction

Definitions of fasting:

- *Most inclusive*: abstinence from anything that is legitimate in and of itself, for some special spiritual purpose.
- *Narrower*: voluntary abstinence from physical nourishment—food and drink—for special spiritual purposes.

A. Fasting in the Old Testament

(1) Day of Atonement (**Lev. 16:29**, 21; 23:27-32; Num. 29:7)

(2) After the Exile (Zech. 8:19)

(3) Occasional fasts:

- Individual (2 Sam. 12:22)
- Corporate (*e.g.* Judges 20:26)

(4) Fasting gave expression to:

- Grief (1 Sam. 31:13; **2 Sam. 1:12**; 3:35; Neh. 1:4; Esther 4:3; Psalm 35:13-14)
- Penitence (1 Sam. 7:6; 1 Ki. 21:27; Neh. 9:1-2; **Dan. 9:3-4**; Jonah 3:5-8)
- Humility (Ezra 8:21; **Ps. 69:10**)

(5) Fasting was often directed towards securing the guidance and help of God (Exod. 34:28; Deut. 9:9; 2 Sam. 12:16-23; 2 Chr. 20:3-4; **Ezra 8:21-23**)

B. Fasting in the New Testament

(1) Jewish practice:

- Day of Atonement (Acts 27:9)
- Pharisees: every Monday and Thursday (Lk. 18:11-12)
- Anna (Lk. 2:36-37)

- (2) Jesus' fasting (Matt. 4:1-4)
- (3) The fasting of Jesus' disciples is assumed (Matt. 6:16-18)
- (4) Acts: leaders of the church fast when choosing missionaries (13:2-3) and elders (14:23)
- (5) Paul twice refers to his fasting (2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27)

II. Characteristics of Fasting

A. Degree of Abstinence

- (1) **Normal Fast:** The abstinence from all food and drink. (Est. 4:15-16, Ezek. 10:6, Acts 9:8-9, Deut. 9:9)
- (2) **Partial Fast:** A partial fast is a limitation of diet, but not abstention from all food. (Dan. 1:12)

B. Number of Participants in the Fast

- (1) **Private Fast:** Matthew 6:16-18
- (2) **Small Group Fast:** Acts 13:1-3
- (3) **Congregational Fast:** Esther 4:16; Neh. 9:1; Joel 2:15-16

C. Length of Fast

D. Frequency of Fasts

- (1) **Regular Fast:** On a repetitive schedule (Lev. 16:29-31)
- (2) **Occasional Fast:** Whenever a need is perceived
- (3) **Continuous Fast:** Example: John the Baptist (Matt. 3:4)

III. Should Christians Fast?

- What the NT says about food and eating: **1 Tim 4:1-5**; Col 2:16-23; Rom 14:3-6; 1 Cor 8.
- Fasting is nowhere commanded in the NT. Yet it seems clear in Scripture that Jesus assumed his followers would fast.
- Matthew 6:16-17 – “*When you fast,...*” “*But when you fast...*” (cf. Matt. 6:2-3 “*...So when you give*” & Matt. 6:5-7 “*But when you pray*”)

IV. Christian Fasting Has a Purpose

None of the purposes involve earning God's favor. We are made acceptable to God through the work of Jesus Christ alone

10 Good 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 Chr. 20:2-4
- (4) **Fast to Express Grief** -- over sin or calamities 2 Samuel 1:11-12; but remember 1 Peter 3:18, 1 John 1:9
- (5) **Fast to Express Repentance:** 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:** Dan. 9:2-3
- (8) **Fast to Minister to the Needs of Others:** Isaiah 58:6-7
- (9) **Fast to Fight Temptation and Dedicate Yourself to God**
- (10) **Fast to Express Love and to Worship God**