

**Welcome to the  
Common Ground Café!**



**Sunday, May 19, 2019**

**Why Fast?**

**A Study of Matthew 6:16-18**

**[www.hillcrest.church](http://www.hillcrest.church)**



Think about a time you had to skip food before a medical procedure or a time you tried to diet. What was difficult about it? What “rewards” did you hope to get out of it?

There are physical advantages to developing self-control with food. But there are spiritual advantages, too!

Read Matthew 6:16-18 and answer the following questions:

- ❖ Does Jesus’ instruction on fasting begin with the words “If you fast” or “When you fast”? What is the difference in these two phrases?
- ❖ In verse 18, what might be some “reward(s)” that God would give to those who fast?

Matthew 6:16-18 is part of a larger section of teaching. In Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus discusses the right way and the wrong way to conduct three religious practices. Answer the following questions:

- ❖ What religious practice is discussed in Matthew 6:2-4?
- ❖ What religious practice is discussed in Matthew 6:5-15?
- ❖ What religious practice is discussed in Matthew 6:16-18?
- ❖ In Matthew 6:1, he says that these three things are how you “practice your righteousness.” What does that mean?

In previous studies in April and May, we’ve already looked at charity (Matthew 6:2-4) and prayer (Matthew 6:5-15). Today we’ll look at fasting.

Why fast? Pastor Tom mentioned four biblical reasons for fasting that form the acronym “F-A-S-T.” As your group comes to each point in the discussion guide, complete the acronym.

**F** \_\_\_\_\_  
Fast when you’re broken-hearted  
over your sins and the sins of others

Read Joel 2:12-13 and Nehemiah 1:3-4.

How does broken-ness over sin lead us to change?

What is God’s response to true repentance?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_  
Fast as an act of worship to God

Read Luke 2:36-38.

Is there any evidence from the text that Anna was fasting as part of confession of sin? Is there any evidence from the text that Anna was fasting as a part of asking God to meet a personal need? In the absence of any of these reasons for fasting, is it reasonable to assume that Anna fasted simply as an act of adoration?

Have you ever been so “caught up” in an activity that you forgot about eating? Describe that experience.

Have you ever been so “caught up” in a *worship experience* that you forgot about eating? Describe that experience.

Read Zechariah 7:5. How is a fast “for God”?

Read Ps. 35:13. What attitude does fasting help us get into according to this verse? How does fasting contribute to the formation of this attitude?

## S \_\_\_\_\_

Fast as you pray for  
something only God can give

Read Ezra 8:21-23

What did the people of Israel need from God?

List needs in your life, our church, and our world that would be worth committing a day of fasting to pray about

## T \_\_\_\_\_

Fast to learn about real priorities

According to the following verses, what's more important than food?

- ❖ Luke 2:36-38 says the w\_\_\_\_\_ of God is more important
- ❖ John 4:32-34 says the w\_\_\_\_\_ of God is more important  
(Bonus points: In the context, what specific work did Jesus regard as more important than food?)
- ❖ Matthew 4:2-4 says the w\_\_\_\_\_ of God is more important



Close with praise reports and prayer requests