

## Discipleship Groups — Level II

### WEEK 3 THE DISCIPLINE OF FASTING

Hello everyone,

In our discipleship classes we have already talked about the disciplines of:

1. Prayer
2. Reading and studying the Bible

Today I want to share with you about the discipline of Fasting. Fasting is a very important spiritual discipline in the life of a disciple. As part of the culture of heaven, the end or purpose of fasting is 100% spiritual.

Fasting consists of abstaining, totally or partially, from eating food or performing certain activities for a certain period of time.

As we talked about in previous classes, good motivation makes a difference.

In Matthew chapter 6 the Lord Jesus is speaking to his disciples and to a multitude of people who followed him. He teaches them that fasting requires humility and sincerity. Two good reasons.

*"When you fast, do not look sad, as hypocrites do. They like people to know that they are fasting. I assure you that this will be the only prize they will receive. When you fast, comb your hair well and wash your faces, so that people do not realize that you are fasting. Only God, your Father, who knows all the secrets, will know that you are fasting and will give you your reward. — Matthew 6:16-18 (NLT)*

In fasting our relationship with God should be our greatest motive. We currently live in a consumer culture, and you may think that fasting is not for these times. The discipline of fasting is for our time and is something that is in the Bible and has been practiced for years.

We see many people trying to fast and fail. As we have taught in previous classes, we should train every day to get into the habit of fasting. Something that doesn't help much nowadays regarding fasting is the constant propaganda that the media sends us. Consume, consume, consume. They communicate the exaggerated idea that if we don't eat three large meals a day, with several snacks between each meal, this can affect our body. The reality is that this is not true.

It is good to clarify that the human body cannot survive without air or water, but it can go a few days without consuming food. This ability to go a few days without consuming food will depend on our state of health and physical condition.

When we practice spiritual disciplines, the most important thing is to be clear about why we are doing it. We can define this as purpose. Purpose gives meaning, direction and satisfaction to the actions we perform.

A good question is **what is the purpose of fasting?** Here are some resolutions

## **Fasting for:**

### **1. Strengthening My Relationship with God**

Fasting, as well as prayer and Bible reading, go a long way in strengthening my relationship with God.

As disciples of Christ, we must daily deepen and cultivate a more intimate, genuine, and constant connection with God. Fasting is an expression of humility and dependence on God. By temporarily giving up something essential like food, we recognize that our true need is God.

### **2. Seeking God's Direction**

Fasting is a way to seek clarity and divine guidance in times of important decisions or confusion. By turning away from those things that take our attention away or distract us, we focus more on listening to God.

### **3. Achieving a Spiritual Renewal**

Fasting allows for greater concentration on spiritual things and can lead to deep inner renewal, promoting an attitude of repentance, cleansing, and transformation.

### **4. Overcoming distractions and weaknesses**

Fasting helps to master the desires of the body, bringing focus and spiritual discipline. Fasting can strengthen your faith and character, helping you overcome temptations or weaknesses. A great truth is that when we practice the discipline of fasting, the things that control us will be revealed.

### **5. Making Intercession for Others**

Our fasting can be done on behalf of other people or situations. As an act of intercession, we seek God's intervention in someone's life or in a situation of crisis or difficulty.

**In the Bible we find evidence of great people who practiced the discipline of fasting.**

The Bible tells us:

### **The Fast of the Lord Jesus, Our Savior**

John baptizes him in the Jordan River, the Holy Spirit descends upon him, and then he is taken into the wilderness where he spends 40 days and 40 nights fasting and praying. It was a time of preparation before he began his public ministry.

This is a supernatural, Holy Spirit-led fast. God led him to this experience. It is supernatural since humanly it is difficult and dangerous. He was sustained by the power of God.

## **The Fast of Moses**

Like the fast of Jesus, the fast of Moses can be considered supernatural and guided by the Holy Spirit. To receive the tablets with the Ten Commandments he fasted for 40 days.

## **Queen Esther's Fast for Three Days**

Esther was the Queen of Persia. She fasted for three days with all her people. This fast was crucial in the history of the Jewish people. Thanks to this fast, the people of Israel were not exterminated.

A fast can change the course of events or it can also change situations.

## **Daniel's Fast for 21 Days**

Daniel did partial fasts for 21 days. Before the king of Persia, Daniel decides not to defile himself with the food of that kingdom and fasts for 21 days so that God would reveal to him the meaning of a vision he had received.

For 21 days he decided to eat only simple, unprocessed and natural foods such as vegetables, legumes, fruits, and water. No meat.

## **Very important:**

When fasting is practiced correctly, it brings great benefits to our lives. Here are some of the benefits you get from fasting:

### **1. Greater Spiritual Intimacy**

By fasting, believers set aside time to focus more deeply on their relationship with God. James 4:8 says, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."

### **2. Listen to God's Voice**

Fasting helps to silence the noise of the world and to hear God's direction and voice more clearly.

### **3. Bring Spiritual Renewal**

Fasting helps to renew and strengthen the spirit, distancing the believer from temptations and focusing him on holiness.

### **4. Clarity in Decision Making**

Fasting help us in making important decisions. This is seen in Acts 13:2-3, where the leaders of the church in Antioch fasted before sending Paul and Barnabas on their mission.

### **5. Breaking Spiritual Bonds**

Isaiah 58:6 speaks of fasting to break chains of wickedness, loose bonds of oppression, and set captives free.

### **6. Divine Protection**

Fasting is also associated with seeking divine protection and intervention in times of danger, as in the case of Queen Esther and the Jewish people.

## 7. **Control Over the Body and Passions**

Fasting helps to develop **self-control**, teaching the believer to control his fleshly desires and focus on the spiritual.

## 8. **Heart Purification**

Fasting purifies not only the body but also the heart, allowing Christians to approach God with clean hands and a pure heart.

## 9. **Effective Prayers**

Fasting can make prayers more effective and powerful. In short, fasting brings great benefits to our lives.

### **How are we going to practice fasting?**

**First** let me explain the types of fasting that exist.

- **Total Fasting:** Abstaining from food and, in some cases, water for a specific period of days. This type of fasting should be done with caution and a lot of common sense. You must have good training to do it.
- **Partial Fasting:** Restriction of certain types of food or drink. An example of this fasting is the one that Daniel did in the Bible.
- **Fasting from Activities:** Some choose to fast activities, such as using technology, or using the telephone, stopping watching television, etc. The idea is to push away the things that take up a lot of our time and distract us.

As a **second** point to practice fasting, you should **make a plan**. Creating a plan for fasting is essential to making the experience meaningful and spiritually enriching. Here is a basic plan that you can adapt according to your needs and abilities:

### **FASTING PLAN**

#### **1. Before starting the fast**

- **Establish a Clear Purpose.** Determine why you're fasting. It can be to seek direction, intercede for someone, repent, or simply draw closer to God.
- **Pray.** Make time for prayer before you start fasting. Ask God to give you strength and speak to your heart during this time.
- **Consult with a Spiritual Advisor.** If it's your first fast, or if you're planning an extended fast, it may be helpful to talk to a pastor or spiritual counselor.
- **Consult a doctor and check your health status.**  
In order to choose what type of fasting you are going to do, it is necessary to know your physical condition. If you are under medical treatment you must take into account certain restrictions.

- **Communicate with your Family Members:** Inform your loved ones about your fasting plan so they understand your process and can support you.
- **Choose the Type of Fasting you are going to do.**  
As with all disciplines, a progression must be observed; Remember don't try, train daily. It is advisable to learn to walk well before attempting to run. It begins with partial fasts of one to two hours, then six, twelve, and twenty-four hours of duration.

Try this once a week for several weeks. Break your fast with a light meal of fresh fruits and vegetables and a healthy dose of inner rejoicing. After two to three weeks of training, you'll be ready to try a normal fast of twenty-four hours or more.

## 2. During Fasting

- a. Practice spiritual disciplines
- b. Make sure you drink enough water to stay hydrated.
- c. Be flexible with yourself. If at any point you feel like you can't continue, it's best to break the fast with prayer and gratitude.

## 3. Ending the fast

- **End your fast with gratitude**  
At the end of the fast, thank God for the time you spent with Him.
- **Break the Fast Gradually:** If your fast was total or prolonged, start with light foods. Avoid overeating immediately after ending your fast.
- **Reflect on the Experience:** Take some time to write down what you learned and how you felt during the fast. You can also share it as a testimony.

The key is to keep the focus on God and allow fasting to be an experience of spiritual growth.

We hope that all this information is of great value for your life. Our purpose is that you can have a clearer and expanded vision of each topic we are presenting to you and help you in your growth as a disciple of Christ.