



HABIT 6

FASTING

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Context

Fasting can be defined as “Abstaining from food for a period of time for spiritual reasons.” Interestingly, fasting is a feature of almost any religion on earth. Although its meaning in one religion is different from another, it is a curious thing that almost every religion recognizes the importance of denying yourself of something that you usually depend on for sustenance in order to achieve specific spiritual purposes.

In light of that, it won't be a surprise if some people in your group have attempted fasting in the past. So, let's start with some sharing in the group.

1. If you have fasted before, please share with the group your experience (i.e., Why you fasted? What did you fast from? How did you do it? What was the spiritual benefit from it?)
OR If you have not fasted before, please share with the group the reason(s) why you never got around to do it?

Observation & Meaning

2. There are many references to fasting in the Bible. It is quite safely assumed that fasting is an important element of the spiritual life of the people of God.

Text	Why fasting?
Judges 20:26-28	
1 Samuel 7:3-6	
1 Samuel 31:11-13 and 2 Samuel 1:12	
2 Samuel 12:16-23	

1 Kings 21:27–29	
Jonah 3:6–10	
Ezra 8:21-23	
Nehemiah 1:1-4	
Matthew 9:14–15	
Acts 13:1–3	

3. It is unfortunate that it is human tendency to turn something good into bad. We are prone to misuse or take for granted something that was designed for a beautiful purpose, including fasting.

Go through the following Bible passages and discuss the wrong ways or manners or reasons for our fasting.

Text	Inappropriate way or reason for fasting
Matthew 6:16–18	
Luke 18:9–12	
Isaiah 58:3-4	
Zechariah 7:1-12	

Application

4. In light of the above, what principles do you have to keep in mind when you fast?

Let's be practical now. Let's do something about this. The hope is that we want to incorporate fasting as one of our spiritual disciplines, both individually and as a group.

5. Fasting in the Bible is almost always about abstaining from food. However, it does not mean that fasting has to be about food.

In 1 Corinthians 7:5, for example, Apostle Paul talks about married couples abstaining from being physically intimate for a period of time for the purpose of prayer (see also Exodus 19:15 and Ecclesiastes 3:5b).

Think about one or two things that you find yourself dependent upon (e.g., sugary drink, chocolate, video games, social media, YouTube, television, etc.). Share with the group which one of them that you may possibly try to fast from for a period of time. Ask the group to keep you accountable.

6. Spiritual disciplines, such as fasting, can be done together as well. Although fasting does not have to be about food, there is a reason why the Bible talks a lot about fasting from food. Take time to discuss how you can implement this together as a group.

For example / suggestion: Pick a day for your group to do fasting and praying together, and plan to break the fast together. Plan to fast from food on that day. Then, meet together as a group for prayer for an hour in the evening. After prayer, you can break the fast together. Depending on your health, some of you can skip breakfast and lunch altogether. Some of you can skip just the lunch. During the day, as you skip the meal(s), take time to pray for yourself, for your group, for the church, for your global partner, and for other things. Divert your focus from food to God. In the evening, during your prayer time, share your fasting experience. We do hope that this will kick start not just a good habit for your group, but also for your personal spiritual life.