

MEET WITH ME: Fasting SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES SERIES - Part 3 Ben Rudolph

Well good morning Life family. It is so good to see you here this morning. Turn in your Bibles to Matthew Chapter 6 as today we are going to be talking about fasting. If you are wondering why we had Krispy Kreme Donuts on the way into church this morning, it was a giant test for you. No, I am just teasing.

It has been so great to see the volunteers here every single Sunday. I have just been so encouraged to hear their stories of why they serve and I hope you guys stop by the tables out there for the Worship Ministry, Kid Life, and Student Life. I think I am missing a table, maybe it is Prayer Ministry or something. I hope you spend some time talking with them because there are some amazing opportunities to serve the body of Christ here, and I hope you are sensing God's call in your life as we have been focusing on that this month.

When it comes to fasting I have to be honest with you, this is the one spiritual discipline that I feel the most ill prepared to talk about based on my own life. Fasting is just one of those things that maybe you feel like it is something that is for really serious Christians. For example, last weekend my brother-in-law got his black belt in Jiu-jitsu and it took him like twenty years to get that. Now it is not because he is real lazy; it is because the type of jiu-jitsu he does is the Royce Gracie Jiu-jitsu, and they do not hand out black belts to very many people. So he has been working on this his entire life.

And we know that when it comes to martial arts if you have a black belt in any of those disciplines you are supposed to really know stuff. Like, you can hurt people if you have a black belt, or you know how to fight. And I think sometimes when it comes to fasting our idea, our perception of that is: *'Man, that is for black belt Christians. That is for the Christians who are really serious about God. You have to be a Christian for like decades before trying fasting.'* And I want to approach that and address that to let you know that that is not the expectation that I think God has for us. And I don't want that to be the mindset that we look at fasting with. It is not that you have to do all these things, like read your Bible for five years, pray consistently for ten years, and then we will let you dabble into fasting. That is not how it goes.

Fasting is something that I believe God invites us to in a sense to worship Him, and it is almost is an expectation. Now let's look in Matthew Chapter 6 and we are going to read this, and again this is a passage that deals with the public display of righteousness. In verse 1 it says: ***"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who in in heaven."***

So again, this is all about things that people were used to doing in public. As we talked about it a little bit last week, the first thing that Jesus talks about is giving. Now you have all heard a sermon about giving before, right? If you go to church for any length of time you are used to hearing about giving. And then the next thing is prayer,

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which makes complete sense because prayer is a very normal thing to do as followers of God.

Now if you had to pick the third thing to talk about when it comes to exercising your spiritual walk, there are a lot of things I would have picked before fasting. But fasting is here. It is a normal regular part of the worship that is expressed to God. Look what it says in verse 16: ***“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”***

This is the longest passage of Scripture that deals with fasting in a condensed way. So fasting is mentioned here that people were fasting. Look at the very first phrase that Jesus gives: ***“And when you fast.”*** There is never a command to fast that is in Scripture, yet we see it so many times. There are over seventy times in Scripture that fasting is mentioned. Some of the greatest people that we see in the Old Testament their stories revolve around this idea of fasting. And we are going to look at some of them a little later on.

So this idea of fasting permeates the Old Testament and it is even in the New Testament. So why does it feel so foreign to us? I will be honest with you, I was a pastor’s kid and you can’t get any more Christian than a pastor’s kid, people. I had to go to church three times a week, Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night. I was there whether I wanted to be or not. But here is what I know, I did not practice fasting. The first time I dabbled into fasting was when I was in college. It was like I needed to try this fasting thing.

I think fasting has been void of the Christian experience. In fact Richard Foster, who wrote a book on spiritual disciplines, said that in his research of spiritual disciplines from 1861 to 1954, almost a hundred years, there was not one book written about fasting that he could find in the English language. That was fascinating to me. It is almost like it has been this lost spiritual discipline. The question I have to ask myself is – why? Why is fasting not a normal part of our spiritual discipline?

I think there a number of reasons why we don’t fast. Number one, there has just been a completely lack of discipleship in this. People have not practiced fasting, and if you don’t practice it yourself how can you teach others how to fast. I have disciplined people in how to read the Bible and in how to pray, but discipling people in fasting feels like a complete other level for me in our spiritual walk. So I think that is the first reason.

And when you think about the things we talk about like giving, prayer, Bible reading we have all heard sermons on those, but how many sermons have we heard on

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fasting though? It is probably not many, if at all. So I think there has been a lack of discipleship on fasting in our churches collectively.

The second reason is I think sometimes it is a reaction to asceticism. And asceticism is this idea that I must brutalize my body, and cut myself off from experiencing anything that is good in order to show God how serious I am about Him and how serious I am about sin. So we have these images of being like a monk slapping their backs with whips or wearing burlap just to be uncomfortable and itchy in order to have their bodies under control. Now we think that is just weird. Can we all agree that is just weird and we don't find any of that in the Bible? So sometimes fasting gets lumped into some of these other practices that we look at and we think it is a little extreme.

But I think the biggest reason why fasting is not a normal part of our life is that fasting goes against the culture of indulgence that we find ourselves in. You and I swim in a sea of our culture where the air that we breathe is indulgence. If you desire it then you should do it no matter what it is. Whether it has to do with food or technology or sexual desires or free time, it is whatever you feel like indulging in. And we do that. I mean we can go to Bad Daddy's down in Birkdale, and have you ever looked at their menu? Do you know what kind of burger you can order there? Whatever you can dream up you can order it. I can have two patties with cheddar cheese on each one and I can add bacon on that, and jalapenos, and barbeque sauce, and avocados. Or I can put even more bacon on it and eat that today for lunch if I wanted to.

I had this thought like we just live in this world where everything can be just extreme indulgence. And isn't it amazing that we can order a supreme pizza. When I was a kid I only ate cheese on my pizza, and then as I got older I started liking different things. I started really liking supreme pizza because it had all these different toppings on there. Can you imagine taking a slice of supreme pizza, dipping it in beer batter and then deep frying it. And then take that deep fried piece of supreme pizza and dip it in Ranch dressing. How come no one has ever thought of this before, people? Deep fried pizza, I mean, come on.

Some of you are probably thinking you are going to try that. See we can do things like that. We can deep fry whatever we want, we can indulge in the greatest things ever. We can pile ice cream with sauce. We are used to indulging every appetite that we have. If we desire it we can fulfill it. And we find ourselves in one of the most dangerous places in life when we realize that isn't necessarily good because not every desire we have is good.

So what fasting does is confront these desires by asking ourselves if we desire God greater than these other desires? And if there is one point that I want you to leave with this morning it is this – fasting increases our desire for God. Fasting increases our desire for God. None of us ever desires God perfectly. There are things that are battling against our flesh and our will. There are things that every morning we wake up and we

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have to fight the good fight and fight the flesh and ask, *‘Listen, do I truly want God more than the smorgasbord of pleasures that are out there in the world today?’* So we need to face that, we need to confront that on a regular basis. We need to understand that God has allowed us to experience fasting for this reason because He knows who we are. And He knows how little we like to say no to ourselves.

So what we are going to do this morning is look at what fasting is, why we should fast, and then how we should fast. When we read Matthew Chapter 6 and it says, **“*And when you fast,*”** we probably understand that this was spoken to a group of people who already had a biblical understanding of fasting. So I want to lay the foundation of what that is and why we should do it and then go into how we should do it based on this passage.

First of all what is fasting? Fasting simply is the act of abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. Fasting is abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. Now sometimes there can be fasting for other reasons and we will talk about that a little bit later. But predominantly we get this biggest picture of fasting by it always beginning with food.

So where did fasting come from? The first person that mentions fasting in Scripture is Moses. Moses was on Mount Sinai when he went to get the Law and the instructions from God. It says that Moses fasted for forty days and forty nights. His was a supernatural fast because he not only withheld himself from food but also from water which cannot happen humanly. If you were to abstain from water for forty days you will die. The most fasting without liquids that you can ever do is about three days. So Moses did a supernatural fast. And he was the first one to fast in the Scriptures and it was for forty days and forty nights.

There were only three people in Scripture that fasted for forty days. It was Moses, it was Elijah, and then it was Jesus. Those are the ones that we know of who did the bigger fasts. But fasting happened in a lot of different ways, and I have a list of five things that I want to tell you about. There is something about food and following and obeying God that has been with us from the very beginning. In fact I would even say the first fast happened in the Garden of Eden because remember God put Adam and Eve in the Garden and He said, *‘Listen, you can eat all of this food but just don’t eat THIS food.’* So there is this idea of abstaining from a kind of food in order to obey God.

Later on in the book of Exodus you have this display of God where He gives the children of Israel manna in the wilderness. God knows they don’t have anything to eat because they are in the wilderness so He causes it to rain bread or manna from heaven. God gives them the manna and He says, *‘I am giving you this manna to test you whether or not you will obey my Law.’* And there were certain rules about collecting the manna. You could only collect enough for your household for that day, and then depend on God for more the next day. It was a picture of depending on God. *‘You need me to provide*

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for you. You need me to supply this food for you so I want you to understand your dependence on me. So you have this connection to food and to obedience and righteousness that is throughout all Scripture.

So I want you to see the ways that people fast in the Old Testament. There are five main categories and these aren't all of the passages of Scripture, but you can see it in these top five things. For example the first thing is for specific direction from the Lord. Sometimes there are people that need to know God; they are hungry for direction and they don't know what to do. So we see that in the book of Judges when the eleven tribes are not sure what they should do with the tribe of Benjamin because they have been in rebellion, and they fast before the Lord.

Then you see Paul and Barnabas fasting because God is doing a work in Antioch and they wanted His direction of what they should do beyond Antioch. We can also see how people fasted when they mourned over someone's death or someone's serious illness, and they would withhold food in order to ask God to heal them or to comfort them. There is also fasting happening a lot as a sign of repentance. There is a Day of Atonement which was introduced as a holy day, a high holy day for the people of God in the Old Testament. And the people were not to eat anything on that day so they could understand their need for a blood sacrifice substitute on their behalf for their sins. So we see these pictures of the gospel during that day and as they worshipped God the people were to fast from eating that day.

We can see other examples of people repenting and fasting. We talked about Jonah a few months ago. And then we see examples of fasting for God's favor and protection. There were times when people were in such desperate need for God to show up because they were in trouble. There is an II Chronicles passage that is the story of King Jehoshaphat who was the king of Judah and there were three nations that were converging on Judah. They were about to destroy Judah and King Jehoshaphat calls the nation together and tells them we have to cry out to God. And they called a nationwide fast and asked God to deliver them.

We also see in Daniel where the four young men abstained from certain foods and they needed God's favor to be able to show the guard of Nebuchadnezzar that God would take care of their bodies. And then when the people of God were at risk of becoming extinct Queen Esther calls for a three day fast for all of the Jewish people.

And then finally we see fasting for spiritual strength and that was Jesus. Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights and that was before the temptations that He received from the devil. Now why did Jesus fast? Jesus fasted not because He was repenting of anything; it was because He was showing humanity how to beat temptation. Jesus was the second Adam, He was born fully God and fully man, and when He was tempted by the devil He lived out what Adam and Eve failed at doing. Jesus wasn't in a Garden in Paradise, He was in a wilderness and He had fasted so bodily speaking He was much

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more physically weary and His senses were completely weakened both physically and emotionally. But fasting gave Him spiritual strength so that when He faced the devil in the wilderness He did for us what we could not do ourselves.

The reason why Jesus is our perfect righteousness is because He faced temptation and He beat it, He overcame it. So that sense of fasting was to draw spiritual strength to be able to say, ***“Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that precedes from the mouth of God.”*** He was saying that He needed God more than He needed bread. That is what Jesus was saying and that is what we say when we fast.

So what do all of these have in common? All of these have in common the fact that the people who fast are saying, *‘God I need you. God I need you. I need you right now. I need your help. I don’t know how to face this trouble alone. I don’t know how to face this suffering alone. I don’t know how to face this test. I don’t know how to face this issue in my life.’* And all of us have times in our lives when we understand the need for God is completely amplified.

Listen, when I say we need God there is a difference between needing God and needing God. Do you know what I mean? Lots of times we say we need God, but we think of Him as AAA. So like when our car breaks down, and I love AAA because I am not a mechanic, so when I turn that key to start my car and it doesn’t start at all, as a man do you know what I do? I get out, pop the hood open, look at the engine, and then I don’t have the slightest idea what to do. But I do that because that is what guys are supposed to do, they are supposed to raise the hood and realize something is not working. Then when someone asks me if I looked at the engine I can say, yes I did. But the next thing I do is I call AAA because I don’t know what is wrong. They will say, *‘What seems to be the matter?’* And I will say, *‘It’s not working.’* I don’t know what else to tell them other than it is not working.

So when my car is broken down I know I need AAA. And many times we look at our need for God like AAA because we are in a crisis so we need God. But that is not the need of God that we should have when we are fasting. It should be like, *‘I need you, God, like I need oxygen.’* *God, I need you like I need food. If you don’t enter into this moment, if you don’t help me I am lost without you.’* That is the kind of need that we should have because fasting increases our desire for God and it reminds us of how much we need Him. Not just in the big events, not just in the crisis moments, but every single day. We need to be reminded on a continual basis how much we need God. So that is what fasting is.

Now why should we fast? Why is fasting important for us today? Based on the realization that we need God there are things that fasting does in us. And there are three main reasons why we should fast today. Number one, it reveals what controls us. It reveals what control us. If we were to talk about all of the desires that you and I have on a regular basis, we would realize that every day when we wake up we have desires.

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Some of them are physical desires like we need coffee, or we need breakfast. There is something inside of us that we desire certain things.

And what fasting does, if we say we are not going to eat for this period of time, what it does is it reveals to us what our flesh wants, what our desires are. And it might reveal something that says, *'Listen, this desire is controlling me. I want this. I desire this. I think I need this.'* But when you realize that you don't need this, you will realize that you need God. So what fasting does is it reveals to us the things in our lives that control us.

One of the principles that Jesus taught us is if we are to follow Him we are to deny ourselves. That sounds really spiritual, but the reality is denying ourselves simply means we need to tell ourselves *'No.'* Have you ever been around a child that has never been told no? You know what I am talking about because there are kids whose parents try to just redirect little Johnny. And we know they just need to say, *'No.'* And when they ask, *'Why?'* you can say, *'Because I say so.'* Sometimes we just have to tell our bodies, our flesh, *'No, that is not good for me.'* Just because we desire it, just because we want it, doesn't mean that we should do it.

And God wants to remind us that He wants to be Lord over every area of our lives. He wants to be Lord not just over our food choices, but Lord over our finances, our relationships, our careers, and our entertainment choices; He wants to be Lord over everything. And what happens is you and I have things in our lives where Jesus is not king over that area, and fasting reveals to us where those areas are. *'I want this, I think I need this, I desire this more than I desire God.'* And we have to be reminded that we really need God like we need oxygen, like we need food, and like we need water. If I need Him like that then there are things in my life that I have to rid my life of, or at least for a season I have to deny them.

Some of the things might be good, and some of the things might be bad, but we have to learn how to deny ourselves. And if we are going to swim in a culture of indulgence, if we are swimming in these waters then everyone around us is saying, *'I can go online and do whatever I want. I can eat whatever I want and drink whatever I want.'* One of the ways that we shine the light of Christ and the differences of what it means to follow Him is by saying, *'I don't do that because of the control it might have on me.'* That will shine the light of Christ and that will make people ask questions about your faith. So the first thing fasting does is it reveals to us what controls us and what shouldn't control us.

The second thing fasting does is it realigns our desire to God's desire. It realigns our desire to God's desire. The book of Psalms is just filled with these images of food and worship: ***"Taste and see that the Lord is good."*** It is an analogy of food and water and relating it to our relationship with God. Look what it says in Psalms 42 verses 1 and

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2: *“As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?”*

There is something the Psalmist desires and he desires God. He has a lot of desires but his greatest desire is God. And what we need is to align our desires to what God wants, to God Himself. One of the ways that we get tripped up on a continual basis in our spiritual walk with Jesus is when we use God as a means to an end. What I mean by that is this; we can say that we desire God, but if we say that we desire God so that we can get this, so that we can receive this, we are wanting something besides God. And what fasting does is it rips away all of those things that we want and makes us realize that we want God above everything else.

It would be great if we had time to read some of the stories of fasting in Scripture, because I love the desperation that is there with the people of God. The desperation is they just want God. Even if God doesn't deliver them they still want Him right now in their midst. And that is what we need to be asking ourselves: *‘Do I desire God?’* This is a test of our understanding of what God desires for us.

A few months ago I was on my prayer walk and the Spirit of God was like, *‘I want you to study the word ‘delight.’ That is what I want you to study.’* So I go back home and I think I know why God wants me to study the word ‘delight,’ because I need to delight in Him more. I pull up my Bible on my computer screen and I do a word study on the word ‘delight’ in the Hebrew and Greek in the New Testament. So I have done all this study and here is what I realized after my personal study on this word - relationship delight is expressed in three directions.

The first direction is person to person, like a husband delights in his wife, or a friend delights in a friend. There can be a relationship between two human beings that brings joy to each other and there is a delight that comes from that. Maybe you have experienced that delight in your life. There is another kind of delight and it is a delight that we have with God, the way God has shown Himself to be powerful and loving to us. So there is a delight that we express to God.

But the third direction, and this one blew me away, because the third relational direction is that God delights in us. I am not ready for that. As I was reading and studying delight I realized that God wants us to understand how He delights in us so that our delight in Him, our desire for Him is always a response of what He is pouring out and showing us. See He is the one that loves us, that sent us His Son. He is the one that sacrificed Himself for us on the cross, for our sins. His love, His desire to rescue and redeem a people for His glory and for His name was done because He delights in us.

There is a part of me that doesn't want to receive God's delight because I know who I am and I know my sins. But do you know who else knows who I am and knows my sins? He does! After studying this it taught me that fasting may increase my desire

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for God by teaching me how to respond to His goodness. To ask myself if that is the kind of thing that will truly fill me up, or am I looking for something that just fills me up in the moment. Do I just want a kick, something that gives me a temporary level of satisfaction, or do I truly desire Him?

That leads me to the third point of why we fast. It reminds us of what is truly satisfying. I want us to look at another passage from the book of Psalms and that is Psalm 63. This is another example of how David is expressing his desire for God. Look in verse 1 where it says: ***“God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”***

Now look at verse 5: ***“My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food.”*** He is describing an experience that he has had in his soul and the only way he knows to explain it is to say, *‘Have you ever eaten a meal that is so amazing and the spread of food is just so good?’* I have been to Chima a couple of times. Have you ever been to the Chima Restaurant up town like that Brazilian Steakhouse? And it is like all you can eat. They come around with these slices of meat and they have just whatever you want.

Now imagine being at the feast of all feasts. David can speak to this because he is the king. If anyone understood a feast of fat and rich food it would be David. He could tell them what he wanted for dinner tonight and he would receive that for dinner tonight. And he is saying in this Psalm that he has been to feasts, he has enjoyed the delicacies of what food has to offer and he is saying that there is a satisfaction in his soul that is greater than his stomach’s satisfaction. There was a satisfaction in his soul that was so great it was better than the feast.

That is what fasting does. What fasting does is it reminds us there is something greater to enjoy in this world. There is something greater to enjoy than our bodies experience than filling ourselves with food. And when we fast we take those urges, we take those physical desires for things that are good in our stomachs, we stop ourselves from indulging our flesh and eating whatever we want to find that there is someone who can give us greater satisfaction than food could ever give to us.

Listen, we are all going to leave here and I don’t want you to feel guilty about eating today. Some of us are going to eat some really good meals today, and that is great, enjoy it. Meals are sacred too so enjoy the food that God gives to us. I am the type of person that when I eat a meal I want the crescendo of my meal to be the final bite. Anyone else like that? I will get done with my meal and my wife will say, *‘You should try this,’* and I am like, *‘No, because I have a really good taste in my mouth. I have eaten for fifteen minutes and I just took my final bite. So I am done.’* Now some of you are thinking that I am kind of weird. But that is how I eat. So when I take my final great bite I don’t want any more food. And when you are eating lunch today know that there is something deeper, greater and more satisfying that God is offering to you and that is Himself.

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So that is why we should fast. You and I are in the battle of our lives every day asking ourselves if we will satisfy the flesh or if we will satisfy the soul in Jesus Christ. And this we know - fasting increases our desire for God. And as we increase our desire for God, the more we can be satisfied in Him.

Lastly, let's look at how we should fast. Let's turn in our Bibles again to Matthew Chapter 6 and verses 16 through 18 to see how Jesus instructs His people how they are to fast and to follow Yahweh in this way. ***“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who in is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”***

So how should we fast? Number one, it is to be before God and not before people. The whole idea is that when you fast do not fast in a way that draws attention to yourself. Don't walk into Life Community with a solemn face and holding your stomach. *‘What's going on, Joe?’ ‘I have just been fasting today. God is good. He is better than food.’ ‘How is your walk with Jesus, brother?’ ‘Wow, Joe is spiritual.’*

Listen, if that is how you are going to fast, then don't fast, because you are doing it for the wrong reasons. But when we fast we should feel like we are enjoying life. We shouldn't pretend that we are suffering; rather we should not let on anything so that no one knows. Now it does not mean that you should only fast alone, because in Scripture we have entire nations fasting and calling for a community fast. So it doesn't mean you should never fast with other people; there are times when maybe you fast as a family together, or maybe we should fast as a church together, or we fast as a nation together. There are examples of that happening in Scripture, so it doesn't mean that we can never let anyone in the entire world know when we are fasting.

That is not the point. The point is when you fast you are not to do it in a way that draws attention to yourself so that people look at you and think that you are better than you are. So the first one is - we are fasting before God and not men. There is a second way that we should fast, and this is not necessarily in the Bible, but this is something I have learned over time. I consider myself a novice in fasting but there are some things I have learned about fasting, either from Richard Foster or from other people. So here is what I would tell you, or that I will confess to you. And confession is going to be what we talk about in one of the later weeks of spiritual disciplines. I have started a fast and then given up half way through because I got hungry. Okay?

I am sharing that with you so that you won't feel bad if you have that happen. A lot of times the reason why I did this is because I did not work my way up to where I needed to go, and I needed to begin slowly. When we decide to run a marathon it doesn't mean that on the first day we are to go out and run as far as we can. If you go from couch

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to marathon the first thing you need to do is get up and walk a mile because that is the first step. And spiritual disciplines are the same way.

So what I would say is to first check with your doctor if you have a health condition to make sure that you should fast. The second thing I would suggest is just to miss a meal. Make it lunch or dinner whichever and decide you are going to miss one meal and spend that time in prayer. Prayer and fasting are always going hand in hand in Scripture, because it our time for communion with God, and our desire is for Him above all else.

So the first thing you might want to try is missing a meal and spending that time in prayer. The second thing is to move to a twenty-four period. So what you might want to do is after lunch one day, skip dinner and breakfast and then you eat lunch the next day so it is almost a twenty-four hour period. So after missing one meal you have gained enough spiritual strength to take it to another level with a twenty-four hour fast. And again you are building up your spiritual muscles because there are things when you don't eat your body craves. So you are teaching your body that you don't need food right now and what you do need is God, and you are building that spiritual muscle.

After you are able to do the twenty-four hour fast I would suggest going an entire day without meals so you miss breakfast, lunch and dinner, snacks in between and you go thirty-six hours without eating. Let me just say that may sound extreme but you will not die. I promise you that you are not going to die if you miss an entire day of meals. So you need to understand that one of the best things you can do is to build yourself up to fasting. I know of people today that have fasted for forty days. And I look at them and think 'Wow.' But again it is not about impressing man; it is what God is calling you to do. Again there is never a command to fast in Scripture. What there is though is a growing realization that you and I need God and that leads us to fasting.

Number three – go beyond food. So we should fast before God, begin slowly and then go beyond food. Remember there are things more than food that can control us. Some of us are controlled by social media. Maybe you are the type of person that every five minutes you are checking your cell phone. It is like desiring a cigarette and social media is your 'hit.' And you realize that social media and the way it is wired is to give your mind, your brain a dopamine hit every single time you get a 'like' or you get a response. It feeds your brain something. So sometimes, one of the things that we need to do is to take a fast from other things beyond food. And it might be social media or it might be your smart phone.

This last year I was feeling convicted by how much control certain things had on my life and I practiced 'Lent' last year. So forty days prior to Easter I limited certain things in my life. And the things that I limited were game apps on my phone, sports apps on my phone, and podcasts, because I love podcasts. Every single day I was in the car I popped up podcasts. I live in Denver so it is about twenty minutes from where I live to

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the church and then twenty minutes back home so I spent at least forty minutes a day listening to podcasts, if not more. I would just find myself every spare moment I had listening to podcasts, checking sports apps, etc., so finally I took forty days with my phone only being used as a phone. Can you imagine that? And I survived.

The first day I was driving with no music and no one talking. And I thought, *'All right God, let's do this.'* And I would wonder about what the podcasts were on that day. But I was training myself for forty days, and at the end of the forty days do you know what I realized? There were certain things I didn't put back on my phone because I realized I did not need that. It was just a distraction for me. Listen, there are many days I still listen to podcasts on the way to work or the way home from work, but there are also days when the Holy Spirit gets my attention and we just talk. And I needed that sensitivity to let the Holy Spirit grow in my life because of that.

One of the things we are going to be doing is a spiritual growth campaign this next spring is as a church we are going to be observing Lent. Now if you grew up Catholic or maybe high church of some kind you might be wondering what is this. We need to understand that Lent is not Catholic because Lent was around way before there was what was known as the Catholic Church. And I believe if we studied Lent historically we would see that it is something that the Christian faith has been observing for hundreds and hundreds of years.

So what we are going to be doing as a church is collectively walking through that if you so choose to do this. It would be denying ourselves something that might have control over us. I am super excited about this. In the spring we are going to be doing some holy week events and I can't wait to tell you about them. And I want to encourage you as we get ready to leave here today to ask God – *'What do you have for me? How do you want me to apply this today?'*

Again there is no command to fast in Scripture; there is only the understanding of our need for Him, and our need to have an increase of desire for Him. So please bow your heads and close your eyes. Again the entire point of our series is to meet with God, so I want you to just meet with Him right now. What is God asking you to do? Is God even inviting you to deny yourself and to give up something? Will you just listen to Him?

As we get ready to close and sing a final song I just want to invite you, if you are here this morning and you heard these things I have talked about, to invite you to this idea of God satisfying you. But maybe you are not even sure what that means. If you are not sure if you really have a relationship with God or understand what Jesus did for you on the cross, there will be people in the lobby who would love to pray with you if you have any questions or want to know more about what it means to have a relationship with Jesus. And I want to encourage you to stop and talk with them. They are here for you, to talk with you and to pray with you.

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Maybe you are sitting here and you know Jesus, but you feel stuck spiritually, you feel dead spiritually and you would just like someone to pray with you. There are people out there for you as well. Maybe you are going through a hard time, maybe you got news from a doctor this week, or you got bad news for your family and you need someone to pray with you and encourage you. Again go to those people in the lobby and pray with them. Don't leave here today if you have spiritual needs and a hunger for God to do something in your life. We want to pray with you.

Father, I pray right now as we get ready to leave here, to get ready to enjoy meals, enjoy the food that you have given to us that we will rejoice in the abundance of the food that you give to us every day. But God I also pray that you would awaken our hearts and our minds and our souls to this reality of denying the flesh. God, I pray that we would be a church that says we have tasted and seen that you are good, that we can testify that you are as good as eating a meal of fat and rich food. Lord that is what we say, that you satisfy us. God, satisfy us in ways that we cannot find anywhere else, from anyone else. God, we desire you, we need you like we need the breath of oxygen. God, lead us, guide us and direct us into your presence. Oh God, thank you for delighting in us so that we know how to delight in you. Help us to know how to worship you in this way. We pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.