

BIG IDEA

Fasting is not a magic bullet to get what you want, but a response to a sacred moment.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 6:16-18, Matthew 4:1-4, Joel 2:12-15

ICEBREAKER & OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Share your best and worst moments from the last year. Or, How do you bring in the New Year? Do you have a tradition for New Year?
2. A simple definition of fasting is: abstaining from food for a spiritual purpose. Fasting is one way we can make room for God in our everyday lives. Have you ever fasted for any reason? If so, what was your experience?

BIBLE DISCUSSION

3. Read Matthew 4:1-11. Jesus was prepared for this temptation because he had fasted. How might fasting prepare us for what might face in our lives?
4. Read Joel 2:12-15. Does any part of these passages resonate with a time in your life? Have you ever been in a situation where you were faced with the negative consequences of your decisions?

LIFE APPLICATION

5. Fasting has often been an ignored discipline in the Christian life, because we have often split our world between spiritual and physical. In what ways do we keep our physical and spiritual lives separate?
6. How might fasting bring together the spiritual and physical dimensions of your life?
7. Our challenge is to fast for a spiritual reason. There are four reasons for fasting listed below. Which one is more relevant to you right now?
 - a. **A Longing to Return to the Lord.** There is something in your life that could use some fasting, to help you return your heart and life to the Lord. You want to change something that's pulling you from God and channel your focus on turning away from those things and back to God.
 - b. **A Longing to React to the Work of God in our Lives.** This is when we sense God calling us to take the next step in our journey. You feel you need to make room for God to continue his work within and through you.
 - c. **The Longing for God to Answer a Request.** You are seeking God's intervention to a desire, to a prayer. You have a desire for God's direction.
 - d. **A Longing to Release God's Power.** Maybe there is some stubborn hang-up area in your life where you need a breakthrough. Perhaps it's a struggle or an addiction of some kind.

CHALLENGE

Reflect on how you can make room for God to work in your lives through the practice of fasting. We will get closer to God, which is really what we most need. What food can you abstain from or give up in fasting for a spiritual purpose? As you reflect on what you will give up and MAKE ROOM for God to work within you, pray for his guidance. Reflect on which reason for fasting is most relevant for you right now. Lord, please help us bring a breakthrough. Work in and through us. Help us realize the spiritual reason we need to fast so we can get closer to you. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen!