

Matthew 6:16-18

Hungering for God: Fasting

Biblical fasting involves abstaining from food for spiritual purposes: making a priority of humbly drawing near to God.

Genuine seeking after God

- fasting as a component of repentance
- fasting to seek God's guidance, protection, comfort, etc.

Genuine self-denial

- deny the desire to be admired by others
- deny the desire to be noticed by others
- deny superficial faithfulness

Genuine godly reward

- the Bible commands feasting – but has one day for fasting, mourning and repentance (the day of atonement)
- the reward from the Father, the reward of the Father

Questions for reflection:

1. Have you ever fasted for spiritual purposes? How was the experience? Was it easier or harder to pray? Did you find the experience encouraging or discouraging? Did fasting meet any particular goals?
2. If you will fast in the future, what principles should direct you? How would you prepare? What things would you commit to being mindful of during the fast? What would you hope to accomplish?
3. Jesus is concerned that we don't make a show of our piety and become hypocrites. How do the opinions of others affect you? How can you deny the desires you have to draw attention to yourself, when you recognize them?
4. Fasting won't reconcile us to God, and won't purify our hearts – Jesus will. How can you seek Jesus for greater fellowship with God, for greater freedom from sin and its guilt?
5. The Father sees what you do in secret. Does that frighten you? Does it inspire you to do great things without worrying about what people will think?
6. What does it mean for God Himself to be our reward? Can humble, self-denial be part of a life of pursuing joy, or must it be part of a life that is uncomfortable with happiness? How would seeking after God bring you greater joy?