

# ***Fasting***

## **Matthew 6.16-18**

***But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father who is unseen; and then your Father, who knows what is done in secret, will reward you.*** Matthew 6.17-18

How prevalent is it in our culture to be able to get what we want when we want it? We are known as the fast food society and companies succeed based on how well they are able to meet this expectation. Is it possible that we sometimes approach the spiritual disciplines with this same mentality? Although fasting is not the most talked about of the spiritual disciplines, it may have unique possibilities for helping us to come to God with open hearts.

### **“When you fast...”**

- Jesus clearly assumed that his listeners knew what fasting was all about, and that they also were doing it.

Zechariah 7; 2 Samuel 12; Nehemiah 1.4; 2 Corinthians 11.27; Luke 18.12

*Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; **then they will fast.**”* Matthew 9.15

### **Why do we fast? Or give? Or pray?**

- When we put our passage into context with the rest of chapter six, a theme comes forward.

*So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

*And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.* Matthew 6.2-7

- When we practice spiritual disciplines, what are our motives?
- God is more than a spiritual vending machine!

### **So, do we need to fast?**

- My own observations

It is unique because it takes time.

It is unique because it involves “suffering”.

It is unique because we depend so much on food.

- Conclusions and Challenges