



FASTING

# PRACTICING Jesus

SERMON  
STUDY

10.27.2024

## Leader Corner

Practicing Jesus

Fasting

Matthew 6:16-18

Going without something when you don't have to can have profound effects on how we live. We live in the greatest time of consumption in the history of the world. Never before have so many things been available at our fingertips. The sensation and temptation for more and more is astounding. However, this way of living can wreck our souls if we don't pay attention to what's happening in our minds and hearts. Using the tried and true practice of fasting, and its modern day cousin, abstaining, we will intentionally slow down our consumptive ways and focus more on Jesus as our provider and sustainer.

**Main Idea:** Jesus is our main provider and sustainer.

**Main Practice:** Fast or abstain from something in order to spend more quality time with Jesus.

**Main Teaching:** Matthew 6:16-18

A few more housekeeping items for this week:

- **Pro Tip:** Be mindful of where people are at in their journey. This week in particular may have a varied responses depending on your group. Let grace and encouragement abound.
- Remember that Friday is a Night of Worship with an opportunity to practice a food fast leading into our worship time.
- As always, be sure to leave ample time to do the "with Practice" section and the "Practice" portion of the journal

### As You Begin Your Group Time:

Discuss your experience with silence & solitude. What did you learn or enjoy from last week's practice?

How will you continue this practice?

## Connect with Prayer

Have someone pray the following over the group:

*Lord you are a great provider. You sustain us and restore us.*

*Lord, let the Holy Spirit reveal to us the way we can implement the practice of fasting into our lives now.*

*Help us to know what we need as individuals, as a community and in our families to live like Jesus lived while he was here on earth.*

*Lord, we love you and it's in your son's name that we pray Amen.*

## with Praise

As a group listen to "My Promised Land" by Josiah Queen and/or "I'm On Fire" by We Are Messengers.

## with Principle

*"Fasting is one of the most essential and powerful of all the practices of Jesus and, arguably, the single most neglected in the modern Western church . . . You are learning to be joyful, even when you don't get what you want. You're practicing suffering and, through it, increasing your capacity for joy in all circumstances." (Practicing the Way, page 185)*

1. As we approach the theme of fasting or abstaining, take a few moments and reflect upon any previous experiences. Has anyone in your group fasted before? What was their experience? What about abstaining?
2. Review the "Learn" and "Listen" sections of your journal. What insights stood out from Sunday's sermon?
3. Read together Matthew 6:16-18.
  - a. What is the context of this passage? (Read Matthew 6:25-33 for more)
  - b. What is Jesus drawing out for us through the practice of fasting?
  - c. How do Deuteronomy 8:3 and Matthew 4:4 contribute to this theme?
4. Jeremy Chambers reminds us that fasting is a means of training ourselves to "reduce something (of material value) in order to allow something else (of spiritual value) to increase in our lives." What are some material things you'd like to reduce dependence upon and what spiritual things would you like to increase?
5. Genesis 22:14 reveals a new characteristic of God. "Jehovah Jireh" means "God will see to it, will provide." Where do you need God's provision or a breakthrough? How can fasting help train you toward this area?

## with Practice

To recap, **fasting** and **abstaining** are significant parts of following Jesus. Throughout the Bible we see God's people fasting or abstaining. This week's practice is to fast or abstain from something in order to spend more quality time with Jesus. How will you train this week?

1. Will you fast / abstain as a group, a family, or individually?
2. What specifically are you being led to fast or abstain?
3. Write all this down in the "Practice" part of your journal.

If you are choosing **fasting**, we encourage you to start fasting from a meal together. Use that time to commune with God. You could spend that time praying, being silent, or simply asking God to meet you in that moment. Maybe you want to take it a step further and fast for a day. Pick a day to fast from food and use all your mealtimes to commune with God.

Remember, the key is to connect with Jesus and with your community during this time.

- Specifically, how will you use this extra time to connect with Jesus?

Maybe fasting from food is not a healthy choice for you right now. Maybe you are expecting a baby, have a medical condition, or you are trying to repair your relationship with food. We suggest **abstaining** from something else. There are many things in our life that we could abstain from and give that time back to God. Something may have already popped

into your head. If not, here are some suggestions:

Screen time: social media, ESPN highlights, news, games, reading, movies, streaming shows, or sports, podcasts, etc.  
Consumables: fast food, candy, alcohol, nicotine, edibles, etc.  
Shopping online: Target runs, anything Amazon, Bass Pro Shop, Home Goods, clothes, shoes, etc.

As you close your time together, **share** if you are going to fast or abstain from something and how/when/for how long you plan to do it. Then, **pray** over your group's decisions.

\* Don't forget that Friday, November 1st is a Night of Worship.

\*\* (Practice adapted from the "Practicing the Way Course Guide," John Mark Comer)

### For Further Study

Read Deuteronomy 8 and Matthew 4:1-4.

- Explore the themes of each passage and also how they may intersect.

Isaiah 58 also provides some important insight on right fasting and its effects.

Other Resources:

*Practicing the Way, a 4 week study on Fasting- J.M. Comer*  
*Celebration of the Disciplines- Richard Foster*