

40 Day Refresh Discussion Questions
Nourishment for the Soul (Fasting): Matthew 6:16-18
Drawn from the January 21, 2024 sermon by Dr. Jeff Chandler

Opener: What is your own experience with fasting? If you've done it before, what was the occasion?

This small group study is a companion to the 40 Day Refresh devotional readings for January 22-27 as well as a reflection on the sermon from January 21st

Isaiah 58:5

Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

1. Do you think fasting is a valuable practice, or have you been turned off by some people's excesses? What would be some parameters you would use in starting a fast?

Matthew 4:2-4

And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." Jesus answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

2. Reflect on Impacts, Lessons, and Benefits described in the January 23 devotion. How has fasting affected you personally?

Acts 13:3

“So after the church fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on Barnabas and Paul and sent them on their way.”

3. What is the benefit of creating more space for God to prepare us for his purposes? Think of one thing you could give up this week to leave time for God to speak to you.

Matthew 6:16-18

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

4. Have you ever done something “spiritual” to get attention or positive feedback from other people? What form did it take? (praying, Bible reading, fasting, going to church, mission trip, raising your hands etc.) Who were you trying to impress?

Matthew 16:24

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me.

5. Self-denial can take many forms. Which of these four areas mentioned in the January 26th devotion do you relate to most: surrendering my agenda, forgoing revenge, sacrificing my comfort, releasing my reputation?

Zechariah 7:4-6, 9-10

“The Lord of Heaven’s Armies sent me this message in reply: “Say to all your people and your priests, ‘During these seventy years of exile, when you fasted and mourned in the summer and in early autumn, was it really for me that you were fasting? And even now in your holy festivals, aren’t you eating and drinking just to please yourselves?’” “This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says: Judge fairly, and show mercy and kindness to one another. Do not oppress widows, orphans, foreigners, and people with low incomes. And do not scheme against each other.”

6. When you think of fasting, how do you know it's really for God that you are doing it?

7. Why do you think fasting is related to the principles of fairness, mercy, and kindness in our interactions with others?

Group Prayer Time: Lord, as we consider the practice of fasting, help us to focus on you and your will for our lives, not on obligation or getting attention from others. May this time of fasting be a time of spiritual growth and renewal, and may it help each of us to draw closer to you.

For Personal Refection your own:

- A. Memorize Matthew 4:4 - *Jesus answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."*

- B. Plan a fast, and review these health tips for a safe experience.
<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/how-to-fast>

- C. Review the daily devotions for January 22-27 in 40 Day Refresh

Next week, January 28 pastor Jeff will cover the subject "Simplicity" There will be discussion questions available in "Downloads" on the SCC website.