

Have you ever noticed? When you do strenuous physical exercises you're not used to, the next morning, you wake up, and, you're SO sore! I find when I ski, swim, show up to a CrossFit gym, or even get down on my knees and scrub a floor, I exercise many dormant muscles! I would say the same is true for us in our spiritual faith! There are many "spiritual muscles" we don't exercise in our daily walk with Jesus!

Today, as we continue "CrossFit: The Path to Spiritual Growth", let's look at the third inward discipline to get us into "spiritual shape," Fasting. My guess is that this is a spiritual muscle you don't exercise much. John Wesley says it well, "Some have exalted religious fasting beyond all Scripture and reason; and others have utterly disregarded it." So, our goal here today is to understand its' purpose, power, and practice.

First, let's focus on... The purpose of fasting. In A Handbook of the Christian Faith, John Schwarz says, "Fasting is an important spiritual discipline-something done for spiritual purposes-the conscious control of the carnal side of our nature in order that we might "feast," instead, on God." Food. People. Media. Money. Self. Sex. \_\_\_\_\_. They all can easily become our god. Fasting helps us forever center upon God!

Second, let's focus on... The power of fasting. I've experienced breakfasts, medical fasts, 1-day fasts, 3-day fasts (water only), and a 40-day Daniel fast. Every time, the Spiritual reward was powerful! God

showed me things and sins controlling (enslaving) me. God sustained me “by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). And, God strengthened me to better serve Him and others!

Finally, let's focus on... **The practice of fasting.** We know Jesus, while being tempted in the wilderness by the devil, fasted 40 days and nights and was hungry. I don't recommend jumping straight into that! But, in **Matthew 6:17a (ESV)** Jesus says, **“When you fast...”** Note the “when” not “if”. I believe it is clear that Jesus Christ not only upheld the discipline of fasting. He also anticipated His followers would do it.

**This week, begin to fast!** **1. Do a trial fast.** You can only experience something if you try it! You can fast an idol. But, try food, too! **2. Do a timed fast.** 24 hour > 36 hour > 3 day fast, water/juice only. Feast on God and His Word. **3. Do a twice a week fast.** The Pharisee in **Luke 18:12a (ESV)** said, **“I fast twice a week...”** He did it for “show”. Let's do it for regular spiritual renewal/revival! Just, be smart and safe about it!

Let's pray. Lord God, **Hebrews 12:2a (ESV)** says, **“Let us look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.”** Lord God, the Bible shows us that fasting, taking our eyes off the things of this world, to focus completely on You, is good, profitable, and beneficial. Lord God, help us this week to begin learning the discipline of fasting. Help us do so with a humble Spirit, a joyful attitude, and an obedient heart.