



## **Experience 09: Fasting**

Thursday, January 21, 2021

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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.”*

NIV

We learned last week that Fasting is a chosen abstinence for a spiritual purpose. How did that go last week? Was it easy or challenging? I hope you will lean into Fasting each week. I have set aside each Thursday for a day of Fasting during this 40 Days of Powerful Worship Experiences. If you are also Fasting on Thursdays, maybe its helpful to know you're not alone.

Let's talk about the purpose of Fasting. "For a spiritual purpose" is what our definition says. I think the words of Jesus as recorded by Matthew in Chapter 6 really point to this purpose so brilliantly. And actually, you can find in this single chapter the purpose of all our Worship Experiences, not just Fasting. Matthew records in one place Jesus' teachings on giving to the needy, prayer, how we treat money, and trust (lack of worry). Could they all be connected?

Why do we pray, re-allocate our finances, skip meals, and work on worry?

It is for the purpose of connecting with our Father.

If you Fast from Facebook simply to be able to post that you're Fasting from Facebook then as Jesus says, you have your reward. But if you Fast or "choose abstinence" for the purpose of connecting with our Father—well that has amazing potential. Worship Experiences, including Fasting, are simply creating space in our busy hearts, minds, and schedules to explore deeper relationship with God. These are simply the practices any good relationship needs.

When my wife is in the mood for watching a movie that is a little more heartwarming than the Die Hard franchise, I get to decide, do I chose what I want or what will make her happy? Could I choose to abstain from watching a Suns game and spend that time talking to her about her day or playing a game with our daughter? (let's be honest, our daughter is 15- she doesn't like playing games with us, but it sounds good—Ha!)

You see, any healthy relationship involves times where I put aside something that I want so that I can connect with another person.

Our Father asks the same of us. What if you could see Fasting through the lens of connection with God?

## Actions to take

- Read Matthew 6. In your Bible highlight or underline every time the word Father appears. (in the NIV it is 11 times by my count).
- In your journal, describe your current relationship with God your Father.
- Spend 2 or 3 minutes asking God to help you grow in this practice of "chosen abstinence for a spiritual purpose."
- Look at your schedule for the next few days. What will you choose to abstain from this week and when? Put it in your calendar.
- What will you do instead during those times? Try using that time to read your Bible, pray for friends and family who are going through hard times, or practice Centering Prayer to take your focus off of yourself and put it onto God.