



Forget Yourself: Fasting

February 3 & 4, 2018 – John Ortberg

Note to Leaders: Every small group is different, so we are providing a summary study with additional discussion questions in the Going Deeper section. Please choose the questions that relate best to your group.

Follow up from last week: How did you respond this week as you encountered family, friends, or co-workers in need of your forgiveness?

Connect

1. What new insight into the nature of God, your walk of faith, or yourself did you gain from this weekend's services?
2. How would you respond to the Marshmallow Test today? (Substitute the marshmallow for something you find hard to resist.)

Engage

1. Read Matthew 4:2-4; John 4:31-32
 - What was the role of fasting in Jesus' life?
 - Why would God's own son fast?
2. Read Luke 18:11-12; Matthew 6:16-18
 - What do we learn from Jesus about fasting?

Apply

1. What is the relevance of fasting for Christians today?
2. How do you fast, if you do? (If not, why not?)
3. What ideas do you have to begin or increase your fasting?

Pray

Pray the Lord's Prayer together, pausing at "Give us this day our daily bread" for an opportunity to reflect. Invite group members to share their prayers and conclude together with the rest of the prayer.

The season of Lent begins this coming week on Ash Wednesday. As a group, discuss whether you are ready and willing to commit to trying one of the two types of fasting during the period between Ash Wednesday and Easter. If group members are willing, ask each person to share what their fasting will be and invite the group to hold one another accountable.*

** To recall the two types of fasting, see Personal Spiritual Practice, page 2*

Going Deeper

Connect

(Before the group arrives, put out a plate of marshmallows or other favorite treat, with a sign "For later")

How did you feel being shown a treat but told to wait for it?

Engage

What do we learn about fasting from these Old Testament passages?

- Jonah 3:4-8
- Psalm 35:13
- Isaiah 58:3-7

Apply

What kinds of things do you skip meals for? What insight does this give to your appetites and priorities?

Learning Opportunity

- Consider reading *God's Chosen Fast* by Arthur Wallis
- View The Marshmallow Test: www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX_oy9614HQ

Serving Opportunity

God has uniquely gifted you to serve. There are several opportunities at Menlo Church or with one of our partners. Find them at menlo.church/connect/serve

Personal Spiritual Practice

Two types of fasting to try

1. "Fasting as feasting on God" - not just avoiding food, but making space for God.
Start slow - e.g. skip a meal to read and pray; then try two meals, etc. Keep drinking water. If you are a heavy coffee drinker, switch to decaf a few days before fasting; otherwise you may experience a distracting headache.
2. "Fasting as caring" - giving up something you enjoy, to have more resources to give to those with less; also to learn not to be obsessed with your own appetite (read Isaiah 58).

Two ideas for seasons to fast

1. Lent - starts February 14 this year for forty days - to remember Jesus forty day fast and to prepare for Easter. This would be a partial fast, either temporarily changing diet (e.g. no chocolate, no desert) or regularly skipping a meal.
2. Weekly fasting day - choose a day of the week when you can skip lunch and go somewhere private to read and pray.

