**FASTING THAT BRINGS GOD’S REWARDS**

**Matthew 6:16-18**

* **Biblical fasting is when our hearts are hungry for God, to seek God alone.**
* *“As they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ 3 Then after they had fasted, prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them off.”* (Acts 13:2-3)
* *“When they had appointed elders for them in every church and prayed with fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”* (Acts 14:23)

**THE BIG IDEA: God rewards those who fast with pure hearts that are fixed on Him alone.**

**FASTING TO BE SEEN AND PRAISED BY OTHERS IS HYPOCRITICAL**

* *“Whenever you fast, don’t be gloomy like the hypocrites. For they disfigure their faces so that their fasting is obvious to people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward.”* (Matthew 6:16)
* **To be seen fasting is not the same as fasting to be seen.**
* **Much like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, we have too many people doing religious things to be seen and praised by others, to get likes and shares on social media, and to create an image of being religious and righteous, rather than spending quality intimate time with God in private.**

**WE SHOULD FAST IN A WAY THAT DEMONSTRATES OUR HEART IS FIXED ON GOD ALONE**

* *“But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that your fasting isn’t obvious to others but to your Father who is in secret.”* (Matthew 6:17-18a)
* **When our hearts are fully fixed on the Lord we won’t care who else knows the depth and details of our fasting.**
* **Whether giving, praying, or fasting, a heart that is hungry for God’s approval alone, positions and prepares us for God’s rewards.**

**WHEN WE FAST WITH PURE MOTIVES AND A HEART FIXED ON GOD ALONE, HE REWARDS OUR COMMITMENT**

* *“And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”* (Matthew 6:18b)
* **However God chooses to reward us for our commitment to Him, we can be assured that His rewards are always excellent!**
* *“Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people, 24 knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ.”* (Colossians 3:23-24)
* **God is a loving Father who takes joy in rewarding His children.**
* *“I, the Lord, examine the mind, I test the heart to give to each according to his way, according to what his actions deserve.”* (Jeremiah 17:10)

**CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION**

**Icebreaker:**

* What is your favorite indulgence (type of food, activity, etc.)?

**Observation**

* What is the root issue Jesus is addressing in Matthew 6:16-18?
* Is fasting a command? Why or why not?
* What is the primary reason we should fast?
* How does God respond to those who fast with proper motives?

**Digging Deeper**

* Prior to this message, what did you know about fasting biblically?
* What has been your prior experience with fasting?
* How can you be certain your motives are right when fasting?
* How can fasting increase your love for God and strengthen other spiritual disciplines in your life?
* Why is more of God the best reward you could desire and receive for your pure hearted prayer and fasting?
* How will you fast for the next 7 days along with the church?

**Loving Outward:**

* Who do you need to share the gospel with this week?
* Who do you need to follow-up with regarding the gospel?
* Who are you bringing to church next Sunday?

If you are not in a Connect Group and would like to get connected to grow in your relationship with God and others, contact the office at 225-272-3740, and we can help find a group that fits your schedule. (See back)