



Sermon Notes: "The Secret Fast"

Matthew 6:16-18

3.30.2025

Foundational understandings for Matthew 6:16-18

- **νηστεύετε (nēsteuēte)** From the Greek word "nēstis" meaning "fasting" or "not eating."
- **Types of Fasting:**
 - Partial Fasting – Restricting certain foods or meals
 - ◆ Daniel 1:12 & Daniel 10:3
 - Regular Fasting - Refraining from all food but not clear liquids
 - ◆ Matthew 4:1-2
 - Absolute Fasting – Refraining from all food and all liquids
 - ◆ Esther 4:16 & Acts 9:9
 - Activity Fasting – Refraining from activities that you like
 - ◆ 1 Corinthians 7:5

Fasting the Wrong Way:

- Having the wrong motives.

Fasting the Right Way:

- Look great not shabby.
- Keep your fast secret.

So What?

- **Spiritual Growth:**
 - A tool for finding God's will or guidance in your life.
 - Creates a deeper relationship with God by showing repentance and humility.
- **Physical and Emotional Benefits:**
 - Teaches discipline and self-control.
 - Can help with mental clarity.
 - Has potential health benefits.

For Study, Reflection, Discussion:

Begin by reading Matthew 6:16-18

1. Can you remember when you first heard or learned about fasting?
2. Have your thoughts on fasting changed during your Christian walk?
3. Jesus tells why the hypocrites were fasting incorrectly in Matthew 6:16. Read Isaiah Chapter 58.
 - a. What were the Israelites doing that was making them hypocrites like the pharisees in Matthew?
 - b. What did God promise if they would change their ways?
 - c. How does this compare to what God promises to us who practice fasting the correct way in Matthew 6:17-18?
4. Read Romans 14:5-6. This passage encourages personal conviction in matters of spiritual practices.
 - a. Do these verses make fasting an obligation?
 - b. Can and do these verses get abused by many Christians?
5. Of the four types of fasting listed in this sermon, is there one type that seems to fit you most? Why?

Specific Action Steps:

- If you haven't fasted from food or do so rarely, is there a type of fast, involving food, that you would be willing to try between now and Easter?
- If you fast regularly from food or can't fast from food, can you think of an activity that you are spending a lot of time doing that you could fast from between now and Easter?
- How can you strive to fast in a better more humble and contrite way?

Prayer:

Loving Father,

I come to humbly ask for your help in getting better at fasting in my life. Your desire is for me to humbly seek you and learn to grow closer to you by seeking your ways. I understand that while you do not require me to fast, it can be a great way to build my relationship with you and learn to control desires in my life that I don't have good self-control over. I ask for your help in learning to fast better and making me a better Christian in all areas of my life.

In Jesus' name, Amen.