

**Morning Star Church
Small Group Study Guide
Fuel, Week # 2, Fasting
February 20-21, 2010**

Message Synopsis: Pastor Mike continued our sermon series called *FUEL*, this week he taught about fasting. Many of us do not know much about this discipline, so we tend to misunderstand and fear it. Yet purposeful fasting provides strong benefits in the pursuit of a Christ-like life. It is a reality that Jesus both taught and practiced fasting, but it is *not* a spiritual diet and *not* a show for others.

But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men 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. Matthew 6:17-18, NIV

Day 1: Fasting to Strengthen Prayer and to Seek God's Guidance

1. Read Daniel 9:2-19. Daniel intercedes for his people. Have you ever experienced or heard how people have fasted and prayed for a nation?
2. Read Judges 20:20 – 36. The 11 tribes of Israel prepared for war against the tribe of Benjamin. The first two times they fought, the Israelites lost the battle and thousands of their soldiers died. What happened in verse 26 that caused them to win the third battle? Apply this in your personal walk with God. What does this mean for you?

Day 2: Fasting to Express Grief and to Seek Deeper Dependence on God

1. Read 2 Samuel 1:11-12. In the Old Testament, grief for those lost in battle was expressed by fasting. But what about another form of grief—grief over our sins? Could it be that fasting might be an appropriate response from those who recognize just how much they need God? Read I Samuel 7:6 and Joel 2:12-14.
2. One of the most common fasts in biblical times was a fast to seek protection from danger or difficult circumstances. Read Ezra 8:21-23. Has there ever been a difficult time in your life where you needed God's direction and protection like this?

Day 3: Fasting to Overcome Temptation and Heighten Our Awareness of God

1. Read Matthew 4:1-11. If the Son of God fasted in preparation for overcoming a direct onslaught of temptation from Satan, would it make sense that we might also need to consider the same remedy? If Satan took the time to cleverly tempt God's Son, what kind of "easy" targets are we?

2. What could God accomplish in His Church if we were fully dedicated to Him and serving as He directs? When we repeatedly find ourselves powerless in overcoming temptations, could fasting help bring our focus back where it belongs? Read Jonah 3: 3-10.

Day 4: Fasting to Express Love and Worship to God

1. In Luke 2: 36-38, there is an unforgettable woman whose entire 84 years are flashed before us in just three quick verses. The summary of her life is in verse 37. How would your life change if seeking and worshipping God became more important to you than eating?

2. What could be the detrimental outcome of fasting with a self-centered, not God-centered, purpose? Look at Matthew 6:17-18.

Day 5: Fasting to Identify with the Heart of God for People

1. Have you ever felt a burden for God to move, longing to see something miraculous happen in your church or perhaps in the life of a family member? Read Nehemiah 1:3-4. What was the primary reason for the fasting described in this passage?

2. Read Isaiah 58:6-11. Fasting sometimes goes beyond our own personal growth and into acts of kindness, mercy, and generosity for others. Pastor Mike called us into this type of fast where we consciously sacrifice for the needs of others. What is God's promise about this fast in Isaiah 58?

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Sermon Notes
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Fasting is abstaining from physical needs or creature comforts in order to connect more deeply with God.

Fasting is NOT a spiritualized diet or an outward display of holiness.

The challenge of fasting is humility.

Purposes of Fasting

Preparing for God's Direction *(Matthew 4:1-2)*

Expressing grief *(2 Samuel 1:11-12)*

Demonstrating repentance *(Jonah 3:4-10)*

Soliciting God's intervention *(Ezra 8:21-23)*

Seeking God's guidance *(Acts 13:2-3)*

Fasting creates an appetite for God and godly things by denying my appetite for selfish and earthly things.