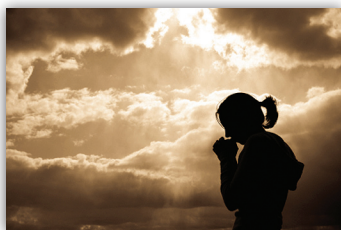


Feasting Through the Discipline of Fasting

Today's Reading
Matthew 6:1-18



It is hard to believe, but even in our county there are people who are under resourced, underfed, or malnourished. Meanwhile most of us are able to enjoy our three squares (and four snacks!) a day. Apart from our busy lives, an occasional stomach flu, or a conscious decision due to our latest diet, there is no reason for us to skip a meal...well almost no reason. What about fasting?

You could define fasting as a decision to abstain from something in order to devote more focused attention to the Lord. You find biblical basis for fasting in terms of not eating food (Matt. 4:1-11), avoiding "choice foods" (Daniel 10:1-3), or married couples mutually deciding to abstain from intimacy for a defined time (1 Cor. 7:1-5). The same principle can be applied to television viewing, a favorite sport or hobby, or countless other activities or life pleasures.

None of these is in itself sinful. No, they are all things that can be enjoyed by God's people. By taking a break from them, however, you are able to spend additional "hang time" with God and enrich your relationship with Him.

In your reading today in Matthew 6, you listened as Jesus spoke of such spiritual disciplines as giving, praying, and fasting. He introduced the subject of fasting with the words "when you fast." In other words, He anticipates that you will, on occasion, give this kind of intensified attention to seeking the Lord. Is that a realistic expectation in your case?

When you do fast, He commands you to not draw attention to it. Fasting is not a discipline to be worn as a badge of accomplishment; nor is it a sacrifice to be paraded as a mark of spirituality. It is a discipline that deepens relationship to the Lord rather than attracting the attention of man.

Could your relationship with the Lord benefit from you giving more focused attention to Him? Might a fast be an appropriate way to approach that? If so, what kind of fast should that be and when should you plan it?