

Foundations – Fasting, Tithing, & Serving

Identity - "I am a citizen of heaven. I am royalty. I am a priest of God."

I. Beginning the Study

A. Fasting

- What is fasting?
- Matthew 6:16-18 – verse 16: “you” = _____; verse 17: “you” = _____
- God expects us to fast both _____ and _____.

I love you more. I want you more.

- Why fast? (Reference: <http://www.new-life.net/fasting.htm>)
 - 1) _____ (1 Samuel 31:13, 2 Samuel 1:12)
 - 2) _____ (Deuteronomy 9:18, Jonah 3:5)
 - 3) _____ (2 Chronicles 20:1-30, Acts 13:2-3)
 - 4) _____ (Ezra 8:21-31, Esther 4:3)
 - 5) _____ (2 Samuel 12:15-23, Psalm 35:13)
 - 6) _____ (Acts 13:3, Acts 14:23)
 - 7) _____ (Exodus 34:28, Daniel 10:1-3)
 - 8) _____ (Matthew 6:16-18)
- Who is supposed to fast? _____!

B. Tithing

- First Biblical examples of tithing: Genesis 14:18-20, Genesis 28:20-22
- 10% = _____ share.
- How does God use the tithe? _____ (Numbers 18:20-21)
- Who is supposed to tithe? _____! (Numbers 18:26)
- Curses and Blessings: Malachi 3:8-12
- The only place in the *Bible* where God tells us to _____ Him is with _____.
- How is tithing different from offering? Tithing is _____. Offering is from the _____.
- More promises: 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

C. Serving

- Psalm 100:2, John 13:33-34, Ephesians 4:11-13
- 1 Corinthians 12:27-28 – “I am a _____ of the _____ of Christ.” (ESV)
- Who is supposed to serve? _____!

II. New Identities!

- I am a *citizen of heaven*. (Philippians 3:20):
- I am *royalty*. (1Peter 2:9):
- I am a *priest of God*. (1Peter 2:9):

III. Small Group Questions

- 1) When you fast, what are you starving and what are you feeding? In the light of eternity, which is more important?
- 2) Read Isaiah 58:3-12. Fasting, like prayer and praise, is another act of worship. How must our lifestyle be for any “act” of worship to be acceptable? How does this relate to our identity as a priest of God?
- 3) Read Matthew 6:19-21, 24. How does the act of tithing remind us that we are not of this world? How does this relate to our identity as royalty of the heavenly kingdom?
- 4) Have you served in the church before? If so, how have you served? If not, how would you like to serve? What area(s) (media team, praise team, service team, prayer team, newcomers, orphanage ministry, etc.) interest you? Do any areas intimidate you?
- 5) What are the 13 identities we have covered so far? What does each mean for us?

Memory Verse of the Week –

Foundations – Fasting, Tithing, & Serving

Identity - "I am a citizen of heaven. I am royalty. I am a priest of God."

I. Beginning the Study

D. Fasting

- What is fasting?

Fasting is abstaining from something for a specific purpose." It is most commonly done with food or food and drink. Fasting can also be done with other things such as the internet, TV, or other things. By giving up these things, you are taking an extra step in offering your life. It is a way of telling God, "I love you more and I want you more." When you are fasting, you are starving your flesh and feeding your spirit.

- Matthew 6:16-18 – verse 16: "you" = plural; verse 17: "you" = singular
- God expects us to fast both corporately and alone.

I love you more. I want you more.

- Why fast?
(Reference: <http://www.new-life.net/fasting.htm>)
 - 1) Mourning (1 Samuel 31:13, 2 Samuel 1:12) Usually when you receive horrible news, you lose your appetite. Fasting in this way can be a natural way to mourn and pray through the grieving process.
 - 2) Repentance (Deuteronomy 9:18, Jonah 3:5) If you are convicted and want to repent, then fasting, coupled with your conviction, is one way to show God that you truly desire to turn from your sin.
 - 3) Guidance (2 Chronicles 20:1-30, Acts 13:2-3) By fasting, we interrupt our usual routine and can take the extra time (during meal time) to listen to God.
 - 4) Protection (Ezra 8:21-31, Esther 4:3) When danger or death threatens us, fasting is an aid to demonstrate that your fight is not in the natural but rather in the spiritual.
 - 5) Sickness (2 Samuel 12:15-23, Psalm 35:13)
 - 6) Ordination (Acts 13:3, Acts 14:23)
 - 7) Special Revelation (Exodus 34:28, Daniel 10:1-3)
 - 8) Spiritual discipline (Matthew 6:16-18) Fasting food removes unhealthy toxins that build up in your stomach. Fasting can also release you from unhealthy toxins in your spirit. Sin, unhealthy habits, and worldliness can be revealed during a fast. Fasting reminds you of how fleshly you are, how attached to the world you are. As you grow in this discipline, you will soon adjust better and

your spirit will grow stronger. We must be disciplined if we want to be a mighty army!

- Who is supposed to fast? Everyone!

The truth is, Satan worshippers and Muslims probably know the power of fasting more than Christians do. It is known that Satan worshippers will have corporate fasts and pray to Satan for pastors to fall into sexual sin. Just as Satan has counterfeit spiritual gifts, he also copies the spiritual disciplines of the people of God. It is well known that during Ramadan the martyrdom rate for Christians increases greatly in Muslim countries. While fasting, the Muslims' passion grows and they will do radical things that they usually would not do. If Satan knows that fasting is such a powerful weapon, then Christians should be even more serious about and accustomed to fasting.

With that said, there is grace. If you have health problems, then you should be careful how you fast or should go without other things than food. If you get tired easily, then start by fasting just solid foods and drink lots of juice or sports drinks. Start gradually and pray through it, asking for God's grace.

The human body can go 3 full days on nothing (no food or water). After 3 full days, the body needs water. The human body can go 21 – 40 days on only water. During the first day or two of a water fast the human body is actually not hungry, but is just giving the usual hunger pains particularly at the times you usually eat. During the 3rd to 6th day, the stomach will hurt more as toxins are being cleaned out. Usually the body is more fatigued at this time. After about 7 days the toxins will be gone and the body will adjust to using energy that has been stored away in your body. At this time you will have renewed strength and the hunger pains will be greatly subdued. The hunger pains will return between 21 – 40 days after the fast first began, and once they do, that is a sign that the body is now going into starvation mode. The fast must be broken at that time. Only Moses, Elijah, and Jesus endured 40 day fasts in the *Bible*. Fasts longer than 3 days should only be done after much prayer and counsel, and also after approval from a physician.

E. Tithing

- First Biblical examples of tithing: Genesis 14:18-20, Genesis 28:20-22
- 10% = King's share. In ancient times all people of a kingdom were expected to give 10% to their king. The Israelites, following Abraham and Jacob's examples, accepted this number as the norm.
- How does God use the tithe? His workers (Numbers 18:20-21)
- Who is supposed to tithe? Everyone! (Numbers 18:26)
- Curses and Blessings: Malachi 3:8-12

This is the only place in the *Bible* where God tells us to put Him to the test. He knows how easily money can become an idol for us, so He calls us out on it. Sadly, this financial curse is on many Christians today. God promises great blessings for those who are faithful. Missionaries who have been faithful in tithing have received so much that they have been able to support other missionaries out of their abundance. During the economic struggles in 2008

and 2009 many Christians who were faithful in giving suffered no setbacks. God's blessings and God's curses are very real.

- The only place in the *Bible* where God tells us to test Him is with money.
- How is tithing different from offering? Tithing is expected. Offering is from the overflow.
- More promises: 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

God loves a CHEERFUL giver. Offerings should be given out of the overflow. If giving money is difficult for you, then just start with the 10% tithe and leave it at that. As time goes by and you continue to grow with the Lord, the fear of money will gradually lose its grip on you. Soon you will be able to give a little here and a little there.

"John Wesley was one of the great evangelists of the 18th Century, born in 1703. In 1731 he began to limit his expenses so that he would have more money to give to the poor. In the first year his income was 30 pounds and he found he could live on 28 and so gave away two. In the second year his income doubled but he held his expenses even, and so he had 32 pounds to give away (a comfortable year's income). In the third year his income jumped to 90 pounds and he gave away 62 pounds. In his long life Wesley's income advanced to as high as 1,400 pounds in a year. But he rarely let his expenses rise above 30 pounds. He said that he seldom had more than 100 pounds in his possession at a time.

"This so baffled the English Tax Commissioners that they investigated him in 1776 insisting that for a man of his income he must have silver dishes that he was not paying excise tax on. He wrote them, 'I have two silver spoons at London and two at Bristol. This is all the plate I have at present, and I shall not buy any more while so many round me want bread.' When he died in 1791 at the age of 87, the only money mentioned in his will was the coins to be found in his pockets and dresser. Most of the 30,000 pounds he had earned in his life had been given away. He wrote, 'I cannot help leaving my books behind me whenever God calls me hence; but in every other respect, my own hands will be my executors.' In other words, I will put a control on my spending myself, and I will go beyond the tithe for the sake of Christ and his kingdom." (Quotes from *Mission Frontiers*, Sept./Oct. 1994, nos. 9-10, pp. 23-24., ref: John Piper, "Toward the Tithe and Beyond")

F. Serving

- Psalm 100:2 (Serve the Lord with gladness!), John 13:33-34 (As Jesus showed His love by serving us, so are we called to serve others), Ephesians 4:11-13 (We are meant for service so that the body of Christ may be built up, unified, and brought to maturity.)
- 1 Corinthians 12:27-28 – "I am a member of the body of Christ." (ESV)
- Who is supposed to serve? Everyone!

If you are a member of the body of Christ, then you must have a purpose to serve. God has equipped us with different personalities, character traits, abilities, talents, and gifts.

Philippians 2:4 calls us to not look to our own interests but to the interests of others.

Nowhere in the *Bible* does it say that some are called to serve while others are called to be

served. Christ came not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45). We are called to have the same attitude of Christ (Philippians 2:5).

II. New Identities!

- I am a *citizen of heaven*. (Philippians 3:20):

We don't belong to this world; we are aliens to this earth. We do not live by the law of sin, but rather, we live by a law that is not of this world: the law of love. Satan is called the prince of this world because he has reign over all who are slaves to sin. But we are dead to sin. We are alive in Christ. We are citizens of heaven. Satan's rule no longer has any power over us. Get it in your head folks, you are out of this world! Not of it. You are heavenly beings. Please repeat after me, "I am a citizen of heaven." Amen!

- I am *royalty*. (1Peter 2:9):

Declaring that you are royalty emphasizes your status as a child of God and as being seated with God in heaven. There is something different about us. We are God's people and have the blessing of God on us. We have special authority because we are royalty! Please repeat after me, "I am royalty." Amen!

- I am a *priest of God*. (1Peter 2:9):

Declaring that you are a priest helps give understanding to how God wants you to exercise your authority. We are not meant to rule over people here on earth, but rather, we are to intercede for them, love them, and serve them as priests of God. Priests in the *Old Testament* were in the business of giving offerings to God as well as declaring grace and cleansing for the people. We are called to do the same: to proclaim the grace and cleansing we have received from God and to offer our bodies as a living offering to Him. Please repeat after me, "I am a priest." Amen!

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Memory Verse of the Week – Philippians 3:12

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