



These notes are lovingly prepared each week by Anne Maclean – thank you Anne!

Matthew 6:1-18 describes three transformative disciplines or act of righteousness: giving, praying and fasting.

Focus on fasting: Re-read Matt. 6: 16 – 18

a) The practice of fasting: Fasting is a great revealer. It is a personal soul experience that can show the reality of our situation and expose our relationship with God in new ways.

Fasting ...

- Increases our sense of humility/dependence on God
- Frees up more time to pray
- Reminds us that we must sacrifice all to follow Jesus
- Is a good exercise in self-discipline against sin
- Heightens our spiritual and mental alertness and our sense of God's presence
- Helps us express an earnestness or urgency in our prayers

Share your personal experience with fasting.

Is this a new experience for you? What are your perceptions of fasting?

If you have fasted before, can you identify with any of the revealing ways of fasting listed above?

b) The promise of fasting: Jesus instructs us to “put oil on our heads and wash our faces” when we fast (v. 17). Some background: In Jesus' time, Jews put ashes on their heads when fasting. Putting oil on the head and washing the face were reserved for joyous occasions. This suggests that Jesus is describing the discipline of fasting as being an act of worship with the reward being the realization of God's Kingdom coming and His will being done on earth as it is in heaven. That's cause for rejoicing!

Read Isaiah 58: 1-9 (especially vs. 6-9)

- Verses 6 & 7 describe the focus for fasting (why we fast). What are the reasons why we fast?
- Verses 8 & 9 describe the rewards of fasting. What are these rewards? How do these connect to the desires expressed in the Lord's Prayer (Mt. 6: 9-13)?

v After this exploration of fasting, are you re-thinking the role of fasting in your life? How might fasting become an act of worship and part of your journey as a follower of Jesus?