

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

"FASTING AND FEASTING"

For individual study or group discussion

DATE: January 30, 2002

SPEAKER: Brian/Chad

SERIES: Gospel of Luke

PASSAGE: Luke 5:33-39

Family Dinner Table

What does fasting look like and when should a believer fast, if ever? According to Dr. Tim Mackie, co-founder of *BibleProject*, fasting in the Bible was a response to God's providence in one's life.³

In the Old Testament, biblical fasting would come in three forms:

1. as a response to a sacred moment (such as Moses fasting after receiving the Ten Commandments in Exodus 34:28; Elijah fasting after the defeat of the prophets of Baal in I Kings 19:8; or in the New Testament, Jesus fasting after his baptism in Luke 4:2)
2. as a response when one laments sinful choices (Daniel fasting on behalf of Judah's sin in Daniel 9:1-19)
3. or as a response to grief and death (Hannah in I Samuel 1:7-8 or Israel mourning the death of Saul and Jonathan in 2 Samuel 1:12).

The heart of the practice of fasting in Scripture was not about getting results, but about having a physically embodied experience to help process and respond to what was happening to one's self spiritually.⁴

- As a family, discuss how this understanding of fasting could lead you into a time of feasting—celebrating God's goodness and grace in your lives.

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Evangelical Church in Turkey, *world missions partner*

Every Generation Ministries, *world missions partner*

Syndicated columnist and humorist Erma Bombeck, once satirized about the countenance of the average church-goer during worship:

"In church the other Sunday, I was intent on a small child who was turning around smiling at everyone. He wasn't gurgling, spitting, humming, kicking, tearing the hymnals, or rummaging through his mother's handbag. He was just smiling. Finally, his mother jerked him about and in a stage whisper that could be heard in a little theatre off Broadway said, "Stop that grinning! You're in church!" With that, she gave him a belt and as the tears rolled down his cheeks added, "That's better," and returned to her prayers...Suddenly I was angry. I wanted to grab this child with the tear-stained face close to me and tell him about my God. The happy God. The smiling God. The God who had to have a sense of humor to have created the likes of us...By tradition, one wears faith with the solemnity of a mourner, the gravity of a mask of tragedy, and the dedication of a Rotary badge."¹

In today's passage, we note the juxtaposition of the countenances of two groups: the feasting disciples of Christ and the fasting disciples of John and the Pharisees. Why weren't the disciples of John and Jesus on the same page when it came to matters of religious practice? Theologian and pastor R. Kent Hughes explains, *"If we wonder why John the Baptist's disciples would put forth such a biting accusation, we must remember that John himself was an ascetic who lived a barren lifestyle and whose message called for mourning and repentance. John came as the ultimate and final prophet of the Old Covenant to prepare the way for the New Covenant of the Messiah. His style was that of an Old Testament seer, a style that his followers naturally adopted. What they were seeing at Levi's house did not seem to mesh with what they had been taught."²*

- Read Colossians 2:16-23. What does Paul teach us about these man-made regulations? According to Isaiah 58, was this the kind of fasting God prescribed for his people?
- Look at Hosea 2:14-23. How does Hosea point us to today's passage?

Jesus then used three parables to explain to his listeners how God's plan of redemption and salvation in the Old Covenant was expanding and progressing toward a New Covenant, one that would usher in the Kingdom of God through his life and ministry (Hebrews 7:22; 9:15).

The Parable of the Bridegroom (vv. 34-35)

Using the illustration of a wedding, where there is feasting and celebration, Jesus pointed out the inappropriateness of mourning during such an occasion.

- Jesus said he came that we "may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). How then should we respond to the good news? (Philippians 4:4-7)
- According to Jesus, when will the disciples fast (v. 35)?

The Parables of The Old Garment and The Old Wineskins (vv. 36-39)

The Old Covenant is depicted as an old garment and used wineskins. The gospel of the New Covenant in Christ could not be made to fit into the old system. If the listeners were to see him as the Messiah, they needed to adjust their expectations and not try to look for salvation in the old forms. To do so would cause spiritual damage and harm.

- In Philippians 3:2-11, how is Paul encouraging the Philippian church not to rely on the old forms? How, then, does righteousness come to us?
- Read Hebrews 8:6-13, Revelation 21:5 and 2 Corinthians 5:17 and talk about the ways that the New Covenant is better than the old. Spend time praising God for all that he has given to us in Jesus!

¹Bombeck, Erma. *Dare to Make a Joyful Noise! Ocala Star-Banner*, February 26, 1970

²Hughes, R. Kent. *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*. Crossway Books, 1998. 189-90.

³⁻⁴Mackie, Tim. "Feasting & Fasting Podcast: BibleProject™." BibleProject, 11 Sept. 2017. <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/practicing-faith-part-2-feasting-fasting/>.