

## **Chapter 10**

### ***SERMON ON THE MOUNT 5***

#### *MATTHEW 6 - PART 2*

**SECTION 1: FASTING (Matthew 6:16-18) Scripture List:** Isaiah 58:3-10; Zechariah 7:5; Daniel 9:3

- I. When Jesus addressed the matter of fasting, He said, "When you fast..." Jesus made an assumption that His hearers and followers would fast. Fasting was a regular practice among the Jews of Jesus' day. Christians are not the only people who fast. Most Eastern religions and New Age philosophies include fasting as a spiritual discipline. Fasting is practiced by many people for health or other non-religious reasons. What is fasting?
- A. In the Biblical context fasting is to deny oneself the pleasure of food and drink for a period of time for a spiritual purpose. Fasting is called "afflicting the soul," or "to deny oneself."
- B. Fasting is to go without food, without food and drink, or to limit one's food or drink for a period of time.
1. To go without any food or drink at all for a period of time is sometimes called a "total fast." This should not be done for more than three days except under special circumstances.
  2. To go without food or nourishment and to drink only water could be called a "complete fast." This can be done for a week if all relevant factors are taken into consideration.
  3. There are also "partial fasts" such as drinking only fruit juices, or eating only one meal per day over a period of time. One can also fast from specific foods for a season as some people do at Lent.
  4. There are physical benefits to fasting, which can include weight loss and purging the body of toxins, but these should not be confused with or substituted for the spiritual motivation for fasting.
- C. Fasting can be for a time determined in advance, or until it seems appropriate to end the fast. Some people fast on a regular basis as a spiritual discipline. For some, fasting is practiced when they feel the need or they feel God is leading them to fast for a specific purpose.
1. Common periods of fasting are: One day, three days, one week.
  2. Extended fasts can be: Two weeks, twenty-one days, thirty days, forty days.
- D. It is not advisable to go on an extended fast without some guidance from a mature Christian. One should also consider one's physical condition, any medical conditions, and one's work-load or responsibilities. People with medical conditions such as diabetes, pregnant women, and people who are on medication should seek medical advice before fasting.

- E. For those who are unable to fast for physical or medical reasons, consider alternatives such as fasting from television, certain types of foods, or from some activity that is normally done only for pleasure or entertainment.
  - F. In order to be spiritually effective, fasting needs to be accompanied by a reduced activity schedule, prayer, meditation, and seeking God. If we don't alter our activities during a period of fasting, we will limit the benefits we receive.
- II. The value in fasting for spiritual purposes depends largely on the motive. Jesus said that if fasting was done to impress others, it had no spiritual value. Here are some reasons we may fast:
- A. Because we feel the need to establish spiritual disciplines in our lives. Fasting can be practiced on a regular basis such as one day per week as a spiritual discipline.
  - B. We may fast because we are at a crisis point in life and need to sharpen our spiritual perceptions, to be spiritually keen and open to God's will.
  - C. Fasting is often associated with seeking God's guidance, spiritual break-through, or repentance. Fasting is not to make God do what we want but to bring self to a place of humility and openness to God and His Spirit.
  - D. We may fast because we need a greater release of God's power, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, or operation of Spiritual Gift or Gifts in our life. Again we must remember that fasting does not force God to act, but it opens us to clearer spiritual perceptions, greater sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, and a release of faith.
- III. What are the benefits of fasting for the Christian?
- A. Because fasting is a spiritual discipline it helps to strengthen us spiritually. As we bring the desires of the flesh under control of the spirit, the spirit grows stronger.
  - B. The Bible refers to fasting as "afflicting the soul." When done with a proper spiritual motive, fasting can help us gain control over our desires and appetites.
  - C. Fasting accompanied by prayer, meditation, and quiet can help us hear God more clearly. As distractions and activities are put aside we become more sensitive spiritually and more responsive to the Holy Spirit.
  - D. As Christians, we have the wonderful privilege of living in two worlds at the same time. We are spiritual beings living in a physical body. Sometimes the external world of the physical becomes so consuming that the spirit withers. When we fast, we make a conscious choice to de-emphasize the physical in order to give the spiritual a chance to be renewed and released. The result is a heightened awareness of the spiritual world, a more clearly defined faith, and a higher level of spiritual energy.

**SECTION 2: TREASURES IN HEAVEN - TRUE VALUES (Matthew 6:19-24) Scripture List:**  
Luke 11:34-36; Luke 12:15; 1 Corinthians 7:31; 1 John 2:15-17

- I. We are motivated in nearly everything we do by our values. Our values determine what is

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important to us, what we will labor to attain or achieve, and what we will be passionate about. Our values are developed and influenced by our culture, our environment and the values of the people around us. As Christians, we must not simply allow the world to shape our values, but we must determine what we will live for and what we will die for. Value could be defined as:

- A. An appraisal of worth or price. To place an estimate of worth on something in a scale of values. To think highly of, to esteem.
  - B. That which is desirable or worthy of esteem for its own sake. The degree of worth. One thing has more or less value than another thing.
  - C. Value has to do with the worth or price of a thing. Values vary according to the degree of worth that individuals or cultures place upon a thing.
- II. How can we as Christians determine what is really valuable? Can we safely assume that the values of our society and of the people around us are the values we want to build our lives on? Jesus said, "Where **your** treasure is, there **your** heart will be also." Jesus made it clear that each of us is free to choose where our own treasure (value) will be placed and where our own heart (passion, affection, desire) will be focused. In Luke 12:15, Jesus said, "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:15; Jeremiah 15:19)
- A. What does a man's life consist of? What values establish the measure of abundance? How do you know if you are rich or poor in the things that really matter? How can you know if you are succeeding or failing at what really matters for life and eternity?
  - B. Is there an absolute system of values? Is there a true value system for our lives? What are the values of the Kingdom of God?
    - 1. Jesus Christ has a right value system based on eternal values. Jesus took the long view and sacrificed lesser things in the short term for greater things in the long term. (Hebrews 12:2; Philippians 2:5)
    - 2. We can learn to have the mind of Christ, to think as God thinks, to perceive worth as God does. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.
    - 3. Short range thinking, long range thinking. Long range thinking and values commonly indicate maturity. It is a sign of growing spiritual maturity when we begin to see through the false values of temporary and material things and become aware of the true value of permanent and spiritual things.
- III. True values and false values - Satisfaction and success
- A. Many people have labored diligently and sacrificed relationships, simple joys, and eternal, spiritual values in order to succeed at business, become popular or powerful. They are successful and have attained great value by worldly standards but have sacrificed integrity, family relationships, health, and peace of mind to attain their wealth or position.
  - B. Other people have made the choices that build a reputation of kindness, integrity, servant's heart. They have passed up wealth, power, and influence to be a good husband, father, wife, or mother. They willingly sacrifice some outward indications of success to be

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a godly person. They have chosen to lay up treasure in heaven. After all, that's the best place to keep your treasure as that's where you will be for the longest time!

- C. Imagine a man standing at the portal of eternity with all his possessions, status, prestige, discovering that he is a pauper in terms of the things that really matter. He has invested his entire life in achieving and attaining things that are no more lasting than a puff of smoke. (Luke 12:15-21)
  - D. Many discover the consequences of wrong values even sooner: They have property, possessions, power, prestige, yet are alone, empty, frustrated. They have lost the love of family, have no real friends. It's not too late to begin to develop right values if you're still alive on earth!
  - E. We need a continuing emphasis on true values. We are continually bombarded with the value system of one society, but we are citizens of another kingdom. Jesus said, "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, that's where you'll be spending eternity."
- IV. Values and emotions are inseparably intertwined. We must make a personal choice on where we choose to set our affections and place our values.
- A. Where your treasure is...your heart will be. Paul tells us in Colossians 3:2 to "Set your minds (affection - KJV) on things above." This is a matter of choosing where you will place your values.
  - B. John tells us in 1 John 2:15, "Do not love the world (the cosmos, world system). This again is an admonition to choose where we set our values and where we place our affections. God says, "Love people, use things," the world says, "use people, love things." (1 John 2:15)
- V. When our value system is right, we can perceive the real worth of something. In order to make right choices about the worth of something we must look at it through right values. Take time for a personal inventory. Take stock of your most valued possessions.
- A. Personally and individually: Have you made the greatest investment of time and energy in accumulating possessions or in building relationships. Do you use people and love things or do you love people and use things?
  - B. Family: Consider your relationships with those God has placed around you; husband or wife, children, brothers or sisters. Are you valuing those people and those relationships as God wants to you? Are you investing yourself in them?
  - C. Church: What do you value about church? Is it just a place to go and be blessed? Is it a platform for you to "do your ministry?" Or is it truly the Family of God and the Body of Christ to you? Are you planted in God's vineyard or are you church-hopping wherever your fancy takes you?
  - D. Determine the things that have real value and invest your life in them. Lay up treasure in heaven!

**SECTION 3: WORRY AND ANXIETY (Matthew 6:25-34) Scripture List:** Psalms 39:6;

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Matthew 6:31; Luke 12:22-31; 1 Corinthians 7:32; Philippians 4:6-7; Colossians 3:15;  
1 Peter 5:7

- I. Worry: To be anxious or concerned. That which causes anxiety. To fret, to be troubled or harassed, uneasiness of mind from care or concern.
- A. Worry is a thing that takes place in your mind. Worry does not depend on circumstances or problems that one actually faces, rather it is an attitude of the mind.
- B. Some people are dedicated, fervent worriers who seem to enjoy nothing more than a good session of "hand-wringing, nail-biting, forehead wrinkling, white-knuckled" worry. Others seem to drift through life oblivious to the joys of worry. Some people are dedicated "Prayer Warriors," while others are "Prayer Worriers!"
- II. What do people worry about? (A study by Earl Nightingale)

<p><b>Things that never happen...40%</b> <b>Things past, can't be changed...30%</b> <b>Needless worries about health...12%</b> <b>Petty, miscellaneous worries...10%</b> <b>Real legitimate concerns...8%</b></p>
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- A. This means that 92% of the average person's worries (worries that take up valuable time, worries that cause painful damaging stress, worries that cause mental anguish) are absolutely unnecessary.
- B. Of the 8% "legitimate" worries there are two kinds:
1. Those we can solve.
  2. Those beyond our ability to solve.
- C. The 4% we can solve, solve them! The other 4%, pray about them, leave them with God!
- III. The dangerous and destructive consequences of worry.
- A. Worry wastes time and energy. You can't think creatively while worrying destructively. (Matthew 13:22)
- B. Worry distracts us from the real issues. (Matthew 6:33; Luke 10:41)
- C. Worry causes illness through stress. Stress-related illnesses: ulcers, hypertension, insomnia. (Luke 12:25-26)
- D. Worry robs faith, spreads doubt.
1. You can't pray a prayer of faith and worry at the same time. James tells us the double-minded man will not receive from God. (James 1:6-8)

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2. Worriers tend to share and spread their doubts, fears, and anxieties. This can undermine the faith of those who are trusting in God.
  3. Some people are “praise gatherers” and “faith sharers” and others are “worry spreaders.”
- E. Worry keeps us from thinking clearly and acting decisively. (Luke 21:34)
- F. Worry is unproductive, accomplishes nothing. (Psalms 39:6)
- IV. What does the Bible say about worry? (Philippians 4:6-7)

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.  
And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)*

- A. The writers of scripture clearly speak out against worry, anxiety, fretting, uneasiness of mind. The AV uses the terms “cares”, “careful”, “disquieted”, and “anxious” to speak of the subject of worry. (Psalms 39:6; Matthew 6:31; Luke 12:29; 1 Corinthians 7:32 )
- B. This is not speaking against legitimate care and concern.
1. Paul experienced the concern for all the churches. (2 Corinthians 11:28)
  2. God cares for us. (1 Peter 5:7)
  3. We are to have equal concern for each other. (1 Corinthians 12:25)
- C. The Bible says that worry is in fact failing to trust God, putting our values on the wrong things, and doubting Gods love for us and ability to take care of us. It is lack of faith, disobedience.
- D. We must deal with it as sin in the sense that sin is “missing the mark.” Acknowledge, confess, repent. Don’t excuse it by saying “I’m just a worrier!”
- V. How do we get peace and overcome worry? (Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:7)

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)*

- A. Treat worry as sin, because sin confessed is sin forgiven.
1. Acknowledge, confess - “I worry”
  2. Repent - “I turn from my worry”
  3. Trust - “I put my complete trust in You, Lord. I cast all my cares on Jesus.”

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- B. With thanksgiving focus on what He has already done for you. Magnify the Lord. Praise doesn't make the sun come up, it parts the clouds so we can see it.
- C. Give your worries and cares to Him. Peace of heart and mind is the result.
- D. Christ gives us peace instead of worry, beauty for ashes. (John 14:27; Romans 14:17; Colossians 3:15)

**QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION**

*Chapter 10 Sermon on the Mount 5: Matthew 6 - Part 2*

1. We know that fasting means to "deny oneself" and usually applies to going without food for a spiritual purpose. What do you feel are the real benefits of fasting? Do you think that fasting is a good thing to do? Do you think it is better to fast as a regular spiritual discipline or should one be "led by the Holy Spirit" to fast?
2. In Luke 12:15, Jesus said, "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." How can we accurately measure our wealth? How can we determine if we are truly wealthy by God's standards? It is relatively easy to measure material wealth, but how do we determine spiritual wealth, which Jesus referred to as "True Riches?"