



# Learning Impulse Control

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March 4, 2018

## Matthew 6:16-18 NLT

*And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.*

### Fasting:

The practice of abstaining from food, possibly drink, possibly other things, for a defined period of time.

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### False Narrative:

We can learn to control our fleshly impulses by trying really hard.

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### Kingdom Narrative:

We can learn to control our fleshly impulses by training for the spiritual life by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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### To train means:

"I arrange my life around those activities that enable me to do what I cannot now do by direct effort."

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## Apprenticeship Prayer Partner Challenge

Consider choosing one meal or one 24-hour period to fast together and share your experience at your next APP meeting.

## Spiritual Practice: Making Space – Learning to Fast

You hear the word fasting and you may be asking who in their right mind would give up food. Why would you put yourself through that? Or maybe you are one who recognizes the health benefits of fasting. The thought of better health or better body image has caused you to try your hand at intermittent fasting, but there is more to fasting than just possible health benefits.

**As an apprentice of Jesus, we can fast for many reasons.** We fast because it reveals the things that control us. We fast because it helps to give us balance in life. We fast because there is an urgent need. **Most important of all, we fast because God calls us to it.** In his teaching on the subject from Matthew 6:16-18, Jesus simply assumed that those who choose to be apprentices in the now available kingdom would fast and he was giving instruction on how it could be done with spiritual success.

Think of fasting as a way to gain control over an aspect of our lives in which our culture seems to have no self-control- the consumption of food. The spiritual discipline of fasting can bring breakthroughs in the heart and mind that will not happen in any other way. **It is a means of God's grace for the continuing formation of the human personality into the likeness of Christ.**

Christian fasting keeps God in mind and choosing to fast puts food aside for a time, reminding us to put our focus on God. There is nothing wrong with the normal functions in life; it is just that there are times when we set them aside in order to concentrate.

Throughout Scripture, fasting is a well-recognized spiritual discipline ranging from Daniel's partial fast to Jesus' absolute fast. The list of biblical personages who fasted reads like a "who's who" of Scripture.

To begin the practice of fasting we encourage you to start small. **Pick one meal or one day that you will choose to put food aside.** In the place of food take time to recognize God's work in your life. As you choose to put food aside, continue to surrender your heart, allowing the Holy Spirit the space and time to reveal God's heart for us and where he is at work shaping our lives.

Adapted from-  
The Making of an Ordinary Saint: Nathan Foster. Baker Publishing Group.