

Celebration of Discipline 4: FASTING

1. **REMEMBERING** Share an experience from your life in which you had to give up something to get something better.
2. **REFLECTING** We defined fasting as “*physical abstinence for spiritual purposes.*” Most of us have had to abstain from one thing to obtain another at some point in our lives. So, what makes fasting so difficult?
3. **DISCOVERING** Matthew 4:1-4 describes the first temptation of Jesus. Read and meditate on this passage and the Foster quote at the bottom of the page.

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was famished. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written, ‘man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

- What do we learn about fasting from these descriptions?
4. **CONNECTING** What could you do to broaden your outlook on fasting? Are there other kinds of fasting—like temporarily abstaining from reading news media, watching entertainment, or sharing criticism—which you’d consider?
 5. **RESPONDING** Consider one of the following responses or come up with your own.
 - Enact a “fast from criticism” for one day
 - Enact a fast from food to focus your attention on asking God for help changing a personal trait
 - Enact a fast from media for a week. You choose what kind (TV, news, radio, etc.)
 - Enact a fast of another kind in the coming weeks or months that is suited to overcoming something that has the tendency to control you
 - Make a list of the practical difficulties of fasting and discuss it with a spiritual friend in the coming week

Pray supportively for one another as you continue your training in these disciplines.

In fasting we are learning by experience how to be sustained by divine pleasures rather than human pleasures. Put another way, fasting is feasting—feasting on God alone.

- Richard Foster, *Spiritual Classics*