

Discussion Questions  
August 16, 2015  
Pastor Keith Edwards  
Spiritual Disciplines:  
Fasting



## Introduction

1. What are the benefits of physical exercises? What are the benefits of spiritual exercises?

In 1 Timothy 4:7,8 Paul, a mature Christian leader, challenges Timothy to "get into shape spiritually."

1 Tim. 4:7,8 *"...train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promises for both the present life and the life to come."*

Look up this verse (v.7a) in 2 or 3 different translations.

e.g. (The Living Bible) – *"Spend your time and energy in the exercise of keeping spiritually fit."*

(Amplified Bible) – *"Train yourself toward godliness (piety), keeping yourself spiritually fit."*

No one will discipline YOU but you, not your parents, not your friends, not your employer, not your church. Discipline is a self-imposed challenge laid on us by God. How many lives are destroyed for a lack of it!

2. Read these 3 different quotes on fasting. Discuss – why is fasting not a very 'popular' topic for preaching and bible studies?

*"...fasting is far and away the most misunderstood, maligned and misused. ....Fasting hurts. Fasting can become exaggerated into an excessive and neurotic indulgence. Fasting, carried too far, can harm the body...and fasting, submitted to theological and scriptural scrutiny, asserts that soul and body are, and that neither is without the other. For many Christians, that itself is a disturbing precept better left unexplored."*

Phyllis Tickle, editor "The Ancient Practices Series - Fasting"

*"It is sometimes necessary to check the delight of the flesh in respect to licit pleasures in order to keep it from yielding to illicit joys."*

St. Augustine (4<sup>th</sup> century)

*"whenever men are to pray to God concerning any great matter, it would be expedient to appoint fasting along with prayer. Their sole purpose in this kind of fasting is to render themselves more eager and unencumbered for prayer....with a full stomach our mind is not so lifted up to God."*

John Calvin (16<sup>th</sup> century)

### 3. Reread Isaiah 58:1-9a

#### A) Appearance

"for day after day they seek me out"

"they *seem eager* to know my ways"

What kind of activities would a believer be doing who 'seemed eager' to know God's ways? How tempting is it to 'appear' to be a righteous person to others? Do you ever try to 'impress' people with your 'outward' conduct?

#### B) Attitude (v.3)

Describe the attitude God's people had towards God. Why were they frustrated with God?

#### C) Assessment

What specific sins were the people guilty of while they were fasting?

How does sin hinder our spiritual growth?

### 4. Self Assessment

We looked at 10 questions which reflect the purposes of fasting as we concluded our study of this topic. Which questions reflect the most important issue(s) to face in your life? Discuss how 'fasting' would address these specific issues.

- a) Do I need to strengthen my prayer life?
- b) Do I need to seek God's guidance?
- c) Do I need to express grief?
- d) Do I need to seek deliverance?
- e) Do I need to repent and return to God?
- f) Do I need to humble myself before God?
- g) Do I need to express concern for God's work?
- h) Do I need to minister to the needs of others?
- i) Do I need to overcome temptation?
- j) Do I need to express love and devotion to God?

If 'Yes' .....then FAST for the purpose of godliness!

Conclude with a time of prayer, recommitting yourself to God's will for your life.