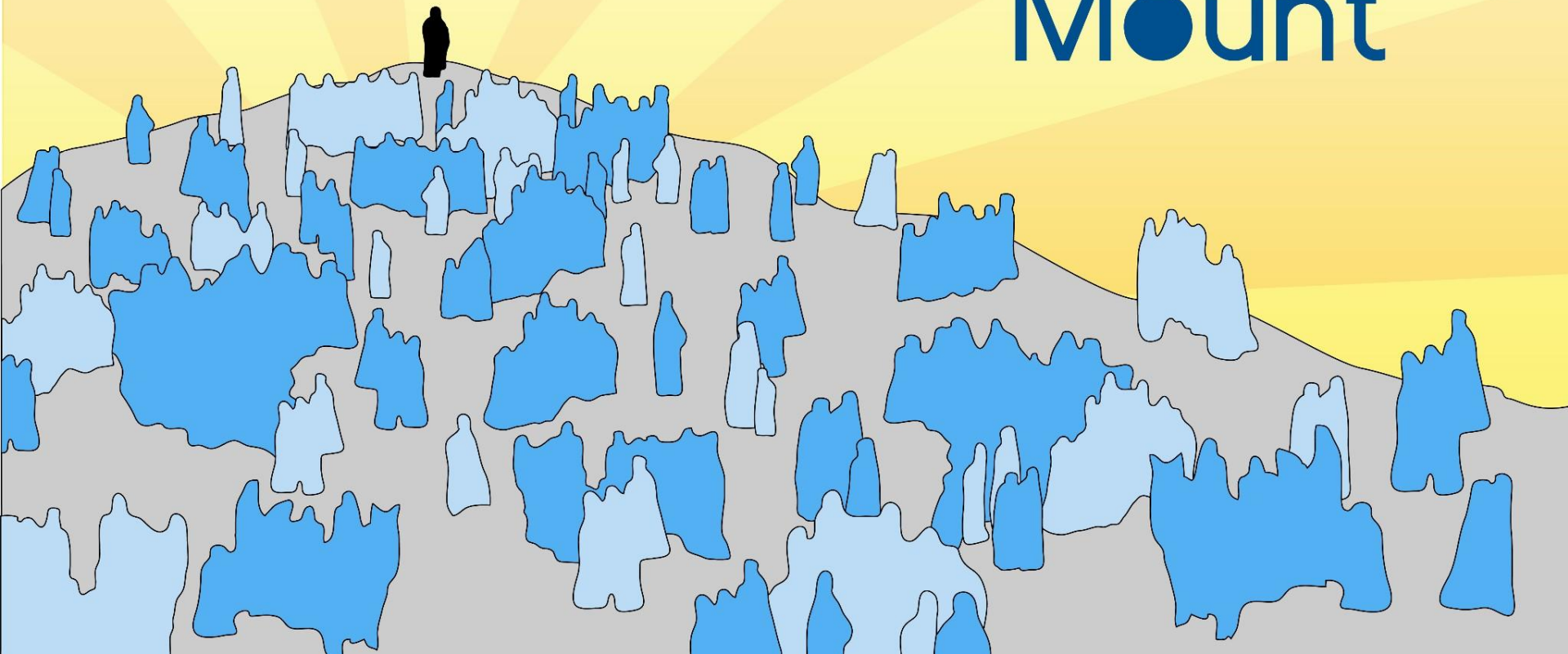


The Sermon on The Mount



Sermon On The Mount Series

Continuing on the Sermon On The Mount Series

General theme of the Sermon is Jesus' vision statement for His kingdom, and what He expects of His disciples.

- Current section of the Sermon focuses on the expectations of a disciple's religious life - his/her "faith-based practices."
- The most prominent of these practices are: Charitable giving, prayer, and fasting.

Sermon On The Mount Series

The last of the faith-based practices - fasting

Matthew 6:16-18 NKJV "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. (17) But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, (18) so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Sermon On The Mount Series

Matthew 6:16-18 MSG "When you practice some appetite-denying discipline to better concentrate on God, don't make a production out of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity but it won't make you a saint. (17) If you 'go into training' inwardly, act normal outwardly. Shampoo and comb your hair, brush your teeth, wash your face. (18) God doesn't require attention-getting devices. He won't overlook what you are doing; he'll reward you well.

6:16, “Moreover, when you fast ...”

- Jesus expects His disciples to fast.
- The Message aptly interprets fasting: "appetite denying discipline to better concentrate on God"
- Jesus used a familiar prayer as the basis for the Lord's Prayer, He also assumes that His followers will continue the familiar practice of fasting.
- Following the same format, Jesus gives us a negative example of the hypocrites (or pretenders) and follows it with a positive example of how fasting should rightly be done.

Negative Example

- “Do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.”
- Strict Pharisees fasted two days per week, plus the annual required fast on the day of atonement
- Jesus does not condemn fasting, but rather challenges His followers to fast in a way that is consistent with His character, the character of the Father, and the character of the Kingdom.

Positive Example

“Anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

- “Anoint your head and wash your face” means to practice your regular daily routine, so that you appear to be normal to those you meet.
- With fasting, as with charitable giving and prayer, it is what is “in secret” that gains us a reward from our Father

Positive Example

- Again we have the term, “Your Father who is in the secret place, and your Father who sees in secret”
- The emphasis is on the inward interaction with our Father, not on the outward acts.
- This does not mean the acts are unimportant, or optional, far from it.
- Neglecting to do the actions that are expected and commanded would be disobedience.

Positive Example

- Doing them with the wrong attitude and only for outward show is hypocrisy
- Christ calls us to DO all of what is expected, with the right attitude and motive
- The motive = intimacy with our Father

Life Application Bible

“Fasting -- going without food in order to spend time in prayer -- is noble and difficult. It gives us time to pray, teaches self-discipline, reminds us that we can live with a lot less, and helps us appreciate God’s gifts. Jesus was not condemning fasting, but hypocrisy -- fasting in order to gain public approval. Fasting was mandatory for the Jewish people once a year on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:32).

Life Application Bible

“The Pharisees voluntarily fasted twice a week to impress the people with their “holiness.” Jesus commended acts of self-sacrifice done quietly and sincerely. He wanted people to adopt spiritual disciplines for the right reasons, not from a selfish desire for praise.”

Grace Based Fasting

- Fasting as a spiritual discipline is one of the most powerful tools, if done correctly
- Four basic types of fasts:
- **Daniel fast:** Daniel 1:8-12 NKJV But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs.

Grace Based Fasting

- (10) And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king." So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink."

Grace Based Fasting

- **Daniel fast** is a general term for restricting your diet, but still eating. Daniel ate only vegetables, but it could also refer to, no sweets, or whatever you feel led.
- **Juice fast** = consuming only liquids. This can be juice, smoothies, etc.
- **Normal fast** = abstaining from all food. Water only.
- **Total fast** = abstaining from both food and water.

Grace Based Fasting

- A fast is NOT a diet - that cannot be the focus
- If you have health issues talk to your doctor before fasting
- The benefit of fasting is not in the amount of suffering. That is a works based mentality.

Isaiah 58:5 NKJV “Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the LORD?”

Grace Based Fasting

- Matthew 4:2 NKJV And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.
- As a new Christian I was taught this and still believe this. If I begin to feel “hungry” while I’m fasting, it usually means I’m not focused on intimacy with the Father, or I’m lacking some essential nutrient, like SALT, (take vitamins!!!)
- Like exercise, fasting has unpleasant aspects, but overall can be enjoyable - but you need to learn how to do it properly

My recommended fasting routine:

- Begin by setting a start and end date (sunset to sunset is best).
- Determine what you will abstain from, but be flexible.
- Minor fasts like no sweets, or no TV/Internet, etc. are fine but are not nearly as powerful in deepening your intimacy with the Father as more restrictive fasts.
- For regular fasting begin by eliminating red meat and then all meat prior to your fast.

My recommended fasting routine:

- Before the fast gradually, over several days to a week, get your body used to the change.
- Then drop to juice & smoothies, eventually reducing to only diluted juice every few hours.
- Then do just water for at least one day, or as long as your fast is intended.
- At the end, gradually introduce new food items in small portions.
- Intentionally keep your portions small for two weeks, to avoid bingeing

My recommended fasting routine:

- REMEMBER the benefit is not in how much you suffer. But rather increased self-control and greater spiritual sensitivity
- Grace-based means that it's okay to make adjustments based on how you feel. I often will do juice only throughout the day, and then before bed have a slice of bread with peanut butter to enable me to sleep through the night.
- Having “a bite” of something, is not violating a fast - just don't have a whole meal. Follow the Spirit!

My recommended fasting routine:

- Juice fasts in our day are as difficult if not more so than normal fasts in Jesus' day.
- Fasting is best if you can take time to be alone, removed from the distractions of life. A water only fast should be done mostly, or exclusively, on a retreat. Even Jesus went out into the desert to be alone when He fasted.
- Fasting reveals issues - that's part of the benefit. Use that time to sort out your issues with your Father in the secret place.

My recommended fasting routine:

- Often the benefits of fasting are not experienced during the fast, but afterward.
- Jesus encountered direct temptation from the Devil when He fasted. Spiritual assaults (in the form of temptation, irritations, conflicts, anxiety, depression, etc.) can be expected. Respond sensitively and take time to pray through these issues, and believe that just as Jesus overcame the Devil you can too!

A fasted life

- Refers to developing a lifestyle where fasting is not just occasional, but routine.
- Can refer to always having some form of fasting as part of your spiritual discipline
- It is keeping the secret place empty of clutter so that your time spent in intimacy with the Father is uninterrupted and free from distractions.

