

Fasting and Feasting: A Spiritually Balanced Diet

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Preacher: Dr. Wes Feltner

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Captioned by Captioned by Captioned by Captioned by Captioned by Capt All right, how we doing
tonight? We good? Hey, it's good to see everybody. Got a good Saturday night crowd here. So you
got a Bible, go to Matthew. Matthew is where we're going to be.

Not only, we'll look at several passages this evening, but we'll start in Matthew chapter 3. We're continuing in our summer series called Good Intention. And the goal of this series is to really look at a healthy, spiritually balanced life. We all know how important balance is in normal daily type things. Examples would be like our diet, our finances, work and fun, but also the same is true spiritually. And in week one, we talked about solitude and community.

So we balance the spending time with people, but also spending time with God. Then we, two weeks ago, looked at the Lord's Prayer and how prayer and our action goes together. Sometimes we think about prayer as like we just leave it for God to do. But Jesus actually taught us in the Lord's Prayer to ask for daily bread, but then to be aware of the others, give us our daily bread, to be aware of those around us that we actually are the answer to their prayer for daily bread. And that's precisely what we saw in the book of Acts. So we're going to look at another one this evening, and we're going to be talking about your diet. Yep, we're going to be talking about your diet and actually your spiritual diet. But of course, it's going to include your physical diet as well with two spiritual disciplines that you've probably heard of. I know you've heard of both of them, but certainly one more than the other. But I don't know that you fully or completely understand what they mean biblically.

And so we're going to look at feasting, and we're going to look at fasting. And we're going to begin here with Jesus. Anyways, all right, we ready? Matthew chapter 3, I'll invite you to stand. Matthew chapter 3, verse 13. We're going to look here at Jesus' life as it relates to the area of fasting. And look at verse 13. It says, Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan, to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, well, I need to be baptized by you. Do you come to me?

[3:22] And Jesus answered him, let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, he immediately went up from the water. And behold, the heavens were opened to him. He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, coming to rest on him.

And behold, a voice from heaven said, this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after doing what? Fasting. For how long? Forty days and forty nights. He was, you think? He was hungry. And the tempter came to him and said, you know, if you're the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread. And he answered, it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Pray with me. Father, I believe you have so much to teach us this evening on these topics. I know you have a lot to teach me, just even in the

preparation for this message. Lord, there has been so many things that I have come to understand and also seen as missing or lacking in my own life. And so I pray that you would just, Holy Spirit, come and teach us the importance of these things. And we give you the glory for what you're going to do in our lives tonight. We love you, Lord. We worship you. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. God's people said. Amen. Amen. You can be seated. In April of 1992, 24-year-old Christopher McCandless went into the Alaskan wilderness with a backpack, a .22 rifle, some books, and a whole lot of confidence. Chris believed that he could survive on his own in the wilderness. And even though he had graduated college with honors, he had come from a very nice, secure family background, Chris became disillusioned with the comforts of our modern world, and he wanted to be free from all of that. He wanted his independence from life as we know it, and he actually wanted to prove that he could take care of himself. And so he gave away everything that he had in savings to charity. He sold his car, and he began to, for the next two years, wander through Western America until he eventually reached the Alaskan wilderness. It was there that he thought, if I can survive here, then I can survive anywhere. If I can take care of myself here, then I can do that anywhere. And so what he did is he found this like old abandoned bus, and he turned it into his living quarters where Chris expected to live the rest of his life. Each and every day he would go out and he would hunt for small game. He would gather up edible plants to eat, and for quite a while his experiment on life was working. But it didn't take long for the wilderness to become unforgiving. In fact, after time passed, the game that he was hunting became scarce. His body started to weaken. Even if he wanted to give up and just quit this whole experiment and go home, he couldn't. The summer melt had caused the river that he had crossed to get into the wilderness to rise to such a level that he couldn't get out. Chris was now trapped deep inside the wilderness. Through lack of food, through mistakenly eating some poisonous weeds, other factors that were taking place, his body weight dropped to 67 pounds. Eventually, and unfortunately, Chris died of starvation. His body was found by some moose hunters, and they found it inside that old abandoned bus. And what makes Chris's story so heartbreaking is when his body was found, they found a note. And this is what the note said.

[8:12] I need help. I'm injured, near death, too weak to hike out of here. I'm all alone.

This is no joke. In the name of God, please remain to save me. I'm out collecting berries close by and shall return this evening. Thank you, Chris.

Chris had actually finally come to realize he couldn't make it on his own. He couldn't take care of himself. Are you listening? He needed help.

Unfortunately, it was too late. You see, Chris didn't die because he lacked intelligence. He was quite a smart young man. He died because of the lie that he believed, and it's the same lie that some of us believe.

It's that you can take care of yourself. Faith family, there's something in us that loves the idea of self-sufficiency. Amen? You can amen that.

[9:31] We celebrate this in our culture, do we not? Are you kidding me? I mean, think about the slogans or the phrases that we use in our culture. Phrases like, he's a self-made man. You've got to pull yourself up by your bootstraps. You've got to learn to stand on your own two feet. We even have stores dedicated to DIY.

What does DIY stand for? Say it. Do it yourself. Doesn't that feel good? Come on now. Doesn't that feel good? Like, it feels good to do it yourself. Self-sufficiency is as American as apple pie.

Come on now. If we Americans love to do anything, it's declare our independence. But I want you to stop and think for a moment how that approach in life has brought some kind of death.

And by that, I don't mean that you died in an Alaskan wilderness like Chris. Maybe for you is, you had a relationship that died because you refused to seek help. Maybe for some of you, you had a business that failed because you wouldn't ask for anybody's help. How many of you have ever gotten lost because you refused to ask for directions? Guys, right? Any of you? Oh, none of you. Okay.

Okay. Okay. Then I'll get some of you here. How many of you have ever injured yourself because you thought you could carry it all by yourself? Or you did a project that took twice as long as it should have. Why? Because you had to do it. That's exactly right. In a more serious note, some of you have faced a serious medical crisis because you refused to go see a doctor. And we will even, come on now, am I being real or am I being real? Like, we will spiritualize our self-sufficiency because we toss around phrases like this. You've heard it. God helps those who help. And there

are some Christians that actually think that's a Bible verse. Like, we are all about this do it ourself. Whether we want to admit it or not, we're just like Christopher. We are. We may not live in an Alaskan wilderness, but we approach our days, we approach our schedules, believing the lie that we can take care of ourselves.

[12:16] We can be our own provider. Now, it is not going to surprise most of you this evening that nothing could be more opposite from a biblical mindset. Amen? The Bible actually teaches the exact opposite. Jesus, after all, said that the kingdom of God belongs not to those who help themselves. The kingdom of God belongs to the poor in spirit, the humble in heart, those who have come actually to the end of themselves, realizing that they cannot help themselves. They are in desperate need of help, serious help, spiritual help, constant help, daily help. In fact, the very message of the gospel, are you with me? Are you with me tonight? The very essence of the gospel is that we cannot save ourselves. But the only reason why we are saved, that we have salvation from God, is God's grace.

God's grace. You didn't do and you cannot do anything to help yourself. We are completely, every day and in every way, helpless. And what I want us to think about tonight is that God has actually given us a practical reminder of this reality every single day. It is something you over, it is actually something you participate in every day, every day, and yet you just look right over it. It is mundane, it's just normal, you grab it on the go, and yet God actually has given it to you to remind you daily how desperate and helpless you are. It's called food. Food. Listen. Bread, that is daily bread, which we looked at two weeks ago in the Lord's Prayer, exists to remind you. I need you to hear this. Are you with me?

Daily food exists to remind you that you are a dependent people. You're a dependent people. You say, well, how does eating remind me of this reality? Because listen to me, every time you eat, what message are you sending? It's not just that you're hungry, right? What message are you communicating when you eat? I need something outside of me to come and sustain me. Do you see that?

You're not creating food internally. Hey man, I don't know if you know how it works, right? No, there's food on the outside, and you take that in, and that is a daily reminder that without help on the outside, I couldn't live. That every time you eat, even if you're not hungry, you're communicating your own dependence, your helplessness. What food reminds you of, family, is that you are a creature.

You are not the creator. Amen? God is self-sustaining. You are not. It is in Him that we live and move and have our being. And we as Christians know this, notice it on the screen, that we not only need bread for life. We need the bread of life. We are a helpless people. Amen? Now, here's what I want to do is this reminder of our total dependence on God through food is actually seen in two very common biblical practices, and they are feasting and fasting. These are very biblical realities. They're consistent throughout all of the Bible, and when I say consistent historically, it's that the overwhelming majority of the Christian heritage that we have has practiced these two disciplines, these two practices of fasting, that is for a period of time not eating, and feasting, which is for a period of time eating a lot, right, with family and friends. And what I want to say to you is this, because I think sometimes we're like, okay, fasting, I'll fast if I want to go on a diet. That's not what biblical fasting is about. Or you think about feasting is, I'm going to eat a lot. I'm going to go to the Chinese buffet because I'm hungry. That's not what feasting is about. Is everybody with me? These two disciplines, these two practices have a deeply spiritual meaning behind them, and that's what I want us to look at tonight for the next few hours.

[17:07] Let's look at in Jesus's life. We just read an example of his fasting. Let's look at it again in verse 16 of chapter 3. So Jesus was baptized. Immediately he went up from the water. The heavens were open to him. The Spirit of God, so God's very presence comes like a dove and descends upon him.

And behold, this voice from heaven says, this is my beloved Son with whom I'm well pleased. And Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after doing what? Fasting for how long? Forty days and forty nights he was hungry. So Matthew 3 ends with the baptism of Jesus.

Now, I'm going to make this point quick because it's not really the point of the message, but I just thought I'd throw it out there because we have our baptism event coming up. So this is free and it doesn't count against my time. But I know that there's still a few people in our congregation, and I

love you and you love me and we're both Christians, but you know that I push you on biblical baptism.

And there are some of you that you still hold to sprinkling as a baby. And I just have one question. I just want to ask you one question, then I'm going to move on. And the question is this. Put all the biblical teaching of baptism aside, which is important, but for this question, just set it aside. And I just want to ask you, why would you not want to be baptized the way Jesus was?

I mean, it's just something for you to really consider. I mean, do you, aside from all the other biblical teaching on baptism, which is a lot by the way, you're telling me that you would rather be, quote, baptized the way a church invented rather than the way Jesus was. There you go. I love you.

[19:06] Now let's get to the main point, all right? So as a result of this baptism, which was clearly immersion, He comes up out of the water. Jesus is then ushered into His public ministry. Now, this is a very crucial moment in Jesus' life. So crucial. Like, you should, like, pay attention to things like this. You do realize that not every event in Jesus' life is recorded in all four Gospels.

So when all four Gospels record the same event, it's kind of like, hello, newflash, this is really a big deal. This is very important. All four Gospels include this event in Jesus' life. It's when, from this point on, He's publicly recognized. He already is the Son of God, but now He's publicly recognized as the Son of God. And He experiences, did you see this in the text? The very presence of God, the Holy Spirit descends upon Him, and He has this life-changing moment, life-altering moment.

What does He do immediately after? Throw a party? Hire an executive team? Announce His public ministry? No.

The opposite. What does He do? The text tells us, in all four accounts, that He is led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and He fasted. For how long? Forty days and forty nights. Now, let's just be honest, this is really bizarre behavior. I mean, if you had a friend say, I'm just going to go out into the wilderness for forty days and not eat, you would probably, like, get an intervention together, right?

Like, this is just weird. It's bizarre behavior. So, why does Jesus do this? This is precisely what He does. And the question you should be asking is, why? Well, has that ever happened in the Bible?

[21:04] The answer is yes. It has. There are actually other examples of this. The very first one, anybody want to shout it out? Anybody, a little trivia, who is the first person to ever fast, and their fast was forty days and forty nights? Moses! Somebody was whispering it, right? Just, Moses, Moses, right? Moses. Remember in the book of Exodus, Exodus 35, Israel has been led out of Egypt.

Now, stop me if you've heard this before, and they pass through the waters. They come up out of the waters, and they go to Mount Sinai, and what happens at Mount Sinai, tell me if you've heard this before, God's Spirit comes down. Are you with me? Israel goes through the waters, then at Sinai, God's Spirit comes down, and it dwells with them there at Mount Sinai. And what does Moses do as a result of this life-changing, life-altering experience? I'll give you one guess.

He fasts, right? Look at it. So, he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights, and he neither ate bread nor drank water. And not only did Moses do this, but Elisha, the prophet, did this. Do you remember? I've got to hurry, but do you remember the whole event with Elijah where Israel is worshipping the Canaanite god of Baal, or really Baal? And they go to Mount Carmel, and they have the big showdown, remember? Where fire comes down from the heavens, and it burns the altar.

You remember this. Have you been to Sunday school, right? And it's like this incredible, life-changing moment when the presence of God just falls upon them. Are you with me?

It is absolutely amazing. And what does Elijah do? He goes into the desert, and he doesn't eat for forty days. So, notice a pattern already. You have three prophets, and what happens is that they experience the presence of God in this incredible way, and they essentially retreat to the wilderness.

Moses was already in the wilderness. And come on, what is the pattern of what they do? They fast. They don't eat or drink for a period of time. And in those examples, it was forty days and forty nights.

[23:45] Now, if we only had those three stories, what would we learn? That the appropriate response, listen to me, the appropriate response after a life-changing experience with the presence of God is to fast. It's to fast. And this leads us to really the first category. There's four main categories of fasting in the Scripture, and here's our first one that we see in Jesus' life, as well as Moses and Elijah. Is everybody still with me? I mean, could you imagine more fun on a Saturday

night?

Play along. All right. So, the first is fasting after a sacred moment. Fasting after a sacred moment. Now, I'm going to try to be brief, but I found this so helpful in my study and preparation. There are rare moments. Now, I say rare because if they happen to you all the time, that is wonderful. But in my experience as a pastor now for 740 years, this is not necessarily a common occurrence for people. And by the way, it wasn't a common occurrence in Jesus' life. Jesus did not experience what He experienced in Matthew 3 and 4 repeatedly in His life. Same with Moses. Same with Elijah. In other words, listen to me.

And some of you have had these, and I hope you have as many as possible. There are these rare moments in life where you experience God's presence in a life-altering way. Have you ever experienced, like nothing's the same anymore.

[25 : 20] Like there was an evening of worship when you felt like God poured down His Spirit on you or on that place in a way that you just don't experience that often. It was life-changing for you. And what I'm trying to tell you here is in these examples, notice that they weren't asking for that experience. That's really important.

Listen, listen. Come on. Preach, preacher. Are you with me? I'm having so much fun. Please have fun with me. They didn't fast to have the experience. They fasted because they had the experience. The fasting actually came after this incredible life-altering experience with God. So it's not fasting because we're seeking results or we're seeking an experience. It's that God has so overwhelmed us in this moment with who He is and what He's done and His goodness and mercy that we are so forever ever changed. And the Bible says that a common response to that is to take a period of time and not eat.

And you say, why? It just sounds weird. Well, I'll answer that in just a moment. But first, let's look at the second category of fasting, and that is fasting to seek direction. Fasting to seek direction. In Acts chapter 3, the early church was at a crossroads in their ministry.

They're trying to discern which direction that the ministry is supposed to go, what they're supposed to do next. And notice what happens in Acts chapter 13 here. I'm just going to kind of skim this. So you see that the church of Antioch was gathered, the prophets, teachers, Barnabas is there, Simeon, Lucius, Saul's there, and they're doing what? They're worshiping the Lord and fasting. And what happens?

[27 : 30] The Holy Spirit said, set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then after, say it, and it's interesting, you're going to find in the Bible that fasting and praying often go together. And I'm going to explain why in just a moment in case you're curious.

After fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and what? They sent them off. So here's what's happening. Again, the church at Antioch is at a ministry crossroads.

And what they do is they come together. I hope you're listening. They don't watch television. They don't study the stock market. They focus on Jesus together. And they worshiped, prayed, and fasted. And all of those are held very common. Like, we're like, yeah, pray and worshiped. I get that. Fasted? And according to the Bible, these were the three common practices that they did. And what happened as a result is the Holy Spirit makes it clear that Paul and Barnabas were to be sent out and this whole new chapter of ministry began. Do you see that?

Now, let me make it practical for you. There are some of you here tonight and you are facing a big decision in life. You know who you are. Some of you are considering buying or selling a business. Some of you are looking at making a major life move. You're considering starting a whole new vocation.

[29 : 04] There's a whole host of big decisions in life where you're at a crossroads and you don't know what to do. Can I tell you what you should do? Fast. According to the Bible, you should fast. Not according to your pastor, not according to what your friend, according to the pattern of the Bible, you should fast.

And so now we'll answer the question, why fasting? Because here's what some of you, here's what I would want to say. Lord, can't I just pray? Do I really have to go without food? Like, can I, can I, are you with me?

Are you with me? Like, like, can I not just pray and seek direction? Like, why do, why is the biblical pattern also fasting? And here's why. This is really important. If you've zoned out, what do you do? Zone back in. Here it is. Fasting makes you experience what your prayer is meant to express.

Listen to what I'm saying. This is really, really helpful. Fasting makes you experience in a physical way what prayer is meant to express. Let me explain that by showing you in the life of Jesus. So go back to Matthew chapter 4. Matthew chapter 4, when Jesus is fasting, verse 1, he's led up by the Spirit into the wilderness. He's tempted by the devil. After fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry, right?

[30 : 34] No, of course he's hungry. Imagine what you would be like if you went 40 days and 40 nights without food. Irritable is an understatement, right? Right? I mean, you would be ready for an all-day binge at the Golden Corral, right? You would be, like, you've never known starvation like that. You would be so hungry, would you not? And so when Satan comes to tempt Jesus, where's the first place he starts?

Verse 3. The tempter came and said to him, if you're the Son of God, command these stones to become... Listen, Satan may be defeated, but he ain't dumb. He may be defeated, but he ain't dumb. He knows exactly where to start with Jesus. And he knows that he's hungry, and so he tempts him with bread.

And look at Jesus' response, because this explains why fasting. He answered, it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Everybody right here, listen.

Jesus understood in his wilderness what Chris did not understand in his. Jesus understood in his wilderness.

Jesus understood in his wilderness. He said, you know what you're going to discover pretty quickly into your fast? How much you need daily bread. Amen? And so fasting is this real-life experience of desperation, of dependence upon God.

[32 : 38] And so notice this on the screen. So when you're seeking direction, why did they fast? Because you need to be reminded of your dependence. Faith family, the last thing you want to do is make decisions like you can take care of yourself.

Come on, say preach preacher, right? Come on, are you with me? The last thing you want to be doing when you're making a major decision is approaching that decision like you can take care of yourself.

So the early church fasted and prayed because their prayer expressed dependence on God and fasting experienced their dependence on God because they wanted to make decisions knowing it's God who provides.

So, notice it on the screen. Prayer is an act of dependence and fasting makes you feel that very dependence.

Does everybody see that? Third category of fasting, and that is fasting as turning from sinful behavior. And you're going to be noticing a pattern through all of these.

[33 : 46] Turning from sinful behavior. This is probably the most common in Scripture of all the, there's like four main categories. There's like 30 different examples of fasting and I tried to put them in like four main buckets.

The biggest bucket would be this one. And I'll give you just one example. There are several. But look at 1 Samuel chapter 7 verse 3. Samuel said to Israel, if you're returning to the Lord with all your heart, put away all these false gods.

Direct your heart to the Lord and serve God only. He'll deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. So, Israel put away all their Baals and Asheroths and served the Lord only.

And Samuel said, gather all of Israel at Mishpah and I'll pray to the Lord for you. And they gathered at Mishpah and they drew water, poured it before the Lord and they fasted on that day.

And they said there, we have sinned against the Lord. Everybody see that. So, what's happening here is that you have a season of time.

[34 : 48] This is important. A season of time when Israel had been wayward and worshiping other gods. Did everybody see that from the text? Is everybody still awake? Right? This has been a period of time where Israel has been away from her God.

It's not so much about daily sins. Here's why. Now, I realize that daily sins add up to that, but it's not like every time you sin, you need to fast.

And here's why. Notice on the screen. If you fast every time you sin, you'll never eat. Right? So, like, literally, you'll never actually eat food. This is not what that is.

What this is, is this has been a period of time that Israel has lived in rebellion. And as a part of her renewal to God and renewal to the covenant, Israel fasted for a 24-hour period.

And by the way, just kind of wake up for a moment and hear this. The most common fast in the Bible is 24 hours. Aren't you glad it's not 40 days? Right? So, yeah, praise God.

[35 : 52] Right? So, Israel fasts for a 24-hour period as a way of their renewal back to the covenant with God.

And once again, you might say, why fasting? Can I not just repent and pray? Like, why do I need to include this fasting bit? Well, here's why. What? Come on.

Think with me. What does sin reveal? Sin reveals your inability to obey on your own. It's the same thing as why you seek direction through fasting.

Fasting reminds you that you cannot walk in obedience without God's help. You're desperate.

You're helpless. That's what fasting experiences.

There's one other piece I want to add to this quickly and I've got to move on. And that's, there's another component of this that you see in one example would be Joel chapter 2 verse 12. It says, Yet even now the Lord declares, return to me with all your heart with fasting, weeping and with mourning.

[36 : 55] Rend your hearts, not your garments. Return to the Lord your God. Why? Because he's gracious and merciful and slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love. He relents over disaster.

So fasting, you'll notice if you study this biblically, is also connected with mourning, that is grieving. Now why is that? Because some of you are like, this sounds like a really great time you Christians have, right?

You just cry and don't eat, right? Like what's going on here? Like what's the connection? Because what happens when you don't eat? You referenced it earlier about being irritable or cranky.

You remember the old Snickers commercial? Can we turn the AC up? I'm dying back here. It's on. Can't you feel it? Can you feel that? Oh. Jeff, eat a Snickers, please.

Why? Every time you get hungry, you turn into a diva. Just eat it so we can all coexist. Turn into your diva. Then your system, cranky pants. Okay. Thank you. Better?

[37 : 54] Better. Will you get your knees out of the back of my seat? You're not you when you're hungry. Snickers satisfies. Think about that.

You're not you when you're hungry. That's true, isn't it? You're not you when you're hungry. Listen to me and I've got to move on. Not eating brings your body grief.

It's a form of suffering. It's not punishing yourself. That is not what it is. It's a form of bodily grief, of bodily pain.

Come on. This is so beautiful. This is so... You're okay if we go just a few minutes longer tonight.

This is... I found this... And you can always leave. Sinner.

Right? So, think about this. I'm intentionally bringing my body grief. Fasting. Because I'm grieving over sin.

[38 : 53] And then what happens when I eat? This is beautiful. This is beautiful. This is beautiful. This is the gospel. Have you ever been really, really hungry?

And then you ate. And what did... How did your body respond? Oh. That's so good.

Dave's hot chicken. Or whatever it is, right? Like, man, that food was so good. And it was the hunger that exposed the goodness of food.

You know where I'm going. Fasting is associated with renewal to God because it brings your body grief as you're grieving sin. And then when you eat, what are you reminded of?

How good God is. Because what did the verse say? He's gracious. And he's steadfast in love. And he relents from disaster.

[40 : 04] God is good. And you're not eating. And then experiencing the goodness of food is a real experience of the very renewal that is happening in your life with God.

Do you see that? Do you see that this is bigger than just, well, I just need to lose weight so I'll fast? It's a deeply spiritual and biblical practice that is very important not only in the Bible but practiced historically.

And I'll just acknowledge to you. I'm terrible at this. I mean, God revealed things in me in preparing for this. This is, I hope you're okay with a pastor admitting this.

This is, trust me, there are many areas. But this is definitely an area that I'm like, God, I'm convicted in because this is not hardly ever a part of my life. Don't look at me and judge me like that, right?

That's the whole point of this series is to get back to balance. So you see that fasting here is a part of renewal to God.

[41:15] I'm going to give you one more. This has taken longer than I intended. But you're just going to get all of it and tomorrow morning we'll get less. Because you're special, right? So I will hurry.

Here's the last category and it's fasting as an act of sadness. Fasting as an act of, now this is different than the one I just gave you. Because what makes this different is you're not grieving your sin.

You're grieving the tragedy of this world. Have there ever been things that have happened in your life or around you in the world and it just completely broke you?

I mean, just devastate you at the pain of life. Let me show you what David did in Psalm 35.

Malicious witnesses rise up.

They ask of things that I do not know. They repay me evil for good. My soul is bereft. But I, when they were sick, I wore sackcloth.

[42:16] I afflicted myself with fasting. I prayed with head bowed on my chest. I went about as though I grieved for my friend or my mother as one who laments his mother, or my brother, as one who laments his mother.

I bowed down in mourning. Does everybody see that? Quickly, what's happening here is David is actually, you noticed he's speaking of his enemies. And David had a lot of them.

David had a lot of people that wanted him to be sunk. And what David says here is that when he hears of the bad things, the tragic things, the sad things that happened in the life of his enemies, he suffered for them.

Isn't that beautiful? I mean, talk about a picture of Jesus. Like that he entered into their suffering. How? He fasted. Are you ready?

And he did that for his enemy. How much more for your friend? Or your fate family?

[43:31] Or someone in your family? This form of fasting is about embodying the grief of the tragic things in our world. One big example would be like death.

That death is so tragic that an appropriate response to that is to take a period of time and not eat. According to the Bible.

When Joseph died, at the end of the book of Genesis, his family and all of Israel fasted for seven days. They were so grieved at the loss and the reality of death.

And now why would you fast in that particular case? Tell me if you're noticing a pattern. Fasting when we grieve for the tragic things of life is a reminder that we and the world around us are dependent and desperate for God to come and help.

We become, we encounter things like death that are just bigger than us.

[44:38] And we are desperate for God. We are desperate for God. And did you notice in really only one of those four categories are we actually seeking anything from God?

After the sacred moment like Moses, Elijah, Jesus. After turning from sin. After responding to sadness. You're not trying to get anything from God.

Are you with me? This is not a way of manipulating God to what you want. What you're doing is hands on, first hand experiencing how desperate you are for God.

That you need Him so much. And fasting helps you experience that very need.

Now I want to show you in the remaining time that I have, which is not much. I spent a lot more time on fasting because I think that's where we're more imbalanced. But how about we balance this out with another way we approach food that actually may seem like it's the opposite.

[45:42] But it actually expresses the same thing. Are you still with me? If I've lost you, now we're going to talk about eating a lot. All right? So, okay, I'm alert now, right?

I want this to name it and claim it, right? So here we go, right? Or feasting. Feasting. Now feasting is like throughout, I mean like literally Genesis to Revelation.

Don't worry, we're not going to cover all that. But from Genesis to Revelation, feasting is everywhere. In the garden, human beings were given an all-you-could-eat buffet. The Exodus and the Passover was about celebrating with a Passover feast.

The Promised Land was described as a land flowing with milk and honey, a place of abundance. The prophets like Isaiah would speak of God's future day of glory like this.

The Lord will prepare a feast of rich food, choice meat, aged wines on Zion for all peoples. The Sabbath was a time where Israel would stop from their work and enjoy the fruit of their labor.

[46:45] Jesus frequently compares the kingdom of God to a wedding feast, a celebration of abundance. You've got the feeding of the 5,000. Did Jesus give them barely enough?

Or did He fill their stomachs with food left over? And what about the water to wine? Was there just a little bit of wine left? There were jugs and jugs and jugs of wine left.

Why? Because in the kingdom of God, there is fullness of joy. That Jesus has come to give us abundant life.

Do you see that? Now, the importance here is to know that this is not an excuse to eat a lot. Right? Some of you are like, okay, give me this so I can go out tonight and just eat a bunch of food.

It's not what this is about. Here's why that's not the case. Because we do that all the time. It would be embarrassing trying to explain what an appetizer is to someone from a starving country.

[47:47] Yeah, the appetizer, that's food we eat before we have our food. No, no, you're thinking of dessert. That's food we have before we have our food. Yeah, we eat tons of food.

Like, we already overeat. Can I get an amen? And so that's not what this is about. This is not an excuse for overeating. Feasting.

What is the biblical discipline or practice of feasting? Here it is. Feasting is the intentional, and I want to underline that phrase, intentional act of celebrating something.

You're celebrating not only that God has given you daily bread, He has also given you abundant life. It is an intentional act of celebration around food that not only recognizes His daily provision for you, but His eternal provision for you in Jesus.

Are you with me? You could even shorten it this way by saying feasting is an intentional act of celebrating God's grace. An intentional act of celebrating God's grace.

[49:01] I'm going to give you one example, and I'm done, I promise. Look at Luke chapter 5. This is so awesome. So after this, Jesus went out. He saw a tax collector. Stop.

Good guy, bad guy. You're already asleep, right? Maybe you shouldn't have eaten so much before the service. Levi's bad guy, tax collector.

He's cheated out his own people, the Jewish people. He's become filthy rich. He's like the first century of mafia. Hated.

You know this. They hated tax collectors. And Levi experiences the grace of Jesus. Jesus tells Levi to come and follow me. Come and be one of my disciples.

And after experiencing this gracious invitation by Jesus, what is Levi's natural response? Next verse. He made Jesus a great feast in his house.

[49:59] And there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table. The way Hank Jr. would interpret this is all my rowdy friends are coming over tonight, right?

He gathers all his tax collector buddies, and they have this really big party. Are you with me? Say yes. Well, guess who hates this?

You know. Next verse. The Pharisees and the scribe grumbled at the disciples, Jesus' disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink? Why do you throw a feast with tax collectors and sinners?

In other words, the Pharisees, like, hate the idea that you would feast with these kind of people.

Now, listen. Jesus is now going to explain why the feasting.

Are you with me? Here's what he says. This is important. Jesus answered them, Those who are well, well, they don't have a need of a physician.

[50:54] But those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Why was Levi's feast appropriate? Please listen. Because what was the difference between Levi and the Pharisees? Is that Levi had come to realize he couldn't save himself.

He couldn't do it himself. He couldn't be right with God on his own. He was sick. Really sick.

And he needed a physician. Whereas the Pharisees thought they could do it on their own. And Jesus says the reason why this feast is appropriate is because Levi understands grace.

So the Pharisees say, Well, you know, there's already a way that you can express your dependence on God. And it's not feasting. It's called fasting. They said to him, The disciples of John, Well, they fast often and offer prayers.

[52:11] And so do the disciples of the Pharisees. But you feast. Why don't you fast? There's already a way that you can express dependence on God. Why do you do this?

Oh, man, this is so awesome. And Jesus said to them, Can you make wedding guests fast? Try throwing a wedding and having no food at the reception.

Right? Right? People are going to be angry. Why? Because everybody knows when you're at a wedding, you feast. They fast while the bridegroom is with them.

The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away. And then they will fast in those days.

What's he saying? He's saying the reason Levi's response to throw a feast was appropriate is because we're at a wedding.

We're at a wedding. The greatest of all kinds of wedding. Because Levi has been brought in oneness with God.

[53:31] This is a new family that I have come to create. And the only way you get in that family is when you, like Levi, realize you can't save yourself.

And when you come to the point where you realize you can't save yourself, the appropriate response is feast. And celebrate God's grace in your life.

Amen? Now, let me just point out here that Jesus, did you notice he didn't dismiss fasting? He didn't say, oh, that's old school.

I brought in something new. No. There's an appropriate time to fast. But not today. Today, we feast. Which means what? Jesus wants his disciples, listen, to learn how to hold in tension. Feasting and fasting.

[54:42] There are times that you need to go without food. And there are times you need to claim the glasses and fill the plate.

And enjoy the goodness of God. So, here's our application. And we're done. There should be, this is extremely convicting for me. There should be times in your life when you fast.

And if this has not been a practice in your life, well, according to the Bible, it should be. If you have had a life-altering experience with God, if you need direction in life, if you've drifted from God, if maybe you're going through a tragic event, or someone that you love is going through a tragic event, what should you do?

According to the Bible, you should remind yourself how desperate you are for God. How? Through fasting. Through fasting. Now, you need to hear me say this.

I realize there may be health concerns. I may be a doctor. I ain't that kind of doctor. Okay? I fully realize there may be certain situations that some of you are in where you can't do that to the fullest extent, or maybe you need to talk with your doctor about that.

[55:56] I certainly want to be sensitive to that. But keep in mind, I'm not suggesting that it be 40 days. And all God's people said, thank you, Lord, right? It might be a day.

It might be a half day. It might be in your case, for whatever the context is, that you just miss a meal. And you just at least let yourself in the afternoon feel hunger.

It may not be the full depth of a full day fast, but at least missing that meal makes you feel like, you know how worse this would be if I didn't eat?

Which reminds me of what? How desperate I am for daily bread and the bread of life. You should be fasting. You should be fasting.

And then secondly, you should be feasting. There are times when you should feast. This is, again, not an excuse to overeat because you like food. It's about a time when you've experienced God's grace.

[57:08] And you need to be reminded in a very real way of the goodness of God in your life. It may be that you got the promotion, that you made it to graduation by the grace of God, right?

You got married. You experienced salvation. Are you kidding me? And what do you do? What should you do? If you're following the biblical balance of the Scriptures, what should you do?

Here's what you should do. Save you up some money. And make a reservation. Or cook your best meal. And invite all your rowdy friends over tonight.

And enjoy the grace of God together. And be reminded in that moment, you wouldn't have that promotion.

You wouldn't have sold that business. You wouldn't be a child of God if it weren't for God. In both cases.

[58:15] I'm done. In both cases. Through the absence of food and through the abundance of food, here's what you're reminded of. You're not self-made.

You're not self-made. And you cannot do it by yourself. And you and I are reminded of that every single week right about now.

Because what do we do right about now? What are we about to do? Communion. We're about to partake of the Lord's Supper. And what was the context? What was happening in the setting when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper?

You know this. The Passover feast. The Passover feast. And what was the Passover feast meant to communicate?

It was a time of eating and drinking to remind Israel they did not get out of Egypt on their own. Passover reminded Israel what Christ didn't understand.

[59:24] Listen. You did not and you cannot survive the wilderness alone. God was and is and always will be your provider.

And of all the feasts in the Old Testament, Jesus chose the Passover to explain the meaning of His death. That is that it was through the cross that Jesus would provide everything we need for salvation.

That just as you cannot sustain yourself without bread, you cannot save yourself without Jesus. So come tonight to the table, you spiritual beggar, pour in spirit and ask for help before it's too late. And you will find all the food your soul needs at the foot of the cross. And all God's people said, Amen.

So Lord, we now enter into this time of remembrance. Understanding the context of the Passover feast.

[60:53] This reminder of our need for you. not just daily need to live, but spiritual need for eternal life.

And you came in the flesh and offered for us all that our soul needs. Living water.

Bread of life. And I pray this evening as we partake in just a moment that as we do, we will be reminded as we eat this bread and we drink this cup, we are not self-made.

We are not self-saved. We are beggars. And you have given us bread.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.